In August 2020, the Global Designing Cities Initiative released its “Designing Streets for Kids” guidance as a supplement of NACTO’s Global Street Design Guide. The guidance aims to create welcoming and safe streets for children and their families and caretakers. Here are 10 actions from the guidance that help to put children at the heart of street design:

1. Think from 95 cm: consider the views of a child - for example, a 3-year old and their need for food, shelter, joy and relationships with others when out and about.
2. Disincentivise private vehicles: determine our mobility by infrastructure provision such as public transport only lines, cycling lanes, broad sidewalks, streets closed to traffic and shared space designs.

3. Increase public transport reliability: plan for comfortable and convenient transportation services like analysing public transport stops locations, their service offers and design, and adding new stops connecting directly to key destinations for children and accompanying adults.

4. Build Wide and Accessible Sidewalks: sidewalks need to give enough space for pedestrians walking next to each other and for other functions as playing and conversation. They need good lighting at night, places to rest, walk, play and socialise as well as wayfinding systems.

5. Add Spaces for Play and Learning: Aside from pavements, children need space for play and learning, either by dedicating entire streets or smaller areas for them. Elements like surfaces, street furniture, the use of different materials, paving, colours, lighting and interactive elements can help to create spaces for play.

6. Provide Safe Cycling Facilities: provide fully protected cycling tracks on higher traffic volume streets, allowing side-by-side cycling. On smaller streets with low traffic volumes, cycling in traffic can be considered.

7. Improve Pedestrian Crossings: place crossings frequently, mark them clearly and hold them as short as possible. Designing pedestrian crossings need to bear in mind that children are slower, are less visible and cannot see as much as an adult when around traffic.

8. Lower Speeds by Design: lower speed means comfort and safety to children. Many elements like reducing the number and width of lanes, road traffic crossing designs, speed bumpers and chicanes as well as visual road surface design helps to keep motorised traffic at a slower speed.

9. Add Trees and Landscaping: trees and greenery are not only important for mitigating air pollution and heat, but they are also essential for children’s healthy development like their brain development, cognitive functions and motor skills.

10. Prioritise Children in Policies: key decision-makers need to be convinced to put children’s needs at the centre of their work. Children themselves need to be engaged in the actual design of their environments like streets, which required fitting planning and design methods allowing them to meaningfully take part.

The full guidance is accessible here.

The Horizon 2020 Metamorphosis project offers a set of guidelines and examples for designing neighbourhoods for children accessible here.

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