



URBAN95



# THE VOICE OF PARENTS IN THE CITY

Creating a Parent-Supportive Urban Environment

Conference / Seminar Summary

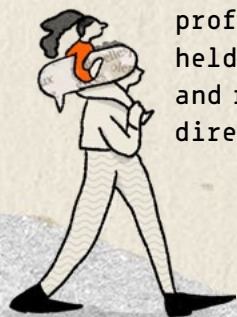
December 2025, Tel Aviv-Yafo

## WHAT DOES A CITY THAT SUPPORTS PARENTS ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE – IN EVERYDAY LIFE, TIMES OF EMERGENCIES, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN?

This document emerged following a pioneering professional conference led by the [Urban95 Tel Aviv-Yafo program](#), which placed the well-being of parents of young children at the heart of the municipal agenda. At the conference, we sought to examine how cities can act proactively, systematically, and consistently to strengthen parenting, belonging, and resilience among young families – not only through dedicated services, but through a comprehensive municipal approach.

During the conference, we delved into the role of the local authority as a key player in shaping parents' living conditions – through public space planning, service development, community strengthening, trust-building with residents, and emergency preparedness. We integrated research-based knowledge, field practices, practical examples, and the voices of parents to bridge strategic thinking and day-to-day action within local governments.

This summary is based on the content, ideas, and insights that emerged at the conference, as well as on a professional seminar for local authority representatives held shortly thereafter. The material has been processed and reorganized to distill key principles, strategic directions, and practical tools for local authorities.



### PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

In the following pages, we present key insights drawn from accumulated knowledge and experience, with an emphasis on practical implementation. We aim to provide tools for professionals in local authorities and to support the development of policies, planning, and urban initiatives that promote parental well-being in early childhood – in routine times, in emergencies, and everything in between.

### HERE YOU WILL FIND:

- A conceptual framework for understanding parental well-being as a cross-cutting municipal issue.
- A mapping of key challenges in the urban parenting experience.
- Municipal spheres of action for promoting parental well-being.
- Core principles for planning, service provision, community building, and family resilience.

# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## Opening Lecture

### Stories, Tantrums, and to the Playground: Israeli Parenting in 2025



**Hilla Regev**

Communications professional, content creator, mother, and researcher specializing in culture and parenting communities

## Applied Aspects in the Public Space

### The City as a Foundation for Optimal Parenting



**Arch. Hila Lotan**

Co-Director of "Publica" and Co-Founder of "Street Language" magazine

### It Is Not Good for the Parent to Be Alone: On Parenting Communities in the City



**Dotan Haas Hershkowitz**

Community Management Specialist

### Family Resilience in Early Childhood: The Role of Local Authorities in Routine and Emergency



**Ran Cohen Harounoff**

Co-Founder and CEO of "Early Starters"

## Elective Sessions

### Session 01 Let the World Be Flexible: How to Help Parents and Children Feel Seen



**Or Alterman Barnea**

CEO of "Safe Place" organization

### Session 02 Parent-Friendly Planning: Challenges and Opportunities



**Arch. Tali Bergel**

Director of Construction and Development, Education Administration, Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality

### Session 03 From the Kibbutz to the City: Insights on Parent Support Systems



**Ofer Gitai**

Director of the Society Division, Kibbutz Be'eri

### Session 04 From Response to Initiative: Building Trust Between Parents and the City



**Nir Wittenberg**

Director of the Service Center and Parent Relations, Education Administration, Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality

## Acknowledgments

We thank the speakers for sharing their knowledge, experience, and insights; the participants for their open, professional, and committed dialogue; and our partners who made both the conference and the development of this document possible.

We are grateful to the Van Leer Foundation, the Urban95 Israel team, the Tel Aviv Foundation for Development, and the CET team for their guidance, collaborative thinking, and ongoing investment in advancing parental well-being and early childhood in the urban sphere.

Special thanks to our partners at the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality - from the Community Administration, Education Administration, Social Services, Strategic Planning Unit, City Architect's Office, Municipal Sanitation and Maintenance Division, and Transportation Division - for their dedicated, professional work to improve the lives of parents and children in the city.

## PARENTAL WELL-BEING IN THE CITY: FROM CHALLENGE TO OPPORTUNITY

Parenting today takes place within a global reality of rapid change, information overload, and blurred boundaries between work, family, and personal life. Many parents of young children belong to a generation that grew up in a digital world and are accustomed to constant comparison, the pursuit of self-fulfillment, and high-performance standards. They enter parenthood with fewer natural support networks and an ever-expanding sense of daily responsibility.

Parental well-being refers to parents' ability to raise their children with emotional presence, a sense of security, and belonging - not just to manage daily life functionally. It is supported by environmental, social, and organizational conditions that reduce pressure, enable emotional regulation, and sustain family and community relationships over time.

In the urban environment, the local authority is often the first public body parents encounter as they navigate day-to-day challenges - whether through public spaces, municipal services, or direct interactions with city systems. The way a city is planned, managed, and operated - at the intersection of urban planning, service delivery, and community life - has a direct impact on the parenting experience, shapes parents' emotional availability, and plays a central role in building both family and community resilience.



## THE URBAN REALITY OF PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: KEY CHALLENGES

Urban parenting is experienced first and foremost as a personal reality, shaped by unique family and community characteristics and contexts. At the same time, it is significantly influenced by the urban environment, where the interaction between parents' daily lives and the city's operations can either ease or intensify their burden, depending on municipal policy and its implementation.



## EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL OVERLOAD

A buildup of social and cultural pressures, the expectation to be a "successful" parent, constant demands for availability, fatigue, and a lack of emotional bandwidth.



## COGNITIVE AND DIGITAL OVERLOAD

Extensive exposure to social media, idealized models of parenting, and constant comparison to others, alongside a flood of WhatsApp groups, emails, and ongoing updates. Mobile phone use can reduce parents' ability to be fully present with their children.



## ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED STRESS

The high cost of living and the ongoing difficulty of balancing career and parenting due to structural gaps between the labor market and the realities of parenthood. These include working hours, job stability, and vacation schedules that are not adapted to families with children, as well as a negative impact on mothers' income.

## THE URBAN REALITY OF PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: KEY CHALLENGES



### ENVIRONMENTAL AND LOGISTICAL STRESS

Noise, crowding, infrastructure work, spaces that are inaccessible or unpleasant for spending time with children, challenging transportation, and the overall complexity of daily life in the urban environment.



### COPING WITH EMERGENCIES

Emergencies affect parents first, and through them, their children. They require parents to mediate a threatening reality, maintain a sense of routine and security, and navigate ongoing change and uncertainty. The city's preparedness shapes the parenting experience during emergencies, the continuity of services, and the availability of tailored support.



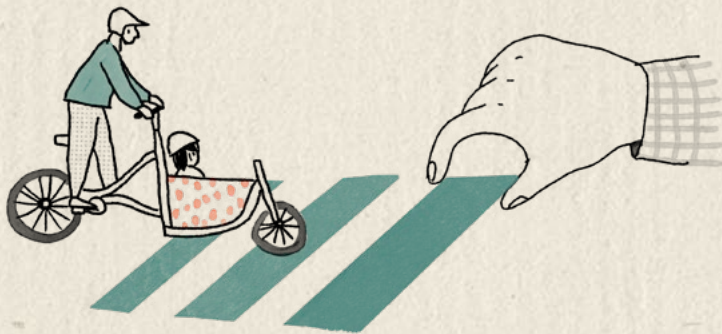
### THE GAP BETWEEN THE NUCLEAR FAMILY MODEL AND URBAN DIVERSITY

Municipal planning and services that rely on a one-size-fits-all approach fails to adequately address the diverse realities of families in the city. This limits opportunities for participation, a sense of belonging, and the ability to navigate parenting in the urban environment.

# MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

## Planning Public Spaces that Support Parents

Parenting unfolds across both private and public spaces. The walk to daycare, time spent at the playground, and interactions with the community are all integral parts of daily life for parents in the city, especially those raising young children. Parent-sensitive urban planning supports parenting not only through physical accessibility but also by creating safe, clear, and predictable environments that reduce the need for constant vigilance. When a space is well designed, constant supervision can shift toward a calmer, more relaxed presence, daily stress is reduced, and the need for adjustments or improvisations in poorly adapted environments is minimized. This opens up emotional availability, allowing parents to deepen their connection with their children and experience the city as a supportive space.



## 1

### PHYSICAL, OPERATIONAL, AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

- Wide, continuous sidewalks accessible to strollers and children.
- Shade, comfortable seating, public restrooms, and access to drinking water.
- Clear, safe, and welcoming entrances to preschools, schools, and public institutions, designed as spaces for gathering and short stays rather than merely for passage.
- Public facilities planned with the parent-and-child experience in mind - space for strollers, areas for nursing or diaper changing, smooth circulation, and easy wayfinding.
- A sensory environment that supports regulation - reduced noise, balanced lighting, pleasant materials, and integration of natural elements in both open spaces and buildings.

## 2

### MOVEMENT AND MOBILITY IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

- Planning that shortens routes and reduces friction with traffic and motorized vehicles.
- Clear, safe walking paths so that parents and children know what to expect along the way and aren't required to stay constantly alert.
- Design that considers parents' time constraints, reducing situations where they need to stop, improvise, or make frequent on-the-go decisions.
- Managing the public realm during construction works: creating a coordinated and navigable space during infrastructure work, including regular updates for parents and improved pathways to reduce anxiety and risk.

## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Planning Public Spaces that Support Parents



3

#### THE PARENT-CHILD EXPERIENCE: TIME TOGETHER AND PLAY

- Low-stimulus play equipment that enables independent play, exploration, and movement, without sensory overload.
- Spaces that allow parents to sit comfortably, observe, be present, and engage – not just supervise from the sidelines.
- Choice and flexibility in the environment – sun and shade, active zones alongside quiet areas, options for proximity or distance.
- A sense of capability for both parent and child – equipment, facilities, and elements designed at child height that encourage independence and ease the load on parents.

4

#### CONNECTION, COMMUNITY, AND BELONGING

- Benches and spaces that encourage natural encounters and interaction between parents.
- Intergenerational and multicultural spaces that don't isolate parents in a "kids' corner."
- Leveraging existing municipal resources as community anchors, such as opening schoolyards, gyms, and sports courts for public use in the afternoons.
- The City as a Continuous Space for Learning and Development – by integrating parks, libraries, cultural institutions, and public spaces into daily personal and family life, the city fosters a sense of belonging and parental emotional availability.
- Urban design that sends a clear message: parenting is visible, valued, and recognized in the public space as a natural part of urban life.

# MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

## Municipal Services that Support Parental Well-being

Beyond the physical environment, municipal services are a central arena where parents interact with the city in their daily lives. The way these services function - their clarity, availability, coordination, and responsiveness - directly affects parents' sense of security, emotional availability, and overall sense of capability. When services are designed from a parenting perspective, parents are not forced to "manage the system," but can instead focus on parenting itself.



1

### CLARITY, CONTINUITY, AND ACCESSIBILITY IN SERVICES

- Clear, up-to-date, and accessible information about rights, services, and processes.
- Cross-departmental coordination that creates a unified city experience, rather than a set of disconnected systems.
- A clear service pathway - who's responsible, what the next step is, and whom to contact when something changes or goes wrong.
- Hybrid service options (in-person and digital) that allow for choice and reduce unnecessary physical visits.

2

### DEVELOPING TARGETED RESPONSES TO PARENTING CHALLENGES

- Municipal services that offer parents both emotional and practical support for the challenges of parenting, e.g., counseling, guidance, accompaniment, respite, and opportunities to build community.
- A mix of individual and group programs, accessible consultation points, and parenting support initiatives tailored to the child's age and the family's stage of life.
- Creating urban spaces where parents can pause, reflect, share, and gain tools, as a foundation for long-term emotional well-being and parental resilience.

3

### RESPONSIVENESS TO ROUTINE AND EMERGENCY CONTEXTS

- The ability to shift quickly from routine to emergency while maintaining continuity of services for families with young children.
- Dedicated support for parents during times of uncertainty, stress, or transition.
- Proactive and clear communication from the municipality during changes, emergencies, or necessary adjustments.

## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Parent Communities as a Municipal Resource

Parent communities form a vital social foundation for the parenting experience in the city. They reduce feelings of isolation, normalize complex parenting experiences, and strengthen a sense of belonging and security – especially during sensitive life stages such as early parenthood, parental leave, or periods of stress, emergency, or crisis.

The principal value of parent communities lies in the combination of human connection and accessible local knowledge. Within these communities, parents exchange every day, practical information – about municipal services, educational options, professionals, extracurricular activities, babysitters, and resources for both routine and emergency situations – alongside emotional support, the normalization of challenges, and a strengthened sense of parental confidence and capability.



Beyond that, parent communities offer an effective system for mutual support and resource-sharing – exchanging equipment, sharing knowledge and experience, providing real-time assistance, and offering small, practical solutions that together make a meaningful difference in daily family life. During periods of stress, emergencies, or personal crises, an active community can serve as a stabilizing force, and at times, even a lifeline.

In addition to their social value, parent communities also hold civic and municipal potential. They reflect real needs on the ground, identify gaps in public spaces and municipal services, and, at times, act as organized groups driving local change. A strategic connection between parent communities and the local authority enables bottom-up processes – where knowledge, needs, and initiatives that emerge from the field feed back into policy, planning, and implementation.

That said, parent communities do not develop entirely on their own. Their growth also depends on a supportive, top-down infrastructure. The role of the municipality is not to manage or replace these communities, but to actively foster the conditions for their emergence and sustainability across the city, including through:

- Identifying existing parent communities and recognizing them as partners, alongside mapping potential spaces and meeting points.
- Allocating supportive infrastructure – spaces, resources, information, and access.
- Establishing direct channels of communication between parent communities and municipal professionals and departments.
- Strengthening connections and collaboration among different communities as a municipal force multiplier.

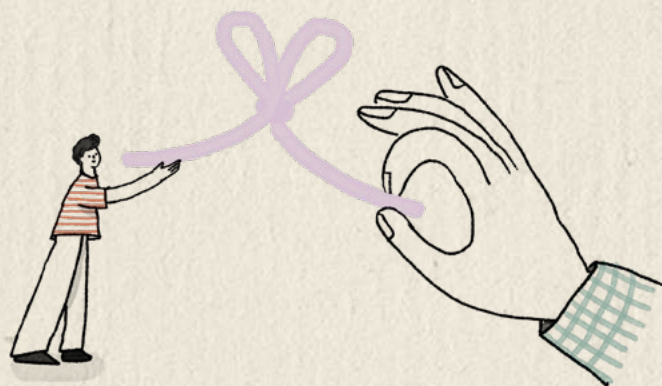
When the municipality acts both from the top down – to build supportive community infrastructure – and from the bottom up – to listen to initiatives, knowledge, and needs from the field, parent communities evolve from a local social phenomenon into a significant municipal resource: one that strengthens parental well-being, community resilience, and families' ability to navigate the challenges of urban life.

# MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

## Municipality-Parent Relations: Trust as a Foundation for Action

Trust between parents and the municipality is not built through declarations or written policies, but through parents' day-to-day encounters with the city. The street, the service, the phone response, the handling of inquiries, the on-the-ground presence, and the way decisions are made - all of these collectively shape parents' sense of trust - or mistrust - in the municipal system.

Parents often encounter the municipality at times of stress, pressure, or difficulty. In these moments, trust is shaped not only by the outcome, but often even more so by the nature of the interaction: whether someone sees them, listens, explains, and responds with transparency, good intentions, and professional judgment.



1

## TRANSPARENCY, COMMUNICATION, AND GOOD FAITH

- Clear, consistent, and proactive communication about processes, changes, and decisions, including explanations of the rationale behind municipal decisions, even when the outcome is not favorable for the parent.
- Strengthening the sense of integrity and professionalism as a foundation for trust, even in instances of disagreement.

2

## HUMAN PRESENCE AND GENUINE AVAILABILITY

- The importance of having identifiable and accessible human figures - faces and names, not just systems.
- Physical presence in the field and in the spaces where challenges arise, especially during moments of crisis.
- Direct, person-to-person encounters that allow for listening, de-escalation, and emotional regulation.

3

## RAPID RESPONSE AND SMALL ACTIONS THAT MAKE A BIG IMPACT

- Timely handling of small, everyday problems that can add up to significant stress for parents.
- Targeted action - even if imperfect - signals attentiveness, care, and the ability to get things done.
- Recognizing that speed and responsiveness are sometimes just as important as the solution itself.

## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Municipality-Parent Relations: Trust as a Foundation for Action

4

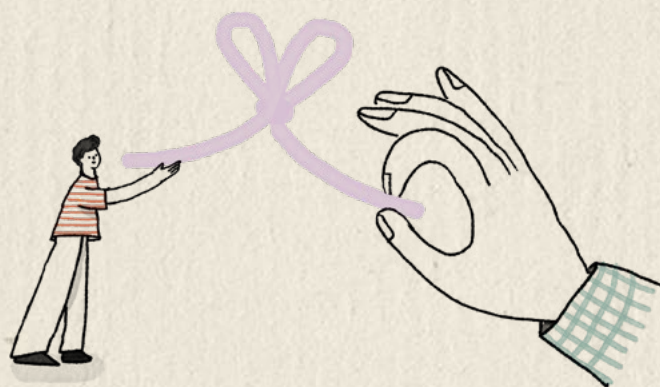
#### LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM THE FIELD

- Listening to the lived experiences of parents as a basis for improving policy and services.
- The ability to channel insights from the field into decision-making processes.

5

#### LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

- Viewing parents as partners, not as "clients" or adversaries.
- Shifting from reactive responses to proactive engagement and sustained relationships with parent leaders and communities.
- Building relationships that strengthen a sense of belonging, mutual commitment, and the capacity for joint action.



## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Family Resilience in Routine and Emergency Situations

Emergencies affect children directly, while placing parents under pressure to cope, explain, and regulate. For young children, an emergency is not separate from daily life – they experience it through their bodies, play, and connection with a trusted adult. Parents' ability to maintain a sense of security, create continuity and routine, and serve as a calming presence for their children is significantly influenced by how the city prepares and operates in routine times, in emergencies, and in the transitions between. A supportive municipal response relies on advance planning, simplicity, continuity, and a visible human presence.



In times of crisis, parents may find themselves functioning under heavy emotional strain or even trauma. In these moments, their ability to maintain authority, set boundaries, and provide emotional containment can be significantly compromised. This may lead to a form of "parental collapse," often accompanied by guilt, exhaustion, and burnout. This does not reflect parental failure, but rather a human response to extreme conditions. Based on this approach, a child's recovery begins with the parent's recovery. An effective municipal or community response starts by creating the conditions for parents to pause, receive support, and gradually regain a sense of stability and control – laying the foundation for the family's overall resilience.

Based on this understanding, strengthening family resilience, both in routine times and in emergencies, requires sustained municipal action across several complementary levels:

### 1

#### PROACTIVE PLANNING AND OPERATIONAL CONTINUITY

- Developing a municipal emergency response plan tailored to families with young children.
- Maintaining continuity of services, frameworks, and support, also in situations of prolonged uncertainty and change.
- Creating a sense of stability, consistency, and predictability for parents and children in a shifting reality, including recognition of "emergency routine" as an ongoing condition.

## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Family Resilience in Routine and Emergency Situations



2

### STRENGTHENING PARENTAL PRESENCE

- Recognizing parents as the central figures in helping children regulate, feel secure, and cope during emergencies.
- Creating conditions that enable parents to actively engage - to play, explain, and comfort - rather than merely be physically present.
- Offering guidance, support, and accompaniment from available professionals, grounded in the understanding that a parent's strength is essential to a child's resilience.

3

### CONSISTENT, FAMILIAR, AND ADAPTED SPACES

- Creating and maintaining dedicated spaces for children and parents that offer stability, familiarity, and simplicity - both in routine and emergency contexts.
- Spaces designed for young children: simple play, imaginative activities, opportunities for movement, and calm time in a safe, soothing environment.

4

### COMMUNITY AND PEER CONNECTION AS A FOUNDATION FOR RESILIENCE

- Connecting families as a stabilizing force in both routine and emergency situations.
- Encouraging mutual support, information sharing, and informal networks among parents.
- Integrating parent communities as an essential part of the city's resilience infrastructure.

# MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

## Tailoring Support to the City's Diverse Families

Families in the city reflect a broad spectrum of structures, life circumstances, abilities, and resources - all of which may shift over time. A supportive municipal approach recognizes this human diversity as a daily reality. It works to broaden its perspective so that urban spaces, services, and initiatives foster inclusion, choice, and a sense of belonging for a wide range of parents and children.



1

### BROAD CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACCESSIBILITY

Adapting cultural activities, extracurricular programs, and community services to serve families from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ways of life - without compromising on quality or meaning.

2

### PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Listening to parents' experiences, incorporating diverse perspectives into planning and service improvement, and working collaboratively with communities as a foundation for ongoing learning.

3

### PROACTIVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Providing clear and consistent information about activities, services, and spaces - what to expect, how things are structured, and what choices are available - to support early preparation and informed decision-making.

## MUNICIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PARENTING EXPERIENCE: KEY ARENAS FOR ACTION

### Tailoring Support to the City's Diverse Families



4

#### CHOICE AND FLEXIBILITY IN PARTICIPATION

Creating a space of engagement that doesn't require a single mode of participation - allowing for legitimate entry and exit, varied levels of involvement, and diverse use of spaces and services.

#### INCLUSIVE AND INVITING MUNICIPAL LANGUAGE

5

Using language that emphasizes options, accommodations, and solutions - not just rules and restrictions - in a way that normalizes differences and reduces feelings of alienation or judgment.

#### HUMAN PRESENCE AND READILY AVAILABLE SUPPORT

6

Municipal staff who are recognizable, approachable, and well-trained, able to identify when help is needed, offer support, and proactively refer families to relevant services with care and sensitivity.

7

#### ENVIRONMENTS THAT SUPPORT REGULATION AND RELIEF AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Designing spaces and activities that include calm areas, opportunities for breaks, and attention to sensory load, pacing, and how the space is used.

## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

Following the conference, a practical workshop was held with the participation of municipal teams from various local authorities, focused on collaborative thinking about municipal strategies to strengthen parental well-being. The workshop focused on ideation, identifying challenges from the field, and developing practical, actionable responses. The challenges addressed in this applied work reflected every day, concrete manifestations of the broader pressures and difficulties of urban parenting presented earlier.

This process led to the development of a range of practices and directions for action, grounded in professional experience, accumulated knowledge, and a deep understanding of the everyday lives of parents in the city. These outcomes are presented here as inspiration for action for professionals working in local authorities.

### 1| MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE IN DIVERSE PUBLIC SPACES

For parents of young children, clear and accessible municipal information is key to navigating daily life calmly, exercising their rights, and making full use of available services. Making information accessible in the urban space includes all communication, outreach,



and signage efforts that allow parents to receive knowledge, messages, and services as part of their everyday city experience - in the street, in parks, in public institutions, on public transport, and in digital spaces. This reflects an ongoing approach to the city as a communicative environment - one that acknowledges parenthood, normalizes difficulty, and supports informed use of available resources.

### PROPOSED TOOLS AND ACTIONS:

- **Municipal campaigns to raise awareness and normalize parenting experiences**

City-led campaigns can carry clear, shared messages for parents and children, such as "screen-free playgrounds" or "phone-free afternoons," helping to promote supportive norms in public spaces. When campaigns are culturally and linguistically adapted, they make services and content more accessible in a non-threatening way, meeting parents where they already are. In this way, the city acts as a supportive and enabling partner, rather than a moralizing authority.

- **Accessible tools for receiving information and support**

Developing a municipal system of simple, accessible tools for information and support enables responses tailored to how parents actually consume information. A hotline, chatbot, or advisory center can be designed with an understanding of parental overload, limited availability, and the diversity of populations, using clear language, familiar platforms, and high accessibility. These tools reduce confusion and frustration, strengthen a sense of continuity and security, and provide a clear municipal point of contact without requiring parents to immediately enter a complex process.

## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

- Using simple tools across different spaces

Physical tools placed in public spaces can convey messages and information in a day-to-day, accessible way - beyond digital platforms or mediated channels. Signage, flyers, stickers, magnets, and bookmarks reach parents on the go. They can communicate messages such as where to access support and information, reinforcing the city's presence beyond the screen. For example, clear information about municipal services, available resources, and how to get in touch can create an approachable first point of contact between young families and the city, even in the earliest stages of parenthood.

- Parental language embedded in the public space as part of everyday urban life

Municipal language that recognizes parenting as a natural part of city life sends a message of inclusion and legitimacy. When parenthood is reflected in signage, messaging, and public discourse - not only in contexts of problems or service requests - it reinforces a sense of belonging, reduces shame or guilt, and affirms parenting

as an integral part of the city's daily fabric. For example, a public exhibition featuring photos and artwork by residents - parents, grandparents, and municipal staff - can share empowering messages about parenting.

### KEY MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

- Divisions of Communications, Public Relations, and Marketing
- Departments of Education, Social Services, Community, and Health
- Divisions of Sanitation and Maintenance and Public Space Planning
- Parent Centers, Early Childhood Centers, and Well-Baby Clinics
- Community partners and civil society organizations
- Digital services and municipal service units and call centers



## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

### 2 | REPURPOSING PUBLIC SPACES FOR ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES

Repurposing public spaces encourages a fresh perspective on the city's existing environments, looking at how they can serve more than just their original function. Instead of seeing parks, plazas, pathways, and public institutions solely as physical infrastructure or spaces to pass through, they can be reimagined as platforms for activities, services, and parent-supportive interactions.

This approach builds on spaces that the public already knows and frequents, or is familiar with but rarely uses, by giving them new meaning within everyday urban life. In doing so, support, community, and services can become part of families' daily routines, easing logistical and emotional burdens while strengthening their sense of security, belonging, and trust in the city. Rather than requiring new infrastructure, it makes the most of the city's existing potential.

#### PROPOSED TOOLS AND ACTIONS:

- **Using public spaces as "open community centers"**  
Repurposing public spaces as open community centers creates ongoing opportunities for parents to meet, form connections, and foster a sense of local community. When

the municipality supports regular activities throughout the day and year-round, it helps normalize the parenting experience and strengthen support networks - both in everyday life and during times of stress or emergency. Hosting activities and community events in public spaces brings them to life, fosters a sense of belonging, and makes community support a natural part of daily urban living.

- **Deploying mobile units in parks and neighborhoods**  
Bringing targeted activities and services into public parks, such as an early childhood activity van or a mobile library, creates child- and family-friendly spaces within neighborhoods. These mobile units reduce the need for travel and offer parents nearby opportunities for respite, support, and positive experiences close to home.
- **Making professional services accessible in public spaces**  
Placing professionals (e.g., parenting counselors) in public settings like playgrounds, early childhood centers, or rotating neighborhood locations conveys the sense that the city is attentive, approachable, and responsive. Offering guidance, counseling, and support in informal, easily accessible settings builds a softer, less intimidating support system. It strengthens parents' sense of care, availability, and trust, lowers barriers to seeking help, and reaches a wider range of families who may not otherwise have access to formal services.
- **Engaging municipal institutions in parent-focused activities**  
Using existing municipal spaces for parent-oriented programming enables more efficient use of city resources, extends the hours of activity, and strengthens parents' and children's sense of familiarity and safety in the urban environment.



## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

For example, guided walks for parents with babies can combine sensory experiences for the child with quality time for the parent. Another model might include creating designated co-working spaces for parents within a municipal play center or near a preschool complex - offering proximity to the child while encouraging connection with other parents.

### KEY MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

- Departments of Community, Culture, and Leisure
- Early Childhood Education Division
- Social Welfare and Services
- Divisions of Sanitation and Maintenance and Public Space Planning
- Municipal Libraries
- Community organizations and local nonprofits



## 3 | DEVELOPING TARGETED PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Developing targeted programs and services is a conscious municipal choice to proactively address emerging parenting challenges, rather than relying solely on existing solutions. This approach is grounded in identifying needs from the field and working with diverse stakeholders - parents, employers, professionals, and communities - to improve the parenting experience and everyday family life in the city. By offering tailored responses to different life stages, stress periods, and family profiles, the city helps reduce burnout, strengthen parents' sense of competence, and promote lasting everyday well-being.

### PROPOSED TOOLS AND ACTIONS:

- **Workshops, gatherings, and programs for parents** with or without children, depending on the need. These offerings can provide space for relief, reflection, and connection. Examples include informal parenting guidance events in public settings, couples' yoga on Friday mornings, mothers' meetups, stand-up comedy nights for parents, dedicated parent theater groups, and short, accessible evening sessions.
- **Bringing services and support directly to the home** Delivering services to families' home environments reduces logistical barriers and creates a "soft," accessible support network during times of heightened stress or isolation. This approach allows the municipality to meet parents in their own safe space and provide personalized assistance without

## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

requiring complex arrangements to leave the house. Examples include distributing newborn kits that include essential supplies along with a structured home-visit program by public health nurses, social workers, or developmental consultants, to offer comprehensive support around nutrition, behavior, and family dynamics; weekly home visits by trained volunteers - mothers themselves - who offer peer-to-peer support and help build community connections; and volunteer-led community initiatives that provide home-cooked, nutritious meals for families in the postpartum period.

- **Targeted programs for specific parent groups**  
When the city chooses to work with a defined group of parents, such as fathers, single mothers, first-time parents, or parents of children with special needs, it can develop content that speaks directly to their specific needs, questions, and experiences. Targeted programming creates opportunities for natural connections among parents in similar situations, allowing for shared understanding, peer support, and the normalization of challenges. Beyond the content itself, these programs gradually foster peer groups that offer ongoing connection and support. Examples include personalized support for single parents in career management, professional training, and

navigating benefits; groups for mothers of children with special needs, and other dedicated initiatives tailored to distinct parenting experiences.

- **Programs aimed at broader spheres of influence**  
Developing programs for municipal professionals, educators, care providers, and HR managers in local organizations reflects an understanding that these stakeholders interact with parents daily and can have a meaningful impact on the parenting experience in the city. For example, a professional seminar for HR managers might explore topics such as parental burnout, flexible work arrangements, and the organizational benefits of employing parents - particularly mothers. It can also examine how a parent-supportive workplace culture, including attention to fathers and shared parenting responsibilities, directly contributes to the quality of life of families in the city.
- **Parent-centered public participation processes**  
to gather and learn from insights, needs, and everyday experiences. Launching structured processes for parent-centered public engagement allows the city to learn directly from the field, identify gaps, and ground service development in current, real-world insights.

### KEY MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

- Departments of Community, Welfare, and Education
- Departments of Culture, Sports, and Leisure
- Municipal professionals in care, counseling, and guidance services.



## FROM INSIGHT TO ACTION: PROPOSED MUNICIPAL PRACTICES TO PROMOTE PARENTAL WELL-BEING

### 4 | ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY

requiring complex arrangements to leave the house. Examples include distributing newborn kits that include essential supplies along with a structured home-visit program by public health nurses, social workers, or developmental consultants, to offer comprehensive support around nutrition, behavior, and family dynamics; weekly home visits by trained volunteers - mothers themselves - who offer peer-to-peer support and help build community connections; and volunteer-led community initiatives that provide home-cooked, nutritious meals for families in the postpartum period.

#### PROPOSED TOOLS AND ACTIONS:

- **Establishing new internal policies that impact all municipal employees**  
This is a powerful tool for broadly advancing parental well-being. When the municipality sees itself as a model for expected practices, it can lead by example - implementing internal organizational changes that promote a healthier work-life balance for its own employees. For instance, introducing a municipal-wide policy that designates a fixed time (e.g., after 3:00 p.m.) as a no-meetings, no-calls period communicates the legitimacy of parenting responsibilities, helps reduce burnout, and sends a values-based message that can influence other employers and shape the city's broader organizational culture.

- **Establishing municipal procedures and standards**  
Creating municipal procedures and standards embeds parental well-being as a broad guiding principle rather than addressing it through isolated efforts. Defining municipal guidelines or a city-wide standard sets clear expectations for how businesses, organizations, and everyday spaces should relate to parents and families. Such measures extend the parental support network beyond direct municipal services, increase visibility and legitimacy for parenting, and foster community-supportive environments, even in areas without active parent groups. One example is introducing a municipal benefit such as "babysitting hours eligibility" - offering free childcare hours through certified caregivers provided by the municipality, available to families that meet specific criteria.
- **Establishing permanent organizational infrastructure, managed by an official municipal body**  
Clear municipal ownership helps create structure, continuity, and trust in an otherwise saturated and often confusing information environment. For example, rather than relying on numerous unofficial WhatsApp groups that create overload and confusion, a centrally managed municipal platform - such as an official city-run WhatsApp community - can serve as a single, reliable source for up-to-date, verified information. Such an initiative reduces confusion and information overload, helps parents understand where to turn and what support is available, and reinforces the municipality's role as a trusted source of information and support in parents' daily lives.

#### KEY MUNICIPAL PARTNERS

- Senior municipal leadership and executive management
- Human Resources
- Community and Social Services Division
- Communications and Public Relations Division

