

C1-C2 Worksheet: What Is A City Without Children? - 22 April 2026

Article

A recent Financial Times feature asks a deceptively simple question: what happens to a city when families with children can no longer afford to remain in it? In many global capitals, the answer is already taking shape. Housing markets built around small, high-yield flats and ever-rising rents have made urban life increasingly inhospitable to households that need space, stability and access to schools. The result is not merely demographic drift. It is the gradual hollowing out of neighbourhood life, as playgrounds empty, primary schools contract and the ordinary social texture created by children begins to thin.

What is lost, the article suggests, is not only affordability but a whole civic ecosystem. Children slow cities down in useful ways: they generate routines, draw adults into public space and anchor communities to the future rather than the immediate demands of work and consumption. Once families are squeezed out, cities may become more efficient for short-term living yet less durable as places of attachment. Streets can still look prosperous, but prosperity on its own does not add up to social vitality. A district filled with professionals, tourists and investors may function smoothly while still feeling strangely provisional.

That tension points to a broader question about urban planning. If housebuilding strategies continue to prioritise compact units and investment value over long-term liveability, cities risk pricing out the very people who give them continuity. The issue is not sentimental nostalgia for childhood itself. It is whether a city can remain genuinely civic if fewer residents are raising children there. In that sense, the debate is really about time: whether urban policy is geared towards the next quarter, or the next generation.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article suggests that many major cities are becoming harder for families with children to stay in.
2. According to the writer, the issue is only about school quality rather than housing costs.
3. The article implies that children help shape the social life of neighbourhoods.
4. The second paragraph argues that prosperous streets always feel socially stable and rooted.
5. The writer suggests that cities may become more functional in some ways even as they lose continuity.
6. The article presents the debate as mainly sentimental and nostalgic.
7. The final paragraph links urban planning to questions about long-term civic life.
8. The article claims that investment value and liveability are always perfectly aligned.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. built around	A. to become smaller or reduce in size
2. take shape	B. to make up a total when combined
3. hollowing out	C. to give importance to one thing over another
4. add up to	D. to begin to develop into something recognisable
5. squeezed out	E. to be directed towards a purpose or outcome
6. filled with	F. to be organised or structured around something
7. points to	G. to indicate or suggest
8. geared towards	H. to be full of a particular kind of person or thing
9. contract	I. to be forced out gradually by pressure
10. prioritise	J. to weaken something from the inside

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. deceptively	A. places where people live near each other
2. inhospitable	B. social or public in character
3. drift	C. gradually and without clear direction
4. texture	D. stable and likely to continue
5. ecosystem	E. misleadingly or in a way that hides the truth
6. durable	F. pattern or quality of experience
7. provisional	G. unwelcoming or difficult to live in
8. civic	H. temporary rather than permanent
9. neighbourhoods	I. an interdependent system
10. continuity	J. connection across time; ongoing stability

Use the new language

Please choose 5 words or phrases and make your own sentence using the new word or phrase.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Do you think your city is a good place for families with children? Why or why not?
2. What makes a neighbourhood feel alive and welcoming to you?
3. Are there areas in your city that seem designed mainly for tourists or short-term residents?
4. Do children make public spaces feel different? In what way?
5. What kinds of homes do young families need most in big cities?
6. Do you think city life is becoming more difficult for ordinary families?
7. What would make you want to raise children in a city rather than outside it?
8. Which part of your city has changed the most in recent years?

Student B

1. At what point does a successful city stop being genuinely liveable for families?
2. Does urban prosperity still hold up if children and long-term residents are squeezed out?
3. Should city governments prioritise family housing even if it reduces short-term profit?
4. How far does the presence of children contribute to a city's civic identity?
5. What do you think big cities will be like in 20 years if current housing trends continue?
6. What about in 50 years: more diverse and liveable, or more temporary and unequal?
7. Can a city remain socially healthy if more people treat it as a place to consume rather than belong to?
8. Is the real issue housing policy, economic inequality or a deeper change in how cities are imagined?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=F, 7=T, 8=F

Phrase Match: 1=F, 2=D, 3=J, 4=B, 5=I, 6=H, 7=G, 8=E, 9=A, 10=C

Synonym Match: 1=E, 2=G, 3=C, 4=F, 5=I, 6=D, 7=H, 8=B, 9=A, 10=J

Example sentences with the phrases

1. The whole redevelopment plan was built around private investment rather than public need.
2. A clearer policy began to take shape after months of confusion.
3. Rising rents are hollowing out the character of the old market district.
4. Convenience alone does not add up to a good quality of life.
5. Independent shops were gradually squeezed out by larger chains.
6. In summer, the square is filled with families and street performers.
7. The sudden drop in enrolment points to a deeper demographic change.
8. Public transport should be geared towards residents, not only commuters.
9. Several local schools may contract if the area loses more families.
10. Governments often say they value community, but their budgets prioritise something else.