

# Scaling Playful Learning: How Civic Infrastructure Can Support Young Learners

December 15, 2020

The logo consists of a purple square with a white border. Inside the square, the text "The Campaign for" is at the top in a small font, "GRADE-LEVEL" is in the middle in a larger font, and "READING" is at the bottom in the largest font, all in white capital letters.

The Campaign for  
**GRADE-LEVEL**  
**READING**

# Presenter and Co-Moderator



## Helen Hadani, Ph.D.

Fellow – Global Economy and Development, Center for Universal Education  
Fellow – Metropolitan Policy Program, Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Center  
for Transformative Placemaking

The Brookings Institution

# Presenters



**Anna White**

Program Manager  
Early Childhood Success  
National League of Cities



**Bosmat Sfadia-Wolf**

Director  
Community Planning and  
Development Unit  
City of Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel



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Office of Early Childhood  
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# Commentator



Siobhan Reardon

Principal  
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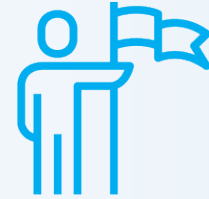
Scaling playful learning:

**How cities can reimagine public spaces to support children and families**





## Commit to and coordinate efforts



- Public sector employees need to be engaged in the design and integration of playful learning efforts into new and existing programs and projects
- Growing trend for U.S. cities to have dedicated staff positions that to lead cross agency collaboration



## Leverage and learn from national groups



Cities don't have to start from scratch. National organizations can:

- Act as a central resource for designing, implementing, and maintaining play-focused initiatives.
- Help public entities to break down silos to maximize limited resources.

# KaBOOM!'s Play Everywhere



## Too Small to Fail: Laundry time is learning time



## Partner and engage for impact

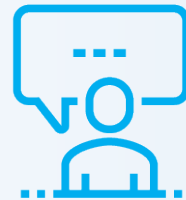


- Forging partnerships with community organizations and public champions helps to foster neighborhood trust and cohesion and builds social capital.
- Faith-based initiative in Detroit encouraged caregivers to talk, read, and sing to their children in church sermons and family programs.

# Blake the Brownsville Bee



## Simplify (and spread) the message



- To reach busy families, information needs to be shared in the most clear and concise way, in various formats and venues.
- Chicago PlayStreets
  - » Communicating the important link between play and healthy development and learning.
  - » Implementation barrier is residents not wanting to move their cars.

## Clear the way



- Nascent field that brings together the learning sciences and placemaking.
- Train urban planners and designers to embed playful learning into projects from the start so not seen as an added effort or cost.
- *“Play everywhere is an elegantly simple concept—they’re inexpensive, small-scale interventions... The biggest hurdle is the permissions and permitting and what’s allowable in the public realm.”*

# With crisis comes opportunity





# Presenter



## Anna White

Program Manager  
Early Childhood Success  
National League of Cities

# Scaling Playful Learning

## How Civic Infrastructure Can Support Young Learners

December 15, 2020



**NLC** NATIONAL  
LEAGUE  
OF CITIES  
CITIES STRONG TOGETHER



# NLC

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## WHO WE ARE

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**The National League of Cities (NLC) is the voice of America's cities, towns and villages, representing more than 200 million people across the country.**

*The ECS Team brings city leaders together from across the country to help them achieve their shared mission: to lead thriving cities*



More than **50** cities, towns  
& villages

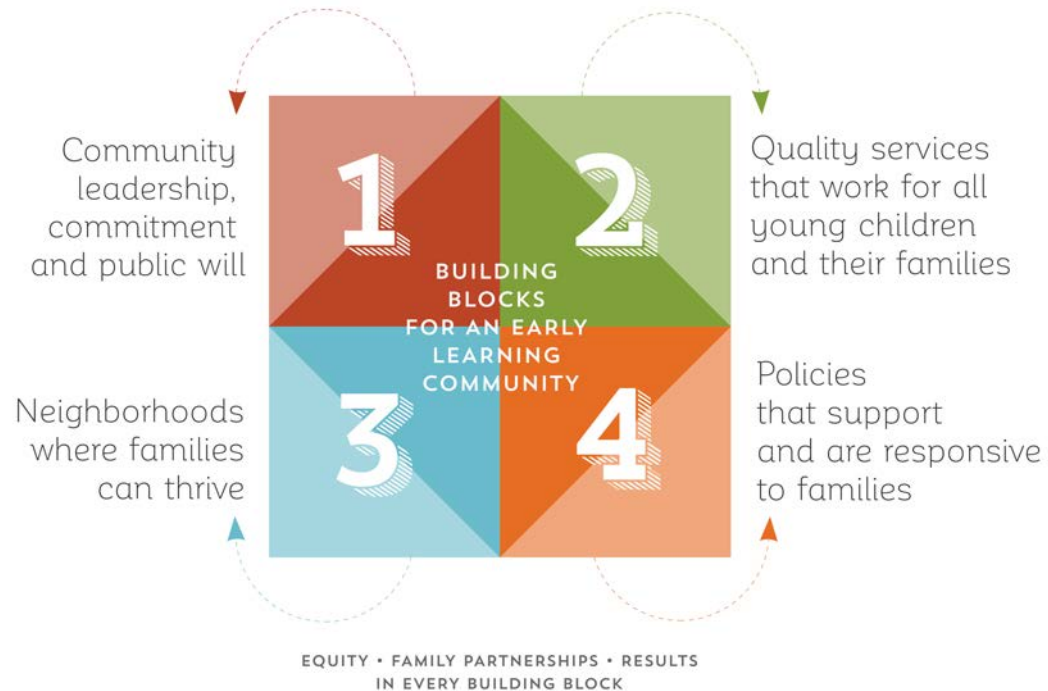
reaching **2 million**  
est. young children birth to  
age 8 years and growing...



Cities participating in Early  
Childhood Success initiatives

## Early Learning Nation

Launched 2015, the National League of Cities (NLC) partnered with the Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP) to launch City Leadership for Building an Early Learning Nation (ELN) to support local officials in developing and strengthening early childhood systems to ensure that young children in our cities grow up safe, healthy and ready to learn.





<https://progressratingtool.earlylearningnation.com/>

## 3

## Neighborhoods Where Families Can Thrive

**Target 3.1** The built environment promotes safety and allows families to access basic services in their neighborhoods and beyond.

**Target 3.2** Economic and employment opportunities are available to all.

**Target 3.3** Residents feel a sense of belonging and hope within their neighborhoods and connection to the broader community.



## City Trends

### 1. Public Libraries

Reimagining public libraries to facilitate greater interaction between young children and their caregivers and libraries partnering with city parks departments to bring early literacy activities to community centers.



1. Chicago Children's Library



2. New York City Play Streets



3. Milwaukee Laundromat Play and Learn Spaces



4. Milwaukee Family Court Play and Learn Space



## City Trends

### 2. *City Transportation*

**Working with city transportation departments to reimagine streets and public transportation to support early learning, e.g., play streets, lending libraries at bus stops, and early literacy messaging in public spaces.**



1. Chicago Children's Library



2. New York City Play Streets



3. Milwaukee Laundromat Play and Learn Spaces



4. Milwaukee Family Court Play and Learn Space

## City Trends

### 3. *Community Partners*

Collaboration between cities and their community partners to bring early childhood opportunities to community spaces like laundromats and grocery stores.



1. Chicago Children's Library



2. New York City Play Streets



3. Milwaukee Laundromat Play and Learn Spaces



4. Milwaukee Family Court Play and Learn Space

## City Trends

### 4. Civic Spaces

Being intentional about designing civic spaces to support early childhood. We are seeing things like little libraries at city hall; play and learn spaces at family courts, and DMVs; and early literacy messaging and resources at places families are likely to visit such as WIC offices.



1. Chicago Children's Library



2. New York City Play Streets



3. Milwaukee Laundromat Play and Learn Spaces



4. Milwaukee Family Court Play and Learn Space

# NLC NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

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CITIES STRONG TOGETHER

[@LEAGUEOFCITIES](#)



# Presenter



## Dea Wright

Director  
Office of Early Childhood Initiatives  
City of Milwaukee

# CITY OF MILWAUKEE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES



## ABOUT OECI



- Opened in November 2018, OECI represents the city's interest in ensuring Milwaukee children ages 0-3 and pregnant mothers have equitable access to evidence based early care and development programs and services helping prepare children for kindergarten.

# MILWAUKEE CARES

MAKE MILWAUKEE A CITY WHERE BABIES THRIVE





Our Partners

Anyone living, working,  
or playing in the City  
of Milwaukee



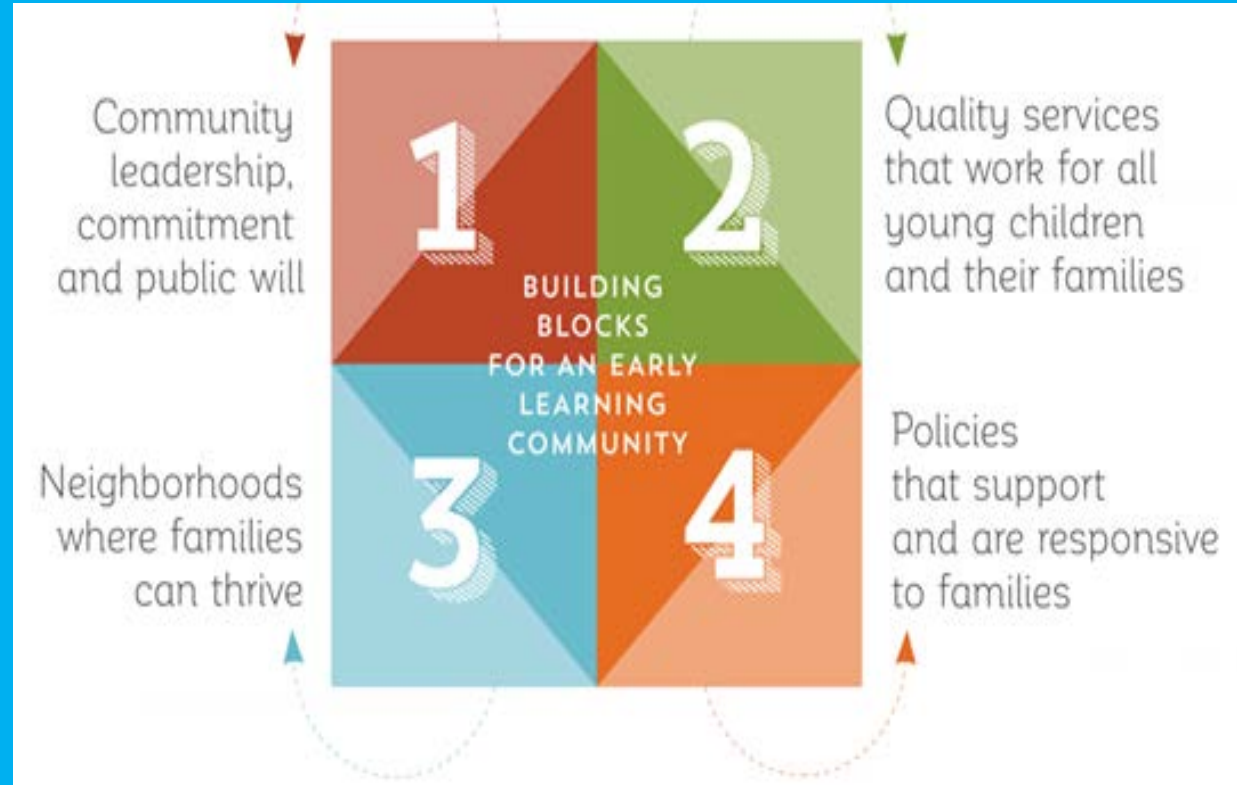
# Our Process

With support from the National League of Cities,

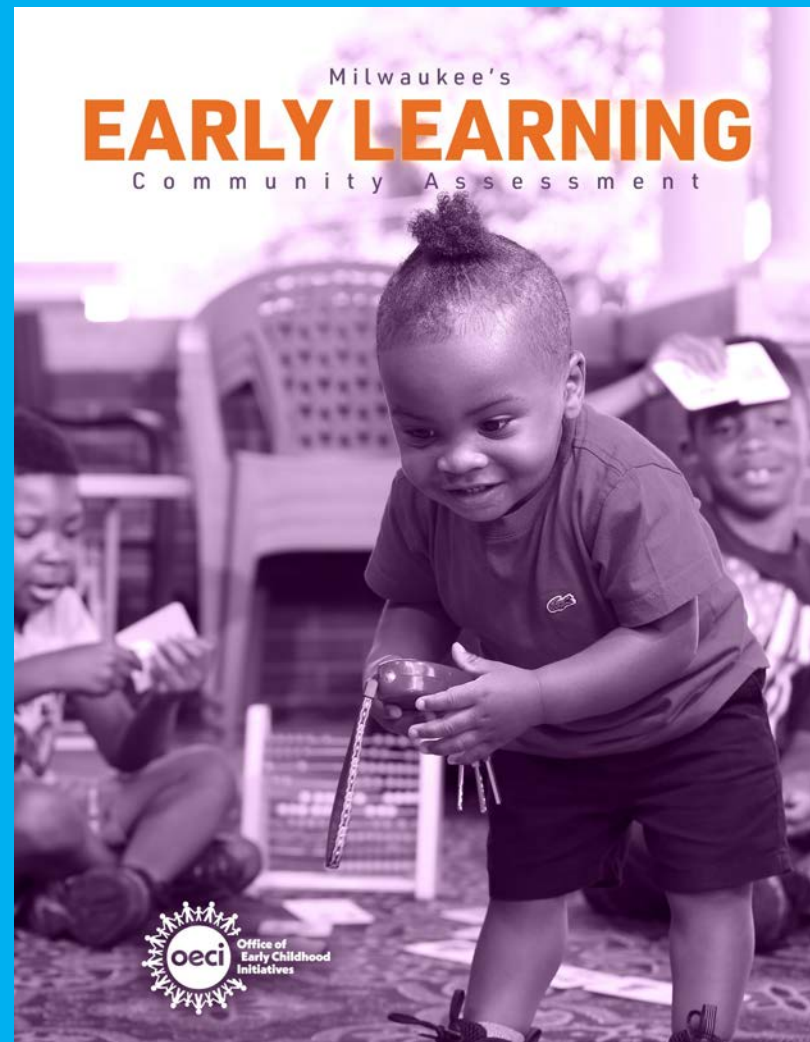
<https://www.nlc.org/initiative/early-learning-nation/>

OECI invited individuals from cross-sectors to use the CSSP and NLC Early Learning Community Action Guide a Progress Rating Tool

<http://earlylearningnation.com/2019/11/introducing-the-progress-rating-tool/>



# Our Plan





## MATCHING GAME

Pop rhymes with top. Use your finger to draw a line between the words that rhyme below! Can you think of other words that rhyme?



MOON

CAT



HAT

CAKE



SNAKE

SPOON



## SUDSY SING ALONG

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. While washing, sing this song three times to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."



WASH, WASH, WASH YOUR HANDS  
WASH THEM EVERY DAY.  
SCRUB IN AND OUT AND ALL AROUND  
KEEP DIRTY GERMS AWAY!

**SMALL TO FAIL**



AT HOME ACTIVITIES!



## WHAT CAN YOU DO IN 15 MINUTES?

Prepare your child for the rest of their life.

A child's early years are so important. In the first three years of life, you can make a great impact on their brain development and help them get ready for kindergarten with fun activities like:

READING ALOUD



PLAYING GAMES



SINGING SONGS



Sometimes, it can feel tricky getting started. Here are a few fun ways to help your child grow and play together:

LOOKING FOR MORE WAYS TO PLAY?

Follow us on Instagram @smalltofail and Facebook @smalltofail for weekly tips and tricks. MKCARES | 224-448



## WONDER

DASHA KELLY HAMILTON  
© 2020

You've cradled a miracle in your arms  
Warm and glowing  
Hold a star against your chest

You've wished upon the dimples,  
freckles and wild tangle of curls  
A million times today  
Gazed into infinity  
Small eyes, wide with wonder

You've done nothing but wish and wonder  
How bright?  
How big?  
How will you harness a star?

You are everything in these moments  
Holding infinity and yourself

You are galaxy and, already,  
everything you'll need  
to fill our sky with starlight



## SCAVENGER HUNT

When you're at home, or in the car, or on the bus, look out the window. What do you see? Do you see a tree or a car? Do you see people? What do you see in the sky?

Touch and count the shapes. How many rectangles do you see? How many circles? Where do you see these shapes at home? What other shapes can you find? Are they big or small?



Can you find these six colors in your home?

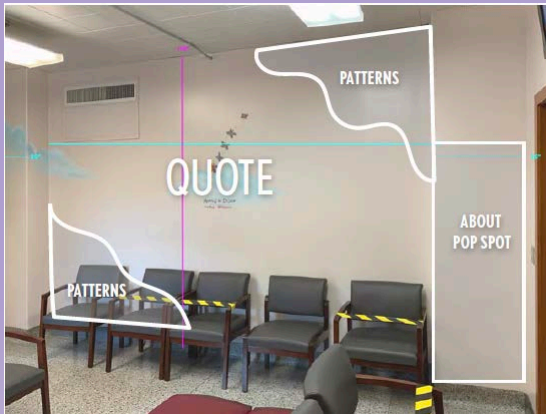




TODAY IS A GREAT DAY  
TO LEARN SOMETHING.



POP! is a series of colorful, interactive pop-up displays designed to engage patients and families in a fun and educational way. Each display is designed to be easy to use and can be placed in a variety of settings, from waiting rooms to patient rooms. POP! is a great way to make your hospital or clinic a more welcoming and engaging place for everyone.



PATTERNS

QUOTE

ABOUT  
POP SPOT

PATTERNS

FOLLOW THE PATH!

**WONDER**  
DASHA KELLY HAMILTON  
© 2020

You've cradled a miracle in your arms  
Warm and glowing  
Held a star against your chest

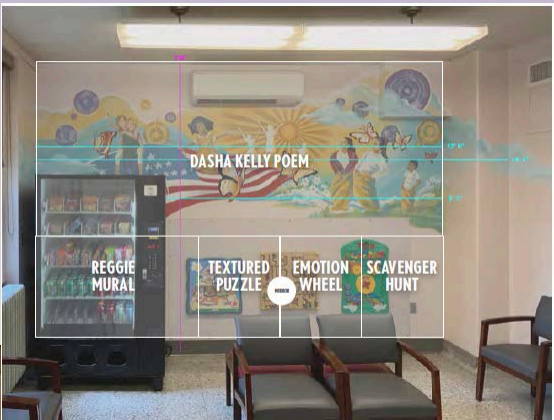
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DASHA KELLY POEM

REGGIE MURAL

TEXTURED PUZZLE

EMOTION WHEEL

SCAVENGER HUNT



**COLOR ME!**  
Color the dog and the leaves. Use the color key to help you.



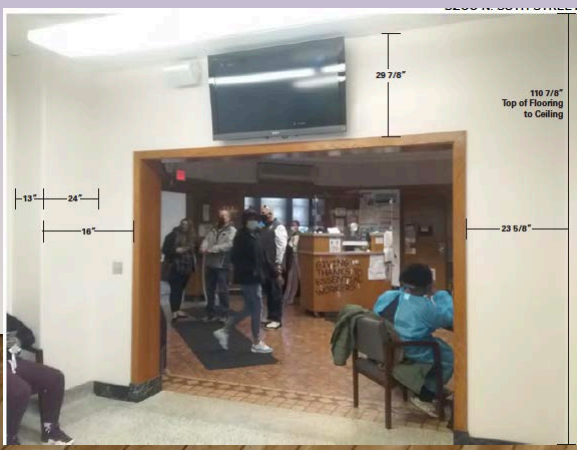
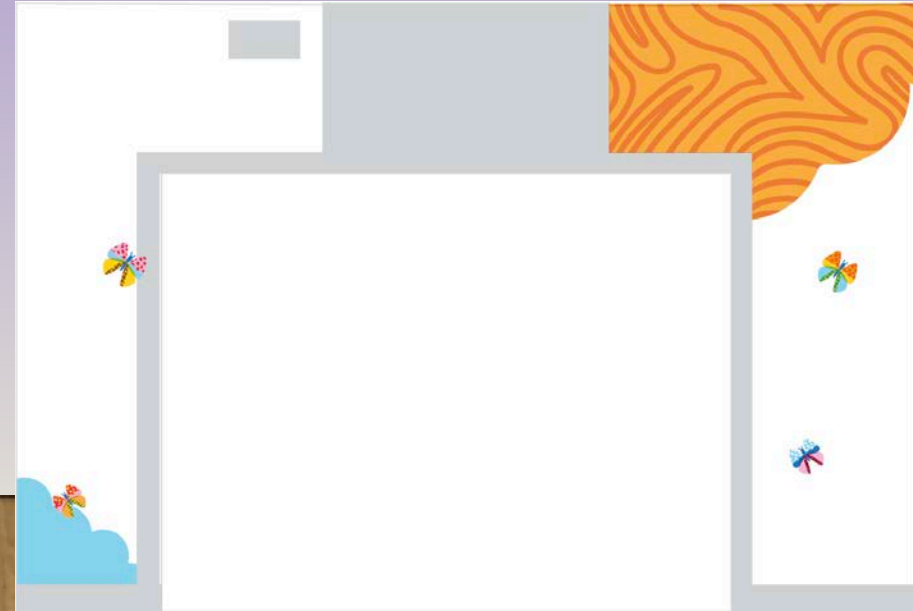
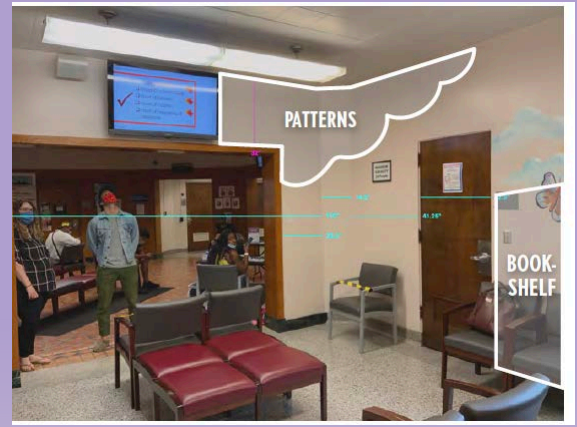
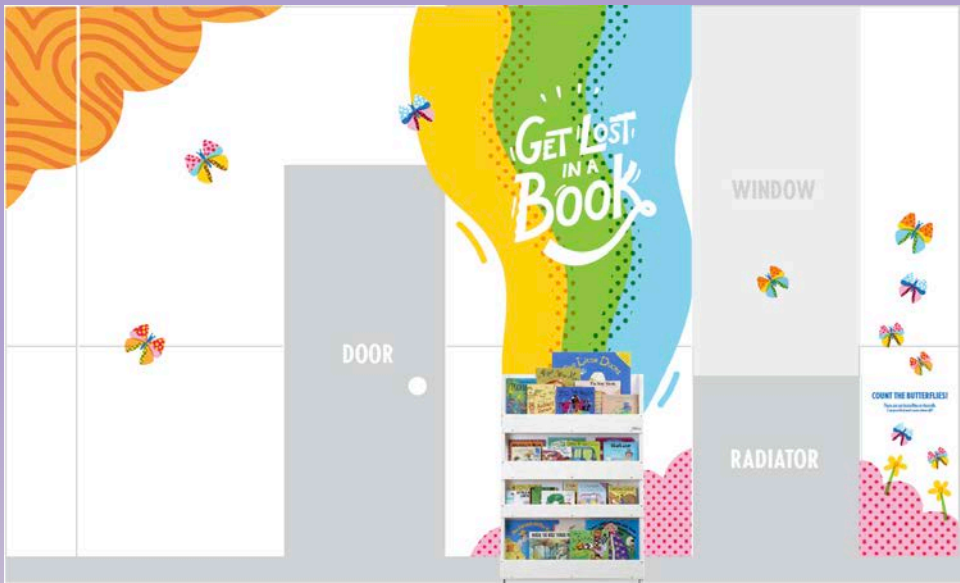
**TEXTURED PUZZLE**  
Put the puzzle pieces together to reveal the dog's face.

**HOW DO YOU FEEL?**  
Turn the wheel to see how you feel today.



**SCAVENGER HUNT**  
Find the items listed on the scavenger hunt card.

- 1 Can you find a rectangle?
- 2 Spot 3 letters! What are they?
- 3 How many buttons can you find?
- 4 What do you see out of the window?
- 5 Spot the color Me!



Before



After



Inside Milwaukee's Children's Court





# MKE Plays

The MKE Plays initiative, conceived by Alderman Michael Murphy, aims to transform 14 of the city's most deteriorated playgrounds into models for local collaboration and renovation.

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/CommonCouncil/Initiatives/mkeplays>







**DREAM, BUILD, PLAY** is an initiative of Milwaukee Recreation, a department of Milwaukee Public Schools. They plan to revitalize 52 Milwaukee play paces.

<https://milwaukeerecreation.net/rec/About/Master-Plan/Completed-Projects.htm>

# THANK YOU

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DEA WRIGHT

[DCWRIGH@MILWAUKEE.GOV](mailto:DCWRIGH@MILWAUKEE.GOV)

# Presenter



## Bosmat Sfadia-Wolf

Director

Community Planning and Development Unit

City of Tel Aviv-Yafo, Israel

# Lessons from the Tel Aviv-Yafo perspective on a playful city

Bosmat Sfadia Wolf  
Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality, Israel

**URBAN**95

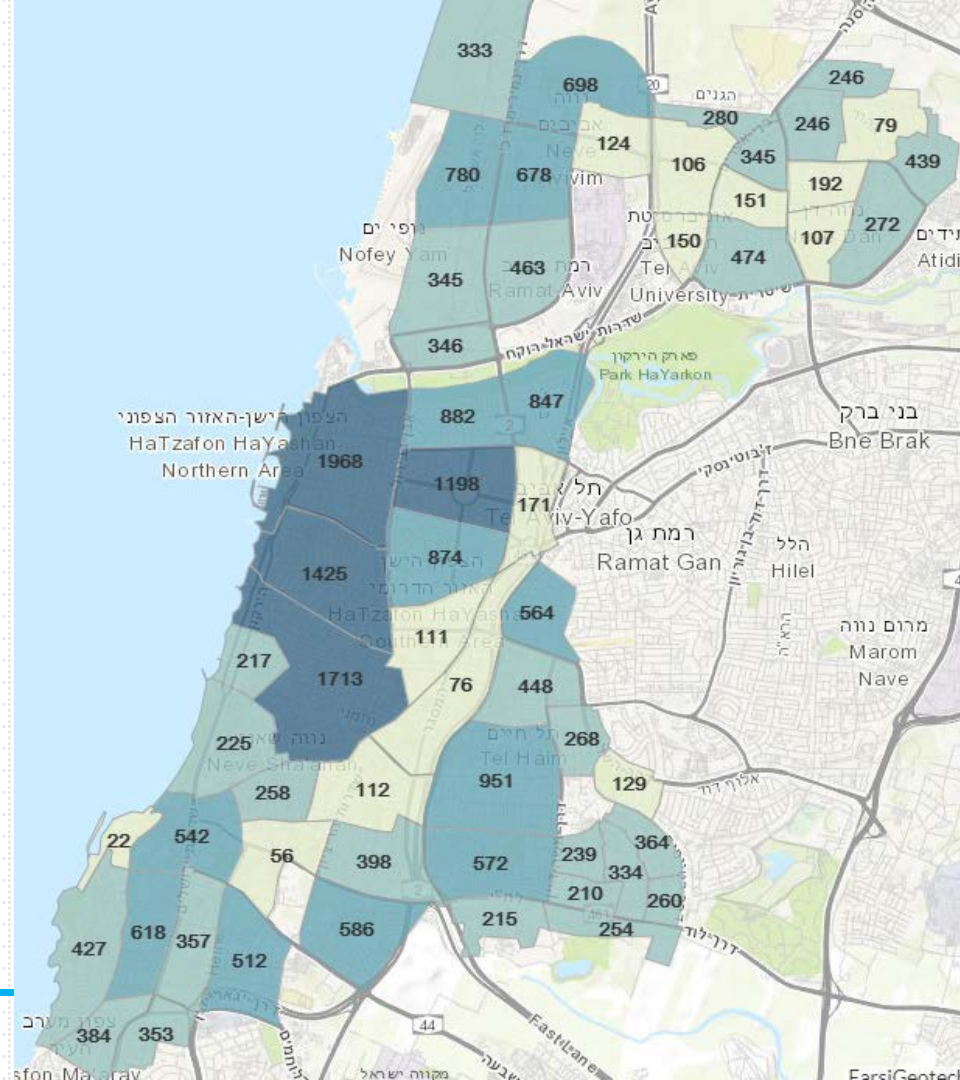




# How can we increase the Playful opportunities for young children and their caregivers on the neighborhood level?

Neighborhood-level data

Number of children birth to 3





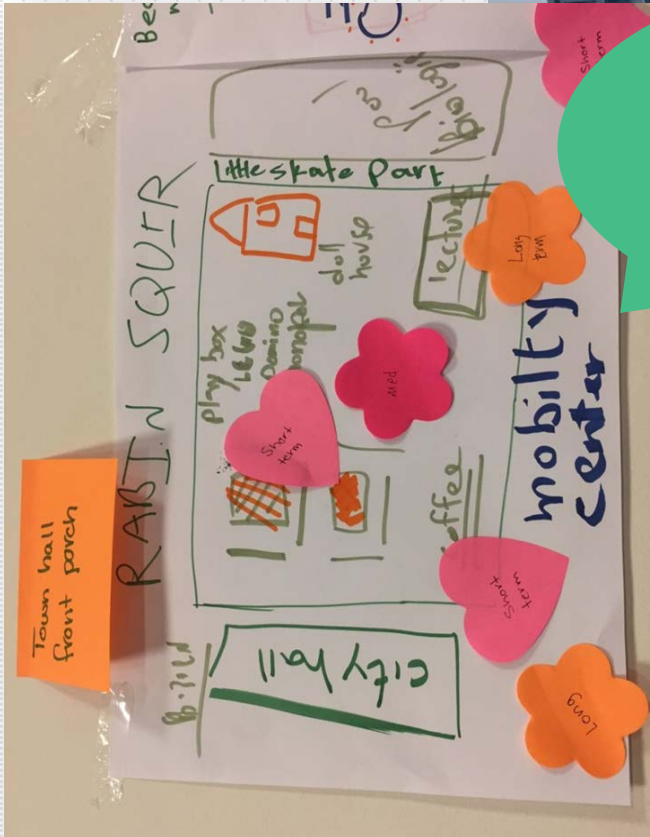


## Meet Yoav- *Parks & Gardens Director*



# 1 - Pop up "Play in the city"





“We created a huge playground which included Urban95 elements, with an emphasis on parent-child play”





100  
imagination  
playground  
blocks



1  
toys shed



20  
sand  
boxes

## 2 - Using data before design



87%



## A program of an early childhood playground

- 1. Physical conditions adjusted to the needs of young children and their caregivers**
  - a. Shading, seats, picnic tables.
  - b. Adjustment to a height of 95 cm: water fountains, lavatory, trash bins, tables.
  - c. Distant from road, noise and air pollution.
  - d. Perimetric fence
  - e. Equipment storage (sand playing tools and the likes)
  - f. Minimal numbers of entries to and exits from playground.
- 2. Recommended play facilities**
  - a. Sand and water play facilities adjusted to early childhood.
  - b. Wooden play facilities .
  - c. Swings, carousels.
  - d. Balance play facilities – on beams, ropes or poles
  - e. Climbing play facilities and slide
  - f. House or outdoor kitchen element.
  - g. Drawing stand, board and chalk
- 3. Environment, Materials & Scenery**
  - a. To crawl, jump, climb or ride
  - b. Integration of scenic elements in planning and design (sand hills, grass, rubber)
  - c. A variety of materials for sensory stimulation: sand, wood, grass, asphalt, gravel, natural vegetation
- 4. Graphics & Signposts**
  - a. Signposts that include messages and tips for caregivers about the play facilities (for instance, the importance of playing with sand, etc.)
  - b. Marking parking spaces for bicycles, etc.
  - c. Marking of the “route to playground” using graphics combined with play for young children
- 5. The Route to the Playground**
  - a. Walking distance of up to 500 meters (playground, kindergarten, community center)
  - b. Addition of benches and rest areas along the route
  - c. Bicycle paths
  - d. Breadth of pavement adjusted to a pram or a group of children
  - e. Removal of physical barriers from pavement
  - f. Treating tree roots that create pits that undermine infants’ balance

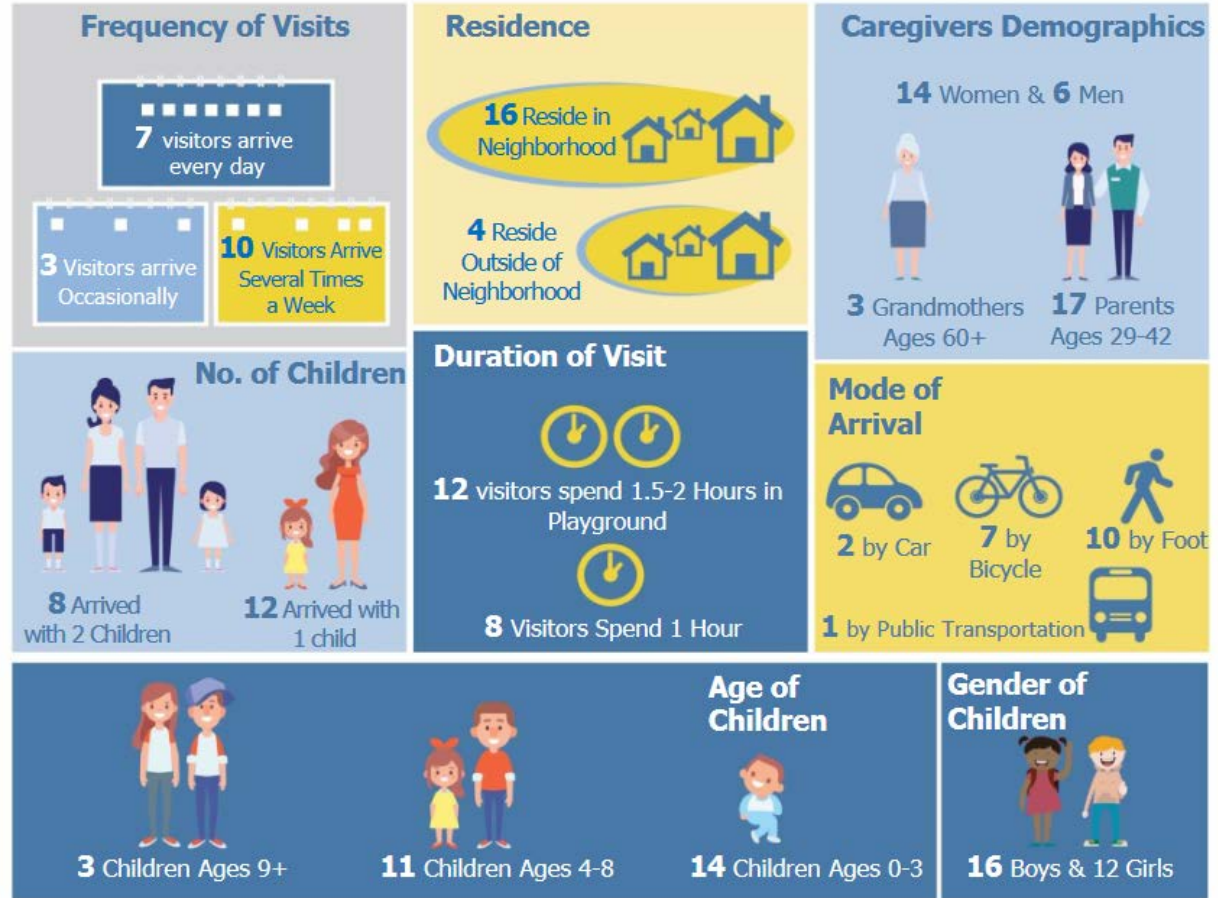


750  
participants  
on online  
survey





# Interviewees' Characteristics according to Demographic Segmentation





- Free Movement –**  
 Contributes to physical & motoric development as well as emotional & cognitive development – reduces stress level.  
Possible mainly in large playgrounds & informal areas.
- Physical Challenge –**  
 Contributes to emotional development (taking risks and dealing with fear) and enhancement of physical / motoric development of balance and effort.  
The most common type of game due to fixtures in playground. Promotes parent-child relationship and joint play.
- Sensory Exploration & Creation of Change –**  
 Contributes to emotional, social & cognitive development of problem solving, language development and fine motor skills.
- Imagination & Social Play –**  
 Contributes to emotional & social development, self regulation, language development and cognitive contribution.

### Legend

- Type of Play**
- Behavior, Activity On-Site** - Activities that demonstrate how each play type might be expressed
- Design that Promotes Play Type** – Fixtures & Elements in Playground that encourage each play type

Moshe Cohen Playground



Moshe Cohen Playground



Moshe Cohen Playground



**Playgrounds after Renewal**  
(post intervention)

Elifelet Playground



Elifelet Playground



Elifelet Playground



### 3 - Opportunities during the COVID-19 crisis

"I live really close and come to shop in the area, **but do not stop with the girls** because we have **nothing to do there**, nothing attracts me"





**Expanding Sitting Area for Businesses**



**Lack of Shading**



**Parent-Child Joint Play & Connection**



**Family Activities on Saturdays**

**Safe Riding for young children**



**Physical Challenge & Free Movement**



Play is the most dominant activity!





Thank You!

*Urban95 is not just a  
program but a way of life*

Mr. Menachem Leiba, Director General, Municipality  
of Tel Aviv - Yafo

# Commentator



Siobhan Reardon

Principal  
Riverfront Associates, LLC

# Questions & Discussion



PLAYFUL  
**Learning**  
LANDSCAPES  
ACTION NETWORK

Transforming community spaces into  
joyful learning opportunities

[www.playfulllearninglandscapes.fun](http://www.playfulllearninglandscapes.fun)

## Free Play

TRANSFORMED TO

## Playful Learning

Climbing the pole to the playground netting? That's free play.



Add hatch marks with numbers to those same poles and kids talk about how high they climbed – playful learning.

Kids on a playground near a bus stop? Free play.



Add puzzles targeting spatial skills or special hopscotch games that build impulse control and you create playful learning.

Stocking a library with more toys? That encourages free play.



Add tangram blocks that invite families to play with geometric forms and a climbing wall with letters and you get playful learning.

# The 5 Principles of How Kids Learn...

Learning can be joyful, stimulating, and fun. Children are naturally curious and love to learn through play! In playful learning, children are in charge and learning is crafted into the environment through the 5 principles of how kids learn.



## "The Daisy"

**Meaningful:** Children learn best when learning has a purpose and connected to something they value. The activity should spark Content, like math, science, or literacy, or build Critical Thinking or Creativity.

**Joyful:** Joy heightens children's interest and motivation for learning. Playful Learning activities should offer something new every time kids play it.

**Socially Interactive:** Working together drives learning. Children learn more when they cooperate, discuss, and mingle with others than when they fly solo. When families do things together, children thrive.

**Actively Engaging:** Children must be "minds on" -acting, not passively observing. The activity should spark a learning goal.

**Iterative:** Children enjoy activities that afford new perspectives rather than repetitious sameness. Activities should be open to change.

## The 6 C's

**Building the skills for  
future success.**

To flourish in this future, kids will need to master a suite of skills that complement and evolve with each other. We call them the 6 C's:

**What Kids Learn... The 6Cs****Critical  
Thinking****Creative  
Innovation****Communication****Collaboration****Content****Confidence**

Do-it-Yourself!



Estimated Cost: \$ \$\$ \$\$\$

Difficulty to Build: Low Medium High

Complexity of Implementation: Low Medium High

Does it include the 6 Cs?



Communication



Collaboration



Content



Critical Thinking



Creative Innovation



Confidence

Does it include the principles of play?

- Fun
- Actively Engaging
- Meaningful
- Socially Interactive
- Iterative

photos: Sahar Coston-Hardy, Rachael Todaro

## Jumping Feet

Children can control their impulses and get to think flexibly when engaging in this new type of hopscotch that challenges them to use one foot to jump on two feet and two feet to jump on one.



**Ask your child:**

Can you put two feet where there is one foot and one foot where there are two feet?



**Fact:**

Jumping Feet can build impulse control!



**Learning Goal:**

Develop impulse control and flexible thinking while hopping alongside friends and caregivers.



Do-It-Yourself!

## Life-size Ruler

Kids can have fun seeing how far they can jump on this life-size ruler to develop measuring and number skills.



**Ask your child:**

Measure how far you can go with 2 jumps!



**Fact:**

Life-size ruler helps build math skills!

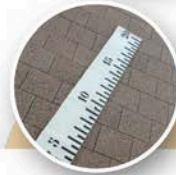


**Learning Goal:**

Practicing magnitude, number identification, counting, and measuring skills.



photos: Sahar Coston-Hardy



**Estimated Cost:** \$ \$ \$ \$\$\$

**Difficulty to Build:** Low Medium High

**Complexity of Implementation:** Low Medium High

**Does it include the 6 Cs?**



Communication



Collaboration



Content



Critical Thinking



Creative Innovation



Confidence

**Does it include the principles of play?**

- Fun
- Actively Engaging
- Meaningful
- Socially Interactive
- Iterative



**Tip:** Make use of the Mayor's bully pulpit to bring attention to the importance of the early childhood.

**Tip:** Use the city's role as community convener to bring partners together and identify opportunities to collaborate.



**Tip:** Engage your city planning department to identify public spaces that could be set up in better ways to support families with young children.

# STEPS MILWAUKEE HAS TAKEN

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- Identify champions to get the ball rolling – these folks are your decision makers, constituents, subject-matter experts, philanthropic and business community
- Find common ground on priorities for children in your area and start building a road map
- Dedicate space or an office to focus on priorities and assign or hire someone to manage along with establishing an infrastructure
- Create an advisory council (to input on strategic plan, overall operations)
- On-going communication about priorities & mechanism for community input

***5 key lessons  
for effective interventions***

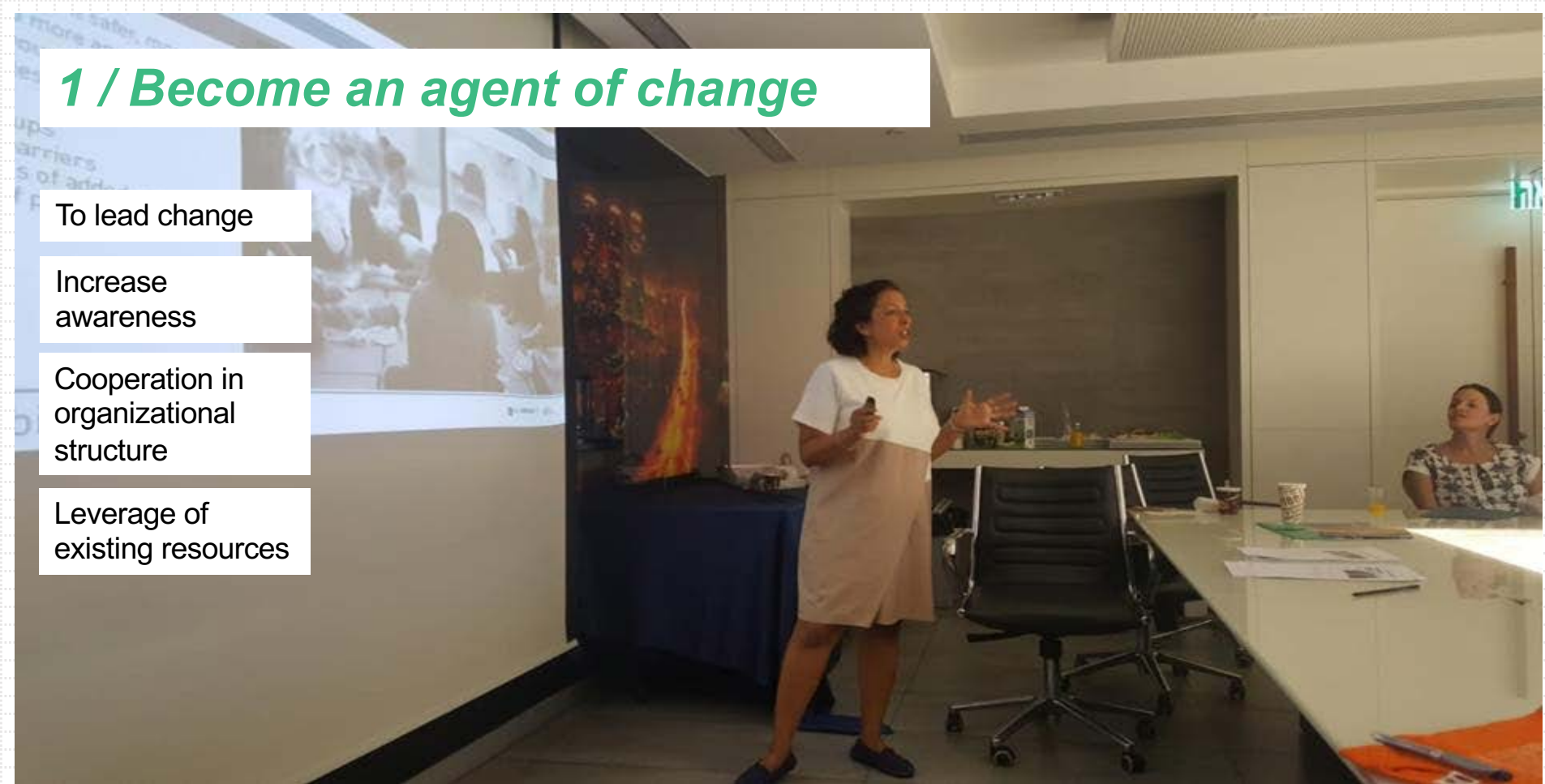
# 1 / *Become an agent of change*

To lead change

Increase awareness

Cooperation in organizational structure

Leverage of existing resources



# 2 / Create cross departmental collaboration

“Copenhagen team”



BVLFF Experts

Gehl Architects

BVLFF representatives

Strategic unit

Director of community administration

Director of parks and gardens

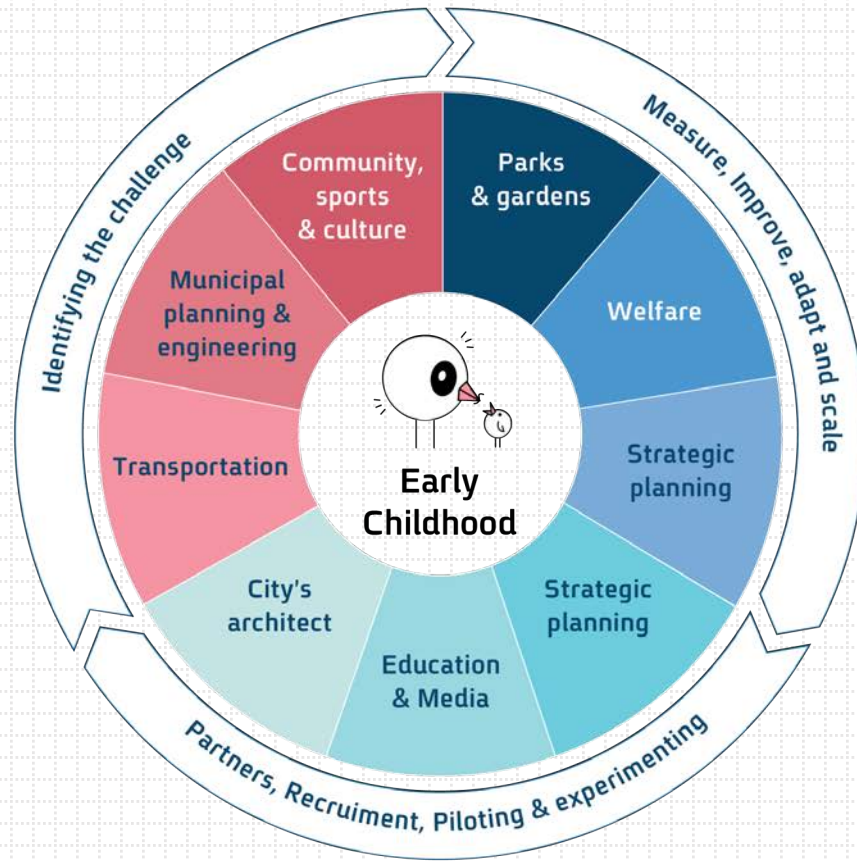
City's engineer

Director of social services administration

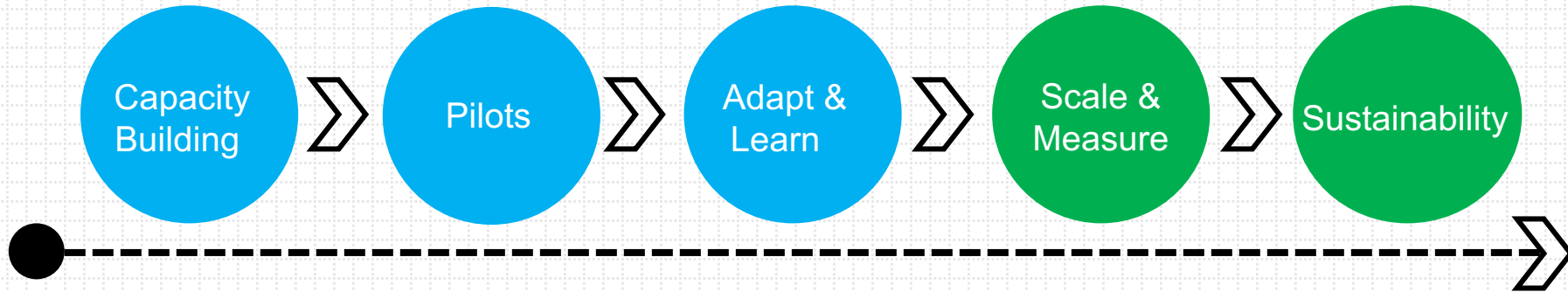
urban95PM

Director of kindergartens

Director of transportation department



### 3 / Low hanging fruits – Quick wins





## 4 / Caregivers engagement



New  
municipal  
policy

## 5 / *Generating Political will*



# Questions & Discussion

# Upcoming GLR Learning Tuesdays Webinars

The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading will resume its GLR Learning Tuesdays webinars on January 12.

*We wish you and your families a very happy holiday season.*

## JANUARY 2021

### LEARNING LOSS RECOVERY CHALLENGE WEBINAR

The Way Forward: Guided by Lessons Learned the Hard Way  
Conversation with Randi Weingarten, AFT, and Becky Pringle, NEA  
Tuesday, January 12, 3 p.m. ET/12 p.m. PT

