

OUR VISION FOR BRAUNSCHWEIG



2026 Local Election Manifesto

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Foreword

Thinking European, acting locally – shaping Braunschweig together

Braunschweig faces the task of actively shaping its future: socially equitable, environmentally sustainable and digitally sovereign. The challenges of our time – from climate change and demographic shift to digitalisation – do not stop at city boundaries. That is why we need local politics that is open to new ideas, learns from one another and consistently implements successful solutions at a local level.

Our city thrives on the people who live, work, study and get involved here. Sustainable policy is not created solely in political committees, but through dialogue with the city's community. For us, democracy means not only listening to citizens, but actively involving them in decision-making. Transparent processes, genuine co-determination and an open administration build trust and strengthen social cohesion.

It is worth looking beyond Braunschweig. Across Europe, cities and regions are demonstrating how modern local authorities can function: with citizen-centered administration, digital sovereignty, sustainable urban development and new forms of participation. Digital pioneers such as Estonia demonstrate how public administration can be designed to be simple and user-centered. Participatory models from other European cities highlight how people can be more closely involved in political decision-making. These experiences demonstrate: Good policy emerges where we learn from one another and adapt solutions to our own local needs.

For Braunschweig, this means boldly breaking new ground. We want a city that makes its decisions together with its citizens, seizes digital opportunities and, at the same time, retains control over key infrastructure. Open standards, open-source solutions and a modern digital administration help to reduce dependencies, create transparency and reliably develop public services.

At the same time, we are shaping Braunschweig into a city worth living in for all generations. This includes affordable housing, good education, safe and sustainable mobility, social inclusion, a vibrant cultural life and the protection of our natural resources. Climate action and social justice go hand in hand: A sustainable city must benefit everyone and enable all people to play an active role in shaping their living environment.

For us, 'Thinking European, acting locally' means: Combining international experience with the specific needs of our city. We bring good ideas to Braunschweig, develop them further together and implement them in a pragmatic way. This creates a city that is democratic, connected and sustainable – a city where people not only live, but can shape their future together.

Volt

1. Citizen participation – collaborative & transparent

Our democracy thrives on people getting involved and being able to contribute their perspectives. At the same time, many citizens increasingly wish not just to be kept informed, but to play an active part in decision-making. We therefore want to strengthen participation in our local community: making it more transparent, more binding and accessible to all. After all, good local politics arises from dialogue with the people who live in our city.

We are committed to a vibrant culture of participation in which citizens are involved at an early stage and where diverse experiences and needs are taken into account. Our aim is an open, inclusive and forward-looking local authority in which co-determination becomes an integral part of political decision-making. To this end, we are creating new forms of participation, strengthening democratic spaces and enabling all residents to contribute their ideas and help shape our community together.

Citizen participation in municipality

Democracy thrives on participation. Towns and municipality become stronger, fairer and more liveable when local people can contribute their ideas and concerns. That's why we consistently involve citizens in local decision-making processes. For a vibrant, open and forward-looking local politics that not only listens to citizens but actively involves them. Together, we shape our municipality the way we want to live in it.

- **Creating more public dialogue and transparency:** We will ensure that political decisions are clear and transparent. That is why we are introducing regular public meetings, neighbourhood conferences and digital public dialogues.
- **Introducing participatory councils:** We will promote permanently institutionalised, randomly selected participatory councils that have the authority to make policy recommendations and complement local decisions.
- **Involving under-represented groups:** We are introducing participation formats for women, such as citizens' councils and targeted participation processes in municipal projects.
- **Allowing citizens to have a say in projects:** We facilitate participatory budgeting and citizen referendums on key issues. Through a local participatory budget and online voting, we create new ways for residents to help shape projects for their city or neighbourhood. This leads to the creation of parks,

community spaces and cultural projects that take into account the needs of all sections of the population.

- **Lifelong participation:** We create cross-generational, inclusive and sustainable participatory opportunities rather than one-time projects.
- **Strengthening democracy centres:** We are creating open, central venues such as participation and democracy centres, where participation councils, initiatives, dialogue forums and community gatherings come together. These are complemented by hybrid or digital participation formats.
- **Expanding local democratic infrastructure:** Schools, community centres, libraries and democracy spaces are linked together to make participation accessible close to home and with low barriers to entry.

2. Education & Democracy – enlightened & democracy-building

Experiencing democracy – having a say right from the start

Democracy flourishes where participation is real, binding and effective. Schools and municipality are key spaces for learning about and experiencing co-determination. When children and young people are genuinely involved, they develop a sense of responsibility, self-efficacy and trust in democratic processes. Our approach combines co-determination in schools, local youth participation and targeted democracy-building into a unified system of participation.

- **Strengthening age-appropriate participation:** We strengthen rights to have a say through class and pupil representatives, children's conferences and involvement in all-day programmes, break-time areas and school meal plans.
- **Promoting children's and youth parliaments:** We strengthen children's and youth parliaments as elected local bodies. These are granted binding advisory seats on local council committees. Furthermore, we support the work of these bodies with staff and financial resources.
- **Forging close links between schools and local authorities:** We advocate for workshops, town hall tours and visits to committees for young people, in order to strengthen cooperation between schools and local authorities.
- **Supporting local funding budgets:** These budgets are intended to promote democracy and are firmly embedded in the local budget.
- **Supporting participation projects:** We support local democracy initiatives and partnerships with schools, clubs and civil society. Funding is allocated transparently and with the active involvement of young people.
- **Equal participation:** We are introducing measures to improve the participation of women in all local government bodies in Braunschweig, for example through

transparent appointment procedures and the active promotion of female candidates.

- **Programmes for the next generation:** Promoting and expanding programmes for the next generation, as well as mentoring for women in local politics, for example through local mentoring networks and partnerships with initiatives.

Networked education – Stronger together for everyone

A sustainable education policy requires a strong network rather than isolated solutions. Nurseries, schools, universities, businesses and public bodies will be linked via a central platform. This creates transparency, promotes cooperation and enables genuine participation. The aim is a practical, democracy-promoting education system that is open to all and takes regional characteristics into account.

- **Establishing central and regional education platforms:** We are setting up education platforms to connect nurseries, schools, universities, businesses, local authorities, organisations and citizens.
- **Organising networking events:** Public events on educational topics such as school facilities, the expansion of childcare centres, all-day schooling, digitalisation and inclusion are held regularly.
- **Promoting exchange:** Regular exchanges take place between teachers, educational professionals and education providers to further develop learning concepts. The city is improving communication to enable greater participation.
- **Promoting work-life balance:** We are improving the balance between family, work and political engagement, for example through childcare during meetings and adjusted expense allowances. We are establishing flexible meeting times and digital participation formats, for example through hybrid council meetings and digital participation options.
- **Utilising funding programmes:** We are utilising the 'Bildungskommune' ('Education Municipality ') and 'Bildungsregion' ('Education Region ') funding programmes to build a networked local education landscape.
- **Making access to educational opportunities transparent:** Projects, funding and examples of best practice are made available to all stakeholders.
- **Creating opportunities:** All citizens should be given the opportunity to get actively involved (e.g. in tutoring, mentoring, language or music programmes, or voluntary work).
- **Education & administrative competence:** We are committed to diversity training for the administration, schools, and youth and social work services to promote awareness and the ability to take effective action. Queer-friendly youth work will be expanded, and LGBTIQ* and FLINTA* groups will receive active support. The 'Queer-friendly Schools in Braunschweig' programme aims to implement training for teachers, anti-bullying measures and partnerships between schools, clubs and counselling centres.

Support that makes a difference – social work for every child

A good education requires reliable guidance, early intervention and support across all areas of the system. That is why we are strengthening school social work, drawing on the expertise of charitable organisations and providing ongoing support throughout children's educational journeys. Our aim is to ensure that no child is left behind, regardless of their background, place of residence or social circumstances.

- **Ensuring social-educational support:** Every school, regardless of type or size, must have at least one school social worker. We are promoting the creation of further full-time posts.
- **Introducing a staff-to-pupil ratio:** One school social worker should be responsible for a maximum of 150 pupils. In doing so, we are following a recommendation from the 'Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft' (GEW).
- **Expand social-educational support:** Social-educational support will be extended to nursery schools to provide early intervention and relieve the burden on families.
- **Targeted recruitment of qualified staff:** We will specifically recruit qualified staff with foreign language skills. This will improve communication with parents and facilitate integration.
- **Involving qualified volunteers:** This should take place in particular in our work with parents and in intercultural mediation.
- **Involving charitable organisations:** The systematic involvement of these organisations brings with it tried-and-tested, evidence-based educational, support and prevention programmes.
- **Establishing a central local contact point:** This contact point within the education management system links nurseries, schools and non-profit organisations.
- **Utilising external programmes:** These complement the educational provision without incurring additional costs for the local authority.
- **Introduce a GDPR-compliant digital learner file:** This tracks the entire educational journey from nursery onwards and ensures seamless transitions between educational institutions without any loss of information. From the age of 16, learners can use the file independently, for example for job applications and further education pathways.
- **Identifying support needs at an early stage:** To this end, collaboration between teachers, school social workers, school psychologists and other specialist services should be improved.

Creating spaces for the future – modern, digital and sustainable

A good education requires spaces that promote learning, social interaction and independence. In Lower Saxony, many school buildings are in urgent need of renovation, journeys to school are often unsafe, and the digital infrastructure is

patchy. At the same time, accessibility, mobility and social infrastructure determine whether education is truly accessible to all. We are therefore committed to learning spaces close to home, safe journeys, modern technology and open educational spaces in everyday life.

- **Establishing local learning centres:** These serve as decentralised places for learning and social interaction for the whole of society.
- **Renovating school buildings:** We are systematically renovating school buildings. At the same time, existing school buildings are being developed into open-plan school designs.
- **Creating flexible learning spaces:** Project and group rooms, learning labs and multifunctional areas are the key components here.
- **Using temporary pop-up schools:** A reserve of portable classrooms for rapid and unbureaucratic measures in the event of a shortage of space.
- **Establishing community gardens:** We are making municipal land available to set up intergenerational learning and social spaces in the form of gardens.
- **Making school and nursery surroundings traffic-calmed:** No-parking zones will be established in front of schools and nurseries.
- **Developing a local authority IT infrastructure:** We are establishing a centrally managed local authority IT infrastructure in schools. This will utilise local servers to ensure reliability, data protection and digital sovereignty.
- **Promoting IT skills among pupils:** We are setting up an IT support working group. Under the guidance of specialist staff, pupils will assist with IT operations, thereby developing their IT skills.
- **Preparing funding applications:** We are recruiting additional staff to assist with the preparation of funding applications. This will ensure that existing state, federal and EU funding schemes, such as the Digital Pact, are utilised to the full.

Creating flexible educational programmes and diverse learning environments

A good education is not achieved through more lessons, but through meaningful learning time. The all-day school enables children and young people to learn independently, gain social experience and develop their own interests. At the same time, education does not end at the classroom door. External learning environments link knowledge to reality and make learning a living, relevant and democratically accessible experience.

- **Creating spaces for self-directed learning:** All-day schooling creates spaces for self-directed learning at one's own pace. This approach does away with conventional lessons during all-day sessions at primary and secondary schools.
- **Promoting project-based, problem-oriented and cross-curricular learning formats:** Project work creates a learning environment free from the pressure

of marks and performance. In addition, individual learning support is available where needed, alongside time for games, social interaction and friendships.

- **Fostering collaboration with external partners:** We systematically integrate external learning venues into everyday education. We also promote collaboration with local businesses, clubs, initiatives, and cultural and civil society organisations.
- **Establishing 'Tiny Forests':** 'Tiny Forests' combine urban greening with environmental education and community participation. Children, schools and volunteers can get involved in planting and maintenance, gaining a practical understanding of ecological interrelationships in the process. As 'green classrooms' and open learning spaces, they facilitate education for sustainable development right within the neighbourhood. At the same time, residents can document the development of the mini-forest through citizen science, thereby actively contributing to an understanding of urban ecosystems.

3. Mobility & Transport – safe, climate-friendly & equitable

Our mobility is changing. On the one hand, cars are getting bigger and therefore more dangerous. On the other hand, we in Braunschweig are increasingly using environmentally friendly modes of transport. We want to redistribute road space: less for cars, more for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. This creates safe streets for everyone. Our goal is **Vision Zero**: no road deaths or serious injuries in Braunschweig.

We strongly support the **transport transition**, because without it, Braunschweig risks failing to meet its stated goal of becoming climate-neutral by 2030. The city council should therefore consistently implement the existing mobility development plan and, where necessary, refine it further. Our aim is the '**15-minute city**': all key locations in Braunschweig – such as homes, workplaces, shopping facilities and medical centres – should be accessible within 15 minutes on foot or by bike. To achieve this, the city administration should work more closely together across departmental boundaries.

Safe streets for stress-free walking

We are placing pedestrian traffic at the heart of our city centre and our residential neighbourhoods. To this end, we are improving paths and public spaces and reducing the dangers posed by transit traffic and parked cars, particularly for children and people with reduced mobility.

- **Developing a high-quality pedestrian network:** Pontevedra in Spain demonstrates how wide pavements, accessible crossings and a signposting system can make walking the new normal, offering a high quality of life.
- **Neighbourhoods free from transit traffic:** We want to divert non-local car traffic around residential streets rather than through the middle of them. In Barcelona, such 'superblocks' are creating space for pavements, trees and playgrounds. We support 'school streets', advocate for pilot projects such as 'summer streets' and call for traffic-calming measures in every district.
- **Establishing neighbourhood car parks:** We will concentrate parking spaces in residential areas in a space-saving manner, following the example of Zurich. To this end, neighbourhood car parks will also be built in existing neighbourhoods, operated by the City of Braunschweig.
- **Allocating parking spaces fairly:** Where on-street parking is necessary, the city council should reserve up to 50 per cent of spaces for local residents. Within the city centre, parking should generally be subject to a charge. The revenue generated should be used to fund the operation of neighbourhood car parks or public transport.
- **Creating attractive parking spaces on the city outskirts:** To encourage visitors from outside the city to travel into the city centre by public transport or on a hire bike, we are improving the existing park-and-ride facilities.

Public transport – the backbone of the transport transition

For us, reliable, accessible and affordable public transport is at the heart of climate-friendly mobility that is available to everyone. With a strong tram network, supplemented by buses, we are improving connections to all city districts and making public transport more reliable – intelligently linked with sharing services and regional rail.

- **Shifting traffic towards public transport:** Following Zurich's example, we will provide buses and trains with dedicated lanes wherever possible and give them priority at traffic lights. People travelling by bus or train should not be stuck in traffic jams.
- **Stabilising and expanding public transport:** We are firmly committed to all sub-projects of the 'Stadt.Bahn.Plus' tram expansion programme. The city administration should speed up planning, implement the projects and resume planning for those that have been put on hold.
- **Gender-sensitive route and timetable planning:** Public transport should facilitate not only commuting but also local travel chains (e.g. work – nursery – shopping – home). Tangential bus routes and frequent services outside peak hours make it possible to carry out care work without a car and without significant loss of time.
- **Better integration of private transport and public transport:** At every stop, Braunschweig residents should be able to switch to their own bicycle, a shared

bike, an e-scooter or a shared car. As in Berlin, a single app should integrate all providers of environmentally friendly transport within the network.

- **Strengthen connections with the surrounding area:** We will resume funding for the regional transport authority and lift the restrictions on the Regiobus service. We support the reactivation of the railway line to Harvesse and the reintroduction of additional railway stops in Braunschweig, along with increased service frequency (“Braunschweig S-Bahn”).
- **Concessionary tickets for school pupils, apprentices and senior citizens:** Until the state of Lower Saxony introduces a corresponding ticket scheme, we will ensure the funding of the Braunschweig school pupil ticket, including for apprentices, students, interns, volunteers and senior citizens.

Braunschweig as a European cycling city

Flat, plenty of green space along the River Oker and, in theory, plenty of space on wide roads: Braunschweig has great potential to become a true cycling city. In reality, however, the expansion of infrastructure is not keeping pace with the rise in the number of cyclists. The more cyclists there are sharing the limited space, the greater the risk of accidents becomes. We believe that cycling in Braunschweig should not be a matter of willingness to take risks.

- **Making cycling safe:** We are monitoring the implementation of the ‘Catalogue of Cycling Objectives and Measures’ adopted by the council, for example the red marking of cycle crossings and the widening of cycle paths.
- **Separating cycle traffic from motorised private transport:** Consistent separation is the most effective way of reducing the risk of collisions. We are refurbishing the existing dilapidated cycle paths and designating additional cycle routes – free from transit traffic, of course.
- **Cycling as a year-round alternative:** We are expanding winter maintenance on cycle paths, taking inspiration from places such as Oulu in Finland. There, footpaths and cycle paths are cleared first. Citizens use an app to rate whether their streets were passable and whether winter maintenance was carried out properly.
- **Just as fast as by car:** More cycle routes in all directions and cycle expressways to neighbouring municipalities make commuting by bike possible. We are pushing ahead with the planning and ensuring that they are designed to be as competitive as those in Göttingen.
- **Secure parking:** We are building weatherproof cycle parking spaces across the board, including lockable ones and – where appropriate – with luggage storage. Following the example of Utrecht, we are campaigning for an appropriate number of parking spaces in new development areas.

Making delivery traffic more sustainable

The principles of the '15-minute city' and 'Vision Zero', as well as our changing consumption patterns, are forcing the city of Braunschweig to rethink its delivery traffic. We urgently need to regulate the increasing volume of delivery traffic in residential areas.

- **Delivery zone management:** We aim to provide parking spaces for delivery vehicles in every street, in line with demand.
- **Expansion of parcel lockers:** Flexible deliveries make life easier for both delivery drivers and customers.
- **Designing cycling infrastructure for cargo bikes:** We aim to make it more attractive to deliver goods by bike rather than on the carriageway.
- **Establishment of micro-depots:** In these small distribution centres on the outskirts of the city centre, goods are transferred to smaller, more environmentally friendly vehicles wherever possible. This allows access for large lorries into the city centre to be limited to the absolute minimum.

Many of these measures were already recommended in 2021 by a consultancy firm working for the city council. We are campaigning to ensure that they are finally implemented.

Car transport of the future

An attractively designed transport transition will encourage many people to use their cars less or give them up altogether. For others, cars will continue to play a role. However, those who switch to an electric car with a view to the future often lack the necessary charging facilities in Braunschweig, particularly near rented flats.

- **Consolidating motorised private transport rather than transit traffic:** We are making Braunschweig car-free within the Wilhelminischer Ring. In the city centre of Ghent, transit traffic is already being physically prevented by infrastructure. Because motorised traffic is initially channelled onto a ring road, most destinations there can be reached more quickly using climate-friendly modes of transport.
- **Expanding '30 km/h' zones:** Extensive 30 km/h zones have helped Helsinki achieve zero road deaths. Münster and other cities demonstrate that '30 km/h' can also become the standard in city centres and residential areas here in Germany.
- **Expanding e-mobility:** We are promoting the further expansion of the charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. In addition to kerbside charging points, we are prioritising the electrification of municipal car parks and future neighbourhood garages, based on the demand of the coming decades.
- **Establishing local battery storage:** Electric cars can absorb peak loads and stabilise the electricity grid. We support Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) through financial

and planning incentives, as well as through the electrification of the municipal vehicle fleet.

- **Strengthening car-sharing schemes:** We are creating attractive conditions for car-sharing providers, for example by ensuring that car-sharing customers do not pay parking charges.

4. Environment & Sustainable Urban Planning – Liveable & Future-Proof

Our environment is changing. The effects of climate change are becoming increasingly evident in Braunschweig too: heatwaves are becoming more frequent, heavy rainfall more intense, and valuable green spaces are disappearing due to increasing soil sealing. At the same time, there is a growing awareness that liveable cities must be designed to be resilient, sustainable and in harmony with nature. We want to make Braunschweig climate-resilient and future-proof – with more green spaces, a secure water supply, a sustainable energy supply and urban planning that prioritises both people and nature in equal measure.

We are firmly committed to sustainable urban development, because environmental and climate protection form the basis for quality of life, health and prosperity. Our goal is the climate-resilient 'sponge city': a city that stores water rather than draining it away, effectively reduces heat, protects natural habitats and uses resources responsibly. In this way, we are creating a Braunschweig that remains liveable, resilient and future-proof for generations to come.

Reducing soil sealing

In Lower Saxony, 4.9 hectares of land are sealed every day as a result of road and building development. This land is then irrevocably unable to store CO₂ or absorb water.

- **Limiting soil sealing:** Areas must be preserved as CO₂ and water reservoirs.
- **Restoring natural water bodies:** River courses, floodplain landscapes and moors can retain large volumes of water during floods, thereby preventing damage in built-up areas. Furthermore, they provide a protected habitat for various animal and plant species.
- **Greening brownfield sites:** Particularly in city centres, areas should be greened to cool cities in summer. These areas also act as a kind of sponge during heavy rainfall.
- **Preserving parks and green spaces:** These serve as local recreational areas for the public.

- **Making the most of existing potential:** Existing buildings should be repurposed for residential or commercial use.

Ensuring the drinking water supply

The supply of drinking water faces major challenges. These include contamination from pesticides and fertilisers, falling groundwater levels and rising temperatures. It is essential that clean water continues to be available to all consumers.

- **Ensuring the water supply:** The water supply is a public service, as it generally constitutes a natural monopoly. The public should be able to influence the organisation of the water supply through political channels. Public utilities aim to cover their costs, not to maximise profits.
- **Preventing social hardship:** Everyone has a right to a water supply. We are committed to ensuring that reduced water charges per person are introduced up to a certain basic allowance.
- **Consistently applying the polluter pays principle:** Individuals and businesses should pay financial compensation for the pollution they cause.
- **Promoting smart irrigation systems:** We support investment in agriculture as well as water-saving measures for domestic customers and industry. This will reduce water demand and conserve water supplies.

Sponge City

The natural water cycle has been disrupted. As a result of climate change, rainfall and drought events are becoming more extreme. Towns and urban areas are particularly affected due to the high level of surface sealing. In future, large volumes of rainfall must be collected in order to store water for dry periods and mitigate flooding. We therefore wish to implement the 'sponge city' concept.

- **Review urban planning:** All construction projects will be assessed to determine the extent to which they are compatible with the 'sponge city' concept and promote the urban microclimate.
- **Use water-permeable road surfacing:** This ensures that rainwater can seep away. Depending on requirements and the location, options such as paving stones, grass pavers or gravel turf may be used.
- **Utilising utility trenches:** This allows rainwater to be stored for watering green spaces and urban trees.
- **Unsealing surfaces:** It should also be possible to store water in the ground close to the city centre. To this end, specific plans are to be drawn up for designated sealed areas. Potential sites for partial unsealing close to the city centre include Schlossplatz, Friedrich-Wilhelm-Platz and Kohlmarkt.
- **Greening building roofs and façades:** Greened surfaces have a cooling effect on the urban climate. At the same time, they store rainwater.

- **Treating rainwater as a resource:** Rainwater should be collected locally and used for appropriate measures.
- **Carrying out awareness-raising work and campaigns:** The concept of the 'sponge city' must be made better known to the public. Through information campaigns, we will educate the public about the measures.
- **Introducing the 'Braunschweig Unsealing Bonus':** Anyone who converts gravel gardens or sealed driveways into flower beds or permeable paving will receive a direct grant.
- **Reduce the stormwater charge:** Households that can demonstrate they collect rainwater in cisterns or allow it to infiltrate on their own property should pay a reduced stormwater charge.
- **Infiltration plans for roadside trees:** Any major road resurfacing project (e.g. on the Ring or in residential neighbourhoods) must include an infiltration plan to actively cool the urban climate.

Redensification

As new land is scarce and soil sealing must be avoided, smart approaches such as the infill development of existing neighbourhoods are necessary. Our aim is to create more housing without compromising quality of life. This requires ecological, equitable and sustainable urban planning. In doing so, we take residents' concerns seriously and prioritise transparency, participation and collaborative planning. In this way, we create a city that grows together and leaves no one behind.

- **Prioritise infill development:** Above all, this should take precedence over new-build projects, as it avoids the sealing of new, undeveloped land.
- **Prioritising the refurbishment of existing buildings:** Rather than demolition and new-build, refurbishment of existing buildings should be the preferred option in order to conserve resources such as concrete, steel and glass.
- **Adding storeys to existing residential buildings:** To create housing without having to seal off new areas, adding storeys to existing residential buildings should be the preferred option. Furthermore, existing infrastructure, such as utility networks, is utilised.
- **Developing town centres:** We focus on further developing what already exists, rather than building on greenfield sites. This keeps distances short and strengthens social interaction amongst local people. This is an effective measure against the decline of town centres.

Heatwave planning

Climate change is also leading to increasingly frequent and intense heatwaves in Braunschweig, posing a growing threat to the health of the population. Older people, those with health conditions and the socially disadvantaged are particularly affected. Heat-related deaths are on the rise, and municipal infrastructure – such as emergency services and care and healthcare facilities – is under additional strain. To address

these challenges effectively, a heat protection plan is essential as part of the municipality's public services.

- **Viewing climate adaptation as a collective responsibility:** Heat protection considerations should be incorporated into development plans right from the outset, during the planning and redesign of built-up areas.
- **Optimising heat maps:** Further expanding and promoting the 'Co-Adapted Braunschweig' project. Digital measurement data is made available on live maps, on which heat pockets are identified. Here, affected individuals can obtain information at an early stage in the event of approaching heatwaves and take appropriate action.
- **Greening buildings:** Through the evaporation of water by plants, greened buildings are cooled in summer and street noise is reduced for residents. Furthermore, their filtering properties help to bind pollutants.
- **Establishing cooling centres:** Installing mobile water gardens and misting columns in paved public spaces during the summer months, whilst structural works are still ongoing. These public, air-conditioned spaces are intended primarily to give older people, those in poor health, children and homeless people the opportunity to escape the summer heat, thereby relieving pressure on the healthcare system.
- **Promoting pocket parks:** These transform small, previously unused or overlooked areas in the city into publicly accessible mini green parks. They cool down overheated city centres, improve the urban climate and create new spaces for socialising and relaxation. Successful examples from Paris, London, Barcelona and Copenhagen demonstrate how such projects can rapidly improve quality of life.

Energy – clean & local

The energy transition is also taking place in Braunschweig. It must be designed to be decentralised, renewable and socially equitable. Through local production, use and storage, local residents can benefit from renewable energy. This allows regional value creation to be linked with social participation. We are striving for a fully renewable energy supply that protects the climate and people and makes our local community resilient.

- **Designating areas for wind and solar power:** This enables the expansion of further renewable energy sources. The general public benefits significantly from this.
- **Utilising renewable heat:** To this end, a municipal heating plan is being drawn up that takes into account both existing and necessary new infrastructure (e.g. biogas, waste heat, geothermal energy, heat pumps, combined heat and power plants, etc.).

- **Promoting energy-efficient refurbishments:** Businesses and private households will be supported with refurbishment projects. In this way, we will improve energy efficiency.
- **Modernising energy networks and infrastructure:** Local networks will be digitised and adapted to the new requirements of the energy transition.
- **Carrying out advisory services and information campaigns:** These help citizens to transition their energy systems.
- **Utilising space for photovoltaics:** Already sealed surfaces should be used for PV systems. Suitable locations include roofs – for example, on public buildings – and car park canopies.
- **Braunschweig Solar Power Plant:** Installing photovoltaic systems on all suitable municipal roofs (schools, nurseries, administrative buildings) and car parks as quickly as possible. We view our public roofs and car parks as a community project. The process envisages that, alongside municipal investment, we will also give priority to community energy cooperatives. In this way, the modernisation of schools and nurseries becomes a participatory process in which the people of Braunschweig can invest directly in the local energy transition and benefit from it.
- **Climate veto in the council:** Every proposal submitted to the city council must include a calculation of its CO₂ impact. Projects that jeopardise the 1.5-degree target must automatically undergo a technical veto procedure.
- **Climate Renovation Fund:** Establishment of a municipal fund to support tenants if modernisation charges following energy-efficiency renovations cause the rent (including heating costs) to rise by more than 10 per cent.
- **Advice and support:** Setting up a municipal advisory team to proactively assist homeowners and landlords with heating system replacements.
- **Mandatory district heating connections:** Binding commitments to connect to the district heating network by 2027 at the latest for all designated areas, to provide planning certainty for property owners.

Waste management & circular economy

We favour a circular economy over a throwaway society. We want to rethink waste management: making it progressive, transparent and sustainable. Preserving our natural resources requires a radical change of direction in waste policy. We are committed to an intelligent circular economy that conserves resources, promotes social justice and prevents waste.

- **Conserving resources:** Through consistent waste prevention and recycling, we are reducing resource consumption.
- **Developing a waste prevention strategy:** We are drawing up a comprehensive local authority waste prevention strategy to make our city a pioneer in environmental protection, and will integrate this into the City of Braunschweig's forthcoming waste management plan.

- **Prioritising reusable items:** At public events, the use of reusable rather than single-use packaging should be made compulsory. We are also supporting local catering businesses in switching to standardised reusable systems.
- **Promoting the circular economy:** Volt supports local repair initiatives and swap meets for everyday items to extend the lifespan of products. Reuse should become the norm.
- **Facilitating deposit collection:** By installing bottle racks on public litter bins, we are making it easier to collect deposit bottles in public spaces. This protects the dignity of those collecting them and prevents valuable raw materials from ending up in general waste.
- **Launching a bio-waste initiative:** Bio-waste is far too valuable to end up in the bin. We are investing in modern digestion plants to convert organic waste into high-quality compost and green energy.
- **Phasing out waste incineration:** For us, recycling takes precedence over incineration. Our long-term aim is to phase out waste incineration and prioritise material separation.
- **Supporting information campaigns:** In schools and nurseries, we support information campaigns to promote awareness of the value of resources from an early age.
- **Strengthening procurement:** The City of Braunschweig is leading by example by increasingly prioritising recycled, repairable and durable products when procuring goods and services.
- **Promoting public participation:** Through increased dialogue with residents on the topic of the circular economy, we are promoting public participation to actively involve them in shaping the 'zero-waste' strategy.

Age-friendly and accessible urban planning

In an ageing society, the way our cities are designed determines whether participation, independence and dignity remain possible into old age or are subject to limitations. Accessible routes, easily accessible services and safe public spaces not only benefit older people and those with disabilities, but also strengthen social cohesion as a whole.

- **Incorporating accessibility into all construction projects:** Decisions should, as a matter of principle, be assessed for their impact on accessibility, particularly in the case of public construction projects and in transport and infrastructure planning.
- **Making public spaces accessible:** We advocate for tactile, acoustic and visual guidance systems for people with visual impairments. In addition, signage should be clearly legible.
- **Making mobility barrier-free:** Mobility must be ensured through safe, well-developed routes, accessible stops and a public transport system that can be used independently and without barriers by everyone.

- **Expanding age-appropriate housing:** We ensure that local development plans give greater consideration to age-appropriate housing.
- **Promoting age-appropriate housing and vibrant neighbourhoods:** Supporting accessible, affordable housing and multi-generational homes enables more people to lead self-determined lives in their own homes. Neighbourhood management schemes bring together local social, care and medical services and create spaces for people to meet.
- **Ensuring age-appropriate healthcare and essential services:** Care and health advisors are deployed locally in collaboration with public health authorities. This strengthens care provision for older people.

Diverse living spaces instead of green wastelands in gardens

The majority of undeveloped land within built-up areas is covered by private gardens. In recent years, however, there has been a growing trend to remove mature trees and diverse flower beds and replace them with concrete and lawns. We demonstrate that there is another way, and that people and nature can coexist harmoniously.

- **Embracing nature in your own garden or allotment:** Free training sessions for residents show how, with simple means and relatively little effort, you can create a garden that provides a home not only for people but also for nature.
- **Allowing trees to grow old:** It takes a tree years or even decades to reach maturity. Through a tree protection by-law, we protect old and large trees and preserve the tree population within built-up areas.
- **Creating a safe home for small animals:** For small animals such as hedgehogs, robotic lawnmowers pose a danger, particularly at night. To protect these animals, we will introduce a ban on the use of robotic lawnmowers at night.
- **Greening concrete wastelands:** In addition to sealed surfaces, in some places even green front gardens have given way to dreary greyness. We are consistently enforcing the Lower Saxony Building Regulations and ensuring that gravel gardens are removed.
- **Experiencing the night naturally:** Bright, intense lighting at night dazzles animals and disturbs insects. To limit the loss of habitat for nocturnal animals, we will switch off lighting that does not serve a safety purpose from 10.30 pm. This includes the lighting of buildings, monuments and decorations such as fairy lights in gardens.

5. Housing, Social Affairs & Culture – Diverse & Equitable

Our city thrives on the people who live here. However, rising rents, social inequality, demographic change and the shortage of skilled workers in the health and care sectors present Braunschweig with major challenges. At the same time, a city worth living in needs affordable housing, strong neighbourhoods, cultural diversity and places where everyone feels welcome, regardless of age, background, income or disability. We want to make Braunschweig a fairer, more diverse and more liveable place – with social policies that enable participation rather than perpetuating exclusion.

We are firmly committed to social justice and social cohesion, because only a city in which everyone has equal opportunities in terms of housing, education, health, culture and leisure is fit for the future. Our goal is a city for everyone: affordable, inclusive and vibrant. To achieve this, we are creating housing rather than forcing people out, strengthening voluntary work and culture, promoting health and participation, and ensuring that no one in Braunschweig is left behind.

Inclusion, integration and social participation – quality of life for all

We want a city where everyone can feel at home. That is why we are breaking down barriers and supporting and guiding residents who need our help. This enables everyone to take part in social life and everyday activities.

- **Strengthening local integration:** Local integration officers, intercultural meeting places and advice centres provide rapid support and genuine dialogue. In addition, language and educational provision is being expanded.
- **Evaluation:** An annual 'Braunschweig Queer and FLINTA Report' transparently documents progress, needs and the success of implementation, with a view to continuously improving the measures.
- **Ensuring social participation for all:** Free cultural, sporting and leisure activities for children and low-income families. Projects combating social isolation and poverty are specifically supported.
- **Promoting diversity in the administration:** Diversity strategies significantly increase the proportion of people with a migrant background or living with a disability in administrative bodies and local councils. By signing the Diversity Charter, Braunschweig gains support and commits to its principles.
- **Strengthening visibility and participation:** Municipal buildings are to be decorated with flags on relevant queer-political days of action to show solidarity.

- **Enabling co-determination and participation:** Migration and inclusion advisory boards, as well as participatory formats for disadvantaged groups, create space for a voice. Their perspectives are systematically incorporated into local planning and decision-making processes.
- **Consistently implementing disability rights:** We demand that, in all the city's activities and in all situations of urban life, citizens with disabilities are supported rather than hindered. To this end, we are developing a binding action plan to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- **Dismantling defensive architecture:** We are dismantling infrastructure designed to drive away homeless people. In this way, we are improving the quality of life for all citizens. We tackle homelessness with genuine support rather than eviction.
- **Decriminalising fare evasion:** Travelling without a valid ticket is a criminal offence under Section 265a of the German Criminal Code (StGB). For criminal proceedings to take place, transport operators must file a criminal complaint. We are instructing the BSVG not to file any such complaints.

An age-friendly city – A city where people feel at home

An age-friendly community is a community where all generations can thrive. The proportion of older people is rising, and with it the need for age-appropriate housing, medical care, nursing care and mobility. To enable people to age with dignity in our community, we also promote social integration and the social and digital participation of older people.

- **Strengthening outpatient and inpatient care services:** Advisory services for those in need of care promote self-determination in old age. Care places close to home, mobile care services, day care centres and respite programmes for family carers are being expanded, thereby reducing unpaid care work.
- **Promoting digital participation:** Free digital consultation sessions, training courses and meeting places for older people enhance digital skills and enable active participation in an increasingly digital society.
- **Supporting leisure, culture and volunteering:** Local programmes that promote sport for older people, cultural activities, intergenerational projects and voluntary work receive special support.
- **Ensuring a say:** Local representatives for older people, advisory councils for older people and regular public dialogues on age-related issues ensure that older people have a say in decisions that affect their lives.
- **Three months' free public transport for older people who hand in their driving licence:** this provides an incentive to make the switch to alternative modes of transport at an early stage.

A child- and youth-friendly city – Living better together

Children and young people are not only the future of our city, but also an important part of society today. Through targeted measures and creative participation schemes, we are creating liveable spaces for young people and families.

- **Ensuring education and childcare for all:** We provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their background or financial circumstances. That is why we provide all-day childcare, modern schools and free nursery places. Early childhood education, digital facilities and free, healthy meals in nurseries and schools improve prospects for everyone.
- **Shaping a safe and child-friendly Braunschweig:** Traffic-calmed zones, safe footpaths and cycle paths, as well as modernised playgrounds and youth centres, create open spaces and opportunities for physical activity. Free swimming and sports programmes, as well as inclusive leisure areas, ensure children grow up well.
- **Expanding leisure, cultural and sporting activities:** Open youth centres, creative workshops, theatre and holiday projects boost self-confidence, a sense of community and participation. Youth cultural events, graffiti walls and self-managed spaces encourage creativity and youth engagement.
- **Giving children and young people a say:** Youth parliaments, participatory budgets and the right to have a say in the city council strengthen an understanding of democracy and a sense of responsibility. Participation projects in the design of playgrounds, school playgrounds and leisure areas give young people a voice.
- **Preventing child poverty:** Even before birth, expectant parents receive information on support and training programmes. Upon the birth of every child, a home visit by a social worker and a baby welcome pack are offered to lower the barrier to making contact.
- **Encouraging the next generation of volunteers:** Youth budgets, mentoring schemes and targeted support for youth organisations and cultural initiatives help to strengthen young people's engagement.

Creating affordable housing

Housing is a human right, not a commodity for speculation. That is why we need appropriate measures to make housing available and keep rents affordable. In doing so, we are committed to a vibrant city where everyone can find a good home.

- **Strengthening municipal housing construction:** We are creating homes that remain affordable in the long term and serve the common good. To this end, we are providing additional staff and financial support to our municipal housing association, Nibelungen-Wohnbau-GmbH Braunschweig, as well as to housing cooperatives and community-led projects.

- **Pursuing an active land policy:** Through leasehold rights, rights of first refusal and municipal land purchases, we are securing land for Nibelungen-Wohnbau and building co-operatives, whilst preventing land speculation. Land reserves are being used specifically for projects that serve the common good.
- **Promoting socially equitable housing:** In every housing development project, at least 40 per cent of the flats should be designated as social housing or affordable housing. This ensures that housing remains affordable for those on average incomes.
- **Making effective use of existing land:** We are committed to infill development, building extensions and the use of brownfield sites within town centres, such as old, disused industrial sites or vacant office and commercial premises. This creates new housing without consuming additional land. The planning approval processes for these conversions will be fast-tracked to reduce the administrative burden in a pragmatic way.
- **Good concepts rather than big money:** Municipal land should no longer go to the highest bidders, but to projects with the best social and environmental concepts. In this way, we will ensure a vibrant, affordable and sustainable Braunschweig.

Tackling homelessness effectively – housing instead of displacement

Everyone has the right to a safe home. Homelessness is not a personal failure, but a reflection of societal problems such as a housing shortage, poverty or illness. That is why we focus on effective support rather than displacement, and create the conditions to ensure that no one has to live on the streets permanently.

- **Implementing 'Housing First':** Our aim is to offer homeless people their own permanent home as quickly as possible, along with personalised support tailored to their needs. International examples such as Helsinki show that 'Housing First' can sustainably reduce homelessness and open up new prospects for those affected.
- **Strengthening prevention:** We are expanding advisory services for those facing rent arrears and the threat of losing their home. Early intervention and close cooperation between the city, social service providers and the housing sector are designed to prevent people from losing their homes.
- **Providing affordable housing:** Together with Nibelungen-Wohnbau, housing cooperatives and social service providers, we are creating more affordable housing for people with special support needs. Partnerships with private landlords are intended to secure additional flats for Housing First projects.
- **Enabling individual support:** Social work, psychosocial counselling, addiction and health services, as well as support with dealing with the authorities, accompany people on their journey back to a self-determined life. The support is tailored to individual needs and is provided on a voluntary basis.

- **Ending displacement:** We are dismantling ‘defensive architecture’ designed to displace homeless people. Instead of exclusion, we focus on dignified places to stay and sustainable solutions.
- **Expanding support services:** Emergency accommodation, day centres, medical care and low-threshold counselling services will be expanded in line with needs and better linked together. No one in Braunschweig should be left without access to essential support.

Ensuring local healthcare

Health is a public good. A well-thought-out care strategy ensures good and affordable healthcare for everyone – regardless of where they live, their age, background or income. Preventive programmes for physical and mental health have a direct impact on people’s quality of life, well-being and safety, as well as on the community.

- **Strengthening mental health:** We are strengthening crisis support for young people and older people, psychosocial counselling services and local suicide prevention initiatives.
- **Modernising public health services:** We are providing more staff and establishing digital public health authorities, as well as local services for prevention, mental health and addiction counselling.
- **Making Braunschweig Hospital fit for the future:** For us, a modern hospital is a central pillar of professional healthcare provision in our region. We therefore support the conversion and expansion of Braunschweig Hospital into a central hospital capable of offering all citizens medical services of the highest standard.
- **Strengthening healthcare staff:** Well-trained and motivated professionals are the backbone of good care. Regional training initiatives, higher staff-to-patient ratios, additional benefits under collective agreements and incentives such as staff accommodation and nursery places for medical staff increase the availability of skilled workers and the quality of care.
- **Promoting health and wellbeing:** Low-threshold counselling centres, school social work and prevention programmes ensure early support in the event of crises, bullying and stress. Public exercise schemes and nutrition projects promote physical and mental health.
- **Health and social care:** Queer-sensitive psychological counselling should be given greater support. Furthermore, the city should ensure safe accommodation for queer and FLINTA refugees to guarantee their protection and participation in all areas of life.

Promoting culture and volunteering

Cultural diversity, community life and voluntary work form the backbone of social cohesion. To maintain this, we need a modern, forward-looking strategy for culture and voluntary work.

- **Local cultural funding rather than grandiose buildings:** Diverse, local cultural projects make our city a great place to live. That is why we prefer to invest in transparent, fair and sustainably secured funding programmes for theatres, music schools, public libraries and festivals, rather than in additional concert halls for exclusive productions. Consequently, we have spoken out in favour of a music school in the Gewandhaus, which has been standing empty since the ‘ ’ and will continue to do so. At the same time, we oppose the plans for the ‘Haus der Musik’.
- **Creating spaces for creativity:** Vacant buildings are being used for cultural start-ups, clubs and social projects. Cultural and creative districts are emerging in collaboration with the business sector, the local authority and civil society.
- **Preserving and modernising cultural and community centres:** Community centres, sports facilities and youth centres are being refurbished and digitised – to be accessible and multifunctional.
- **Strengthening the funding structure:** An annual ‘Fund for Diversity and Queer Projects’ (€5,000–15,000) is intended to provide direct support to initiatives, associations and projects, with a view to continuously expanding services for queer people.
- **Recognising volunteering and civic engagement:** Through a celebration honouring the many citizens who volunteer, the City of Braunschweig recognises the valuable contribution they make to our urban community.

Policy on leisure and sport: physical activity, social interaction and quality of life for all

Sport is not just about physical activity, but also about social interaction, education and participation. Investment in our local sport and leisure facilities therefore has a direct impact on quality of life, health and social cohesion in our city. In doing so, we consistently take environmental considerations and accessibility into account, creating diverse, sustainable leisure opportunities for everyone.

- **Renovating and expanding sports and leisure facilities:** Municipal sports grounds, swimming pools, football pitches, skate parks and leisure areas are being maintained and modernised. It was therefore clear to us from the outset that the Gliesmaroder Bad must be preserved.
- **Promoting physical activity and health in everyday life:** We are modernising and maintaining exercise facilities such as fitness trails, outdoor fitness equipment and exercise circuits in public spaces, and establishing temporary play streets during the summer months as a new standard for spaces for physical activity right on people’s doorsteps.
- **Making sport accessible to all:** Accessible sports facilities for people with disabilities, inclusive projects for refugees and intergenerational leisure activities create spaces for people to come together and strengthen social cohesion.

- **Promoting partnerships with schools and nurseries:** Partnerships and joint sports and holiday programmes improve the use of local sports halls and facilities.
- **Harnessing digitalisation:** Digital sports programmes, online booking systems for sports venues, digital meeting places and live streams of local sporting events are being promoted.

6. Economy, Employment & Regional Value Creation – Innovative & Sustainable

Braunschweig is a major centre for science and business. With its universities, numerous research institutions, innovative companies and a diverse structure of small and medium-sized enterprises, our city has great potential. We want to harness this potential to combine economic development with social responsibility, climate protection and digital sovereignty. A strong local economy creates secure jobs, strengthens urban society and enables investment in the future.

This is not about pitting the economy against the environment or social interests. Successful cities demonstrate that sustainable development and economic strength go hand in hand. We want to make Braunschweig a place where innovation flourishes, decent work is secured and regional value creation benefits everyone.

Promoting a sustainable economy

A modern economic policy supports businesses in tackling the challenges of the coming decades: digitalisation, skills shortages, climate adaptation and sustainable production. In doing so, we focus particularly on small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups, social enterprises and cooperatives, which shape our city both economically and socially.

- **Strengthening regional value creation:** We promote local economic cycles and support businesses that develop sustainable, social and innovative solutions. Local authority contracts should give greater consideration to regional suppliers, where legally possible. Examples such as the French city of Grenoble show how a sustainable procurement policy can strengthen local businesses whilst improving environmental standards.
- **Promoting start-ups and innovation:** We are strengthening start-up centres, open workshops and innovation spaces where businesses, academia and society can collaborate. Successful examples such as Berlin's 'Factory' or the Dutch city of Eindhoven demonstrate how linking research, start-ups and

established companies can create new jobs and drive technological developments.

- **Strengthening the links between academia and the city:** The potential of Braunschweig Technical University, research institutions and local businesses should be utilised more effectively for future municipal projects. Following the example of cities such as Eindhoven, we aim to forge closer links between academia, public administration and the business sector in order to develop solutions for mobility, energy, digitalisation and climate protection directly at a local level.
- **Expanding sustainable procurement:** The City of Braunschweig is a major contracting authority and can use its purchasing power to drive change. Public procurement should take greater account of social, environmental and regional criteria. Cities such as Copenhagen demonstrate how municipal procurement can be used to achieve climate targets and promote sustainable markets.
- **Developing commercial spaces sustainably:** New commercial spaces must be planned in a space-saving and future-oriented manner. Priority is given to the reuse of existing buildings, the development of inner-city potential and sustainable commercial concepts. Examples from Freiburg show how modern commercial areas can be designed with high energy efficiency, good accessibility and minimal land sealing.

Securing good jobs and skilled workers

Our city's economic success depends on the people who work here. That is why Braunschweig needs good working conditions, fair employment and strategies to tackle the shortage of skilled workers.

- **Attracting and retaining skilled workers:** We support measures that strengthen Braunschweig's appeal as a place to work and live. These include affordable housing, good transport links, a healthy work-life balance and an open urban community.
- **Promoting further training and lifelong learning:** Digital and environmental change is transforming many professions. That is why we support further training programmes, partnerships between educational institutions and businesses, and accessible opportunities for employees and jobseekers.
- **Strengthening social enterprises and cooperatives:** Businesses that take on social responsibility make an important contribution to our city. We promote models such as cooperatives, public-benefit enterprises and social innovations. Examples from cities such as Barcelona show how the social economy can strengthen local development and social cohesion.
- **Providing attractive premises:** We provide attractive, modern and sustainable commercial premises. These include well-equipped spaces with forward-looking infrastructure, as well as flexible tenancy models (e.g. scalable spaces, short-term leases or shared facilities). In this way, we attract and retain both

new and established craft businesses. Local businesses thus become more attractive to skilled workers and apprentices. In this way, we help tackle the shortage of skilled workers in the skilled trades.

7. Digitalisation & IT – open, confident & citizen-focused

Our local government must undergo fundamental change. Whilst our everyday lives have long since gone digital, many public authorities still operate using slow, complicated and paper-based processes. At the same time, skills shortages, demographic change and rising demands are increasing the pressure on local authorities. We do not want to use digitalisation as an end in itself, but as a tool: for faster procedures, better services and greater citizen participation. At the same time, we must strengthen our digital infrastructure and make ourselves less dependent on non-European technology conglomerates.

We are firmly committed to a digital and sovereign city, because an efficient administration is a prerequisite for a state capable of taking effective action and an attractive business location. Our goal is 'Smart City Braunschweig': a city with digital, accessible and user-friendly administrative services, intelligent infrastructure and open, European IT solutions. In this way, we will create an administration that works faster, engages citizens more effectively and prepares Braunschweig for the digital future.

Smart City Braunschweig

Our vision for Braunschweig is a smart, digitalised city where technology and innovation improve citizens' quality of life. We promote a digital infrastructure and innovative solutions to the challenges facing the city and the region, and ensure greater citizen involvement.

- **Smart lighting for buildings and pathways:** Public roads, pathways, squares and buildings are lit using motion sensors and dimmable LEDs. This saves energy and reduces light pollution without compromising safety.
- **Installing induction loops on cycle paths:** Sensors detect cyclists at an early stage and adjust the green phase at traffic lights accordingly, either by starting it earlier or extending it. This makes traffic flow more smoothly, reduces waiting times and makes cycling more attractive.
- **Data sharing between mobility providers:** To make mobility sustainable, efficient and user-centred, we are committed to transparent and responsible data sharing between all mobility providers. This enables better coordination

of the various forms of mobility, leads to reduced traffic congestion, shortens waiting times and improves infrastructure planning.

- **Bringing all information together in one app:** We provide citizens with all information and services in plain language and in an accessible format via a single app or portal. The information included covers, amongst other things, the locations of waste bins, electric charging points, park-and-ride facilities, rubbish collection dates, cultural activities and events, as well as transparent data on current energy generation, information on political meetings and consultation processes, news from the city administration, appointment times for government offices and citizen service centres, and information on integration centres and community meeting places.
- **Integrating digital citizen participation:** The portal and app will also offer citizens the opportunity to contribute and discuss their ideas. This will enable them to better represent their interests and needs, and allow the administration to tailor its decisions accordingly.

Digitising the City of Braunschweig

For us, Braunschweig's digital transformation is not a minor, peripheral issue, but a key task for the future. Despite the shortage of skilled workers, demographic change and growing societal challenges, the city administration must function more effectively for our citizens. The aim is to ensure that digitalisation does not merely replicate poor analogue working practices, but instead enables a qualitative improvement. To achieve this aim, we wish to implement the following measures:

- **User-centred administration:** Denmark demonstrates how digital administration can be consistently designed: through the 'Digital First' principle, as well as shared digital identities and platforms, interconnected, easily accessible services are created across the public sector, education, healthcare and finance. The focus is not merely on digitising existing forms, but on developing simple, practical and efficient solutions for citizens.
- **Revising the framework strategy for digitalisation:** We are accelerating the digital transformation within the city administration so that, by 2030, all areas of the city's work are comprehensively supported by digital technologies. The strategy will be developed in collaboration with representatives from public authorities and democratic parties to ensure long-term commitment.
- **Using established and open standards:** The administrations of all local authorities should adopt open data formats such as PDF/A or XML, standardised interfaces (APIs), common identity and security standards, and interoperable administrative software in line with EU or national guidelines, in order to enable comprehensive digital interconnectivity.
- **Ensuring digital accessibility:** Information will be provided in plain language, and websites will be designed to be clear, understandable and high-contrast.

- **Use the European Digital Identity Wallet:** From 2027, the European Digital Identity Wallet will enable Europeans to verify their identity online – wherever they are. We are committed to ensuring that Braunschweig puts the necessary technical infrastructure in place in good time.
- **Reviewing municipal IT infrastructure:** We will comprehensively review and modernise the digital infrastructure, following the examples set by Rosenheim and Hamburg – particularly in schools, hospitals and other sensitive infrastructure. In this way, we will create secure, reliable and data-protection-compliant systems for a modern and citizen-centred administration. This review will inform the implementation planning for the Digitalisation Framework Strategy.

Strengthening digital sovereignty – open, sovereign and citizen-centred

Local authorities provide a large proportion of the services for citizens. These services must not be dependent on the whims of Big Tech operating in other jurisdictions. Therefore, all digital services and procedures should be based on sovereign solutions.

- **Introducing Wero as a means of payment:** We are committed to introducing Wero as a modern European means of payment within local government. Citizens should be able to pay fees digitally in a simple, secure and real-time manner. This reduces administrative burden, speeds up processes and improves the service for citizens. At the same time, we are strengthening our European digital sovereignty and becoming independent of US payment providers.
- **Using open source:** We rely on open-source solutions and the ‘one for all’ principle, as already demonstrated by successful digital strategies in Europe – for example in Estonia, where reusable, interoperable systems characterise digital administration. In this way, we avoid expensive siloed solutions, reduce dependencies on individual providers and accelerate digitalisation through transferable, uniform and transparent solutions for all local authorities.
- **Shaping social media presence with digital sovereignty:** Local authorities should give their citizens the opportunity to consume content on a sovereign platform such as Mastodon. Maintaining multiple platforms requires only a minimal additional effort and helps citizens to become more digitally sovereign themselves.

8. Safety & Cohesion – Preventive, Collaborative & Organised

Today, safety means more than just protection from crime. Heatwaves, heavy rainfall, flooding and prolonged periods of drought also present Braunschweig with new challenges. At the same time, people expect safe public spaces, reliable public services and a city that remains capable of taking action even in times of crisis. We want to make Braunschweig more resilient – through forward-looking urban planning, effective prevention, modern disaster management and strong social cohesion.

We are committed to a preventative and resilient security policy, because security is achieved where risks are identified early, damage is minimised and people are effectively protected. Our aim is a safe and crisis-resilient Braunschweig: a city that is prepared for the consequences of climate change, protects its critical infrastructure and offers safety and reliability to everyone, even in exceptional situations.

Strengthening security and cohesion

Safety is a basic need. Everyone wants to feel safe and secure – on their way home, at a bus stop, at events or online. It makes no difference what gender they are, where they come from or what their circumstances are. Safety is achieved through a combination of prevention, participation and urban design, not through control alone. We therefore focus on coordinated prevention and technical modernisation. We promote social cohesion, economic opportunities and a healthy social environment to prevent vandalism, crime and extremism.

- **Strengthening cohesion:** We are setting up a group of experts to tackle hate crime. This group consists of representatives from the police, educational institutions and social services. It will develop projects to combat racism, extremism and violence, and strengthen cooperation between public authorities and civil society. Anti-discrimination training for public authorities promotes respect in interactions and trust in institutions.
- **Creating safe spaces, providing security:** Safe houses and emergency shelters for victims of violence will be expanded. Organisations that create safe spaces will be supported, and 'Housing First' projects for homeless people in the city will be implemented. Anti-Semitism, racism and all forms of group-focused hostility will be consistently combated.
- **Better protection for vulnerable groups:** Independent reporting centres for sexual harassment and discrimination are being set up. Night taxis are being

supported and the option to alight between stops is being made available. People who are particularly vulnerable are given specific consideration in crises and emergencies.

- **Ensuring safety at events:** The City of Braunschweig actively supports volunteer event organisers in implementing safety measures – with expertise, equipment and practical assistance. This ensures that cultural events can be planned, held safely and organised without complications.
- **Preventively reducing crime:** Campaigns promoting civic courage on public transport and in public spaces strengthen a shared sense of responsibility. Free drug-checking services and awareness-raising work save lives and provide access to support services. Labour market initiatives offer attractive alternatives to organised crime. In this way, we prevent crime before it arises.
- **Expanding prevention work:** Local prevention councils help to identify security issues at an early stage and develop countermeasures in collaboration with the police, social services, schools and local residents. Problems should be resolved where they arise.
- **Preventing violence and extremism:** More local advice centres tackling radicalisation, bullying and violence, as well as preventive street outreach programmes, offer support and address problems before they escalate.
- **Strengthening local public order services:** More staff, digital equipment and mobile response teams ensure greater safety, particularly in high-risk neighbourhoods, at railway stations and at major events. In doing so, we prioritise community engagement and prevention over mere control.

A liveable Braunschweig for everyone – safe and resilient

A well-designed and well-prepared city provides a sense of security. We are making Braunschweig more resilient to the effects of climate change and ensuring public safety across the entire city. In the face of increasing environmental and climate risks, as well as local risks to personal safety, we are designing public spaces to ensure that all citizens are safe and protected. Through inclusive urban planning, robust disaster management and modern infrastructure, we are ensuring a safe and resilient Braunschweig.

- **Safe public spaces:** Better-designed, well-lit and green parks, squares and paths increase safety and reduce risks. Following the example of European cities such as Barcelona and Copenhagen, we are creating public spaces that provide a sense of security and enhance quality of life.
- **Climate-adapted public spaces:** Protecting against the consequences of climate change will be a key priority for the city. We are creating more green spaces, trees and shaded areas. A climate-adapted design of public spaces ensures that they remain usable even during heatwaves and extreme weather.

- **Climate-resilient 'sponge city':** We are improving natural water retention and developing heat-resilient neighbourhoods. Following the example of Rotterdam, we are focusing on a climate-adapted 'sponge city' in which rainwater is better absorbed and damage is prevented.
- **Strengthening and modernising disaster preparedness:** The fire service, emergency services and aid organisations will be better equipped and supported in terms of training, technology and recruitment. Together with emergency services, voluntary organisations and local neighbourhoods, we are developing modern emergency response plans for heavy rain, flooding, storms, heatwaves and prolonged power cuts. As cities such as Helsinki demonstrate, safety is achieved through preparation, cooperation and a strong community.
- **Creating crisis-resilient infrastructure:** Critical infrastructure such as energy supply, drinking water, communications and public facilities must be better protected against failures. Modern warning systems, local emergency plans and close cooperation between the administration, emergency services and the public ensure that Braunschweig remains capable of acting even in difficult situations.

Safety arises where people take responsibility for one another, where problems are identified at an early stage and where the city is prepared. Braunschweig should be a safe, supportive and climate-resilient city in which everyone can live well.