Participatory processes with young people cultivate citizens who know how to work collaboratively to create a more sustainable future.

What does this approach look like around the world?

Professionals in city building work, placemaking and children’s rights are working to integrate the perspectives and meaningful participation of children and young people into organizations, processes and systems.

Check out a small selection of those approaches here:

- UNICEF Child Friendly City Initiatives
- ARUP - Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods
- City at Eye Level for Kids
- City of Toronto Growing Up: Planning for Children in New Vertical Communities, May 2017
- Child Friendly TO
- Child Friendly Edmonton
- 8-80 Cities

Perhaps uniquely, a child friendly approach has the potential to unite a range of progressive agendas — including health and wellbeing, sustainability, resilience and safety — and to act as a catalyst for urban innovation...

The Benefits of Child Friendly Decision Making

Integrating the voices and vision of children in city-building

Playful, more mobile and inclusive cities

Young people with the skills and confidence to effect change

Healthier, more sustainable, and resilient neighbourhoods

Interested in learning more about our participatory design process? Contact us to schedule a virtual consultation: pdworkshops@evergreen.ca

Evergreen works with schools, municipalities, government and the corporate sector to innovate sustainable, child-friendly public spaces and experiences. Meaningful involvement of children and young people is at the heart of our work.
What is Child-Friendly Participatory Design?

Evergreen’s Child-Friendly Participatory Design approach involves working closely with children and young people, to actively prioritize their involvement in long term planning, design and decision-making processes. The participation of children and young people informs the design, planning and delivery of public engagement opportunities that are accessible and appealing to young stakeholders. They are designed to be:

- **Age appropriate** and fun interactive experiences that invite meaningful contribution and participation (rather than powerpoint presentations), such as model making, mapping, or arts-based activities.
- **Scheduled** at times that are ideal for children and young people
- **Located** where children and young people spend their time (e.g. local school, park or community centre).
- **Flexible** and inclusive of children’s differences in abilities, learning styles and experience (e.g. activities of different kinds offered in shorter sessions so children can choose the approach that is best for them to share their thoughts and ideas).
- **Responsive** to local community needs and interests, inviting a ‘connection to place’ (e.g. incorporating cultural and location-specific practices that evolve according to the response and needs of the community).

What does this look like?

Children and young people contribute their perspectives and ideas through observations and gain skills in collaborative decision-making, collecting and analysing data. They are also engaged to shape the process and lead activities that might include: focus groups, guided tours, workshops and community events.

For innovative ideas on engaging children and youth in child-friendly placemaking see this essential guide, *Placemaking with Children and Youth: Participatory Practices for Planning Sustainable Communities* by Victoria Derr, Louise Chawla and Mara Mintzer.

When Children Have a Voice in City Building...*

*They Connect Communities to Local Parks!*

Imagine over 1000 children from local schools engaging as city builders in the redevelopment of two local parks! This happened as a result of Evergreen’s Neighbourhood Nature Play initiative, in partnership with the City of Kitchener. This child-centred, family friendly and community-based placemaking effort engaged children and local communities in nature play activities and seasonal park festivals, leading to reimagined park spaces, and an increase in people using those parks to gather, share meals and host their own community events. The experience has influenced the City’s future approach to park planning, design and programming.

*I liked how involved we got to be and how creative the supervisors let us be with collecting info.*

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*I liked how we were a really big part of this, it’s not just the teachers and the principal. We can be involved and do a lot of things.*

—

*I like how we got more connections, made more friends and learned new things.*

- School Design Team, Grade 5 students


*They Lead Master Plan Processes!*

Evergreen and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) collaborated to centre children’s voices in a school ground redesign process aimed at creating a space with meaningful opportunities for play and learning. Placemaking specialists took a School Design Team (10 students in Grades 4-6 and four teachers) through Evergreen’s child-led, teacher supported approach, building their skills and confidence to lead a whole school visioning process. The School Design Team facilitated classroom activities with over 400 students, and hosted workshops with the surrounding community, external partners and NGOs, resulting in a transformed and engaging outdoor space.

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*Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.*

- Article 12 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child