

Local Economic and Community Plan Submission

Dublin City Public Participation Network



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Dublin City

Introduction

The PPN is a countrywide initiative to build a network of community, social inclusion and environmental groups who work within a local authority area. The focus of the PPN is to empower and assist groups to participate in local decision-making. The Dublin City PPN operates in the Dublin City Council area.

What does the Dublin City PPN do?

The Dublin City PPN is the main link through which Dublin City Council connects with community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups. The PPN empowers and assists groups to engage in local democracy and decision-making.

This submission document has been compiled based on consultation with DCPPN members and member groups. An initial survey was sent out to all members which resulted in thirty-seven survey responses. This was followed by in-person meetings, zoom calls and phone calls with eleven members of PPN groups. Contributions were filtered through the high-level goals and are listed below in the form of bullet point recommendations and practical suggestions that contributors would like to see in their communities and throughout Dublin City.

High Level Goal 1: Climate and Biodiversity

Dublin City Public Participation Network (PPN) members are committed to climate protection and sustainable practices. There are many environmental groups. Members value the green and blue infrastructure across the city and are actively involved in protecting our natural environment and wildlife. Our members want to move away from a focus on economic growth and neo-liberal economics and towards a useful community, that collectively responds to the needs of its people, and produces a space and culture where people can thrive.

- Dublin City Council to commit to sustainable procurement policies throughout all council-funded projects, including outsourced services. Private operators funded by the council to sign up to sustainable procurement policies that commit to using sustainable and environmentally friendly products and services.
- Commit to maintaining council-managed public parks to an equal standard across the city. Ensure adequate resources and staff to maintain biodiverse spaces within the parks. Parks should include rewilding initiatives to support habitats for native wildlife, flora and fauna.
- Increased nature and river life education zones around the city. Increase practical, hands-on programmes for young people, through schools and youth services, to engage with the natural world.

- Provide increased practical and financial resources to community groups in sustaining biodiversity projects.
- Increased planting of native trees
- Increased rewilding including hedgerows
- Creative and fun interactive educational initiatives aimed at all ages to increase awareness of nature, ecology, circular economy and biodiversity. Available in multimedia formats and accessible regardless of location or financial means.
- Develop information on the importance of water conservation aimed at all age groups to champion a habit of water conservation from a young age.
- Support the creation of and provide resources for mending cafes to foster the knowledge and skills required to repair and reuse items and clothing.
- Create and fund a “library of things” in every community to provide access to tools and items that can be shared across communities. This prevents unnecessary overconsumption, fosters a culture of community and shared ownership and creates space in people's homes.
- Plan for, provide space for and resource community gardens in every community. Provide people with the experience of nurturing and growing their own food and learning the skills required to maintain gardens. Alongside the personal, environmental and community benefits, this knowledge can be passed onto future generations if we prioritise bringing young people into these spaces.
- Support the installation of community composting resources in communities alongside practical and accessible information

- Depave concrete spaces and support the replacement of concrete gardens with soil, gravel, woodchip and other permeable surfaces to facilitate natural soaking of rainwater into the ground as opposed to running off into drains . This will reduce the risk of flooding and replenish groundwater supplies.¹
- Increase access to front-loaded retrofitting programmes alongside solar panels on all public buildings and homes.
- Provide practical, financial and administrative support for communities that commit to becoming sustainable energy communities, join the SEAI and create their own Master Energy Plan. While many of the resources and support required will come from a national, department, level, local authority support and engagement are vital for the success of these programmes.
- All public buildings should have an active plan to working towards net zero emissions.
- Affordable, reliable, accessible, safe public transport.
 - Excellent cycling networks, including safe cycling corridors.
 - Walking, wheeling and cycling networks to be accessibility proofed to ensure that no one project makes our city less safe for anyone else.
 - Increased availability of rental bikes and cars, cargo bikes and trailers at affordable prices to contribute to a reduction in car usage and increase in shared usage.

¹ <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/environmental-services/flooding/flooding-prevention-reporting-information/what-depaving>

- Connect neighbouring localities through connected corridors to promote safe active travel

Quotes from our members

“There is an expectation that all, available land must be used for housing irrespective of the future implications. All construction needs to be sympathetic to the natural environment and while it might seem like a luxury, providing outdoor space has health benefits to people. If people have access to outdoor space they will do all to conserve and protect them and pass them on. Ideologies need to change as a grassroots level if we are to hand on our natural environment to the next generation. “

“Provide comprehensive education at all levels - avoid single points of focus (such as hyperfocus on wildflowers, to the detriment of much wider conversation about biodiversity)”

“As for Dublin’s natural resources we should be protecting our water resources, encouraging naturalisation of parks and preserving our mountains/hills and not building endlessly in such areas.”

“Keep what green spaces we currently have. Create more community gardens.”

High Level Goal 2: Housing and Placemaking

Across conversations about living in Dublin City, housing is consistently the single biggest issue raised. The housing crisis has impacted every generation and every community in some way, and there is as strong desire across the PPN to reimagine our approach to building communities. The idea of all communities having a social infrastructure embedded in planning so that the needs of all communities are met was strongly held by our members. While the LECP is not the spatial planning document for Dublin City Council, housing is a vital need that must be met before we can achieve a healthy and well community and we have set out below what housing looks like for our members.

- When designing our housing, processes should focus on whole community planning. Our communities should be built sustainably, with mixed density and an abundance of green and blue spaces.
- Everyone should have local and affordable access to a safe, secure, warm, stable home, provided through public housing where tenants have long term security of tenure.
- Older developments must be retrofitted as a matter of urgency to reduce energy consumption and cost of energy for tenants.

- We do not support private sector, build to rent housing models and all council developments should be through local authority or approved housing body tenancies. Public housing on public land.
- Communities should be designed with everyone in mind, with small, medium, and large homes for all household sizes. People whose family situation change should be provided the opportunity to move to a suitably sized home within their community.
- People who require support to live independently should be provided that support in their home to enable them to live independently in their community with dignity for as long as they want to.
- Communities should include quiet spaces and sensory gardens so that all members of our communities can enjoy our outdoor spaces.
- All planning processes must be disability proofed.
- Planning processes should include a social infrastructure clause and spatial planning to ensure that all regardless of where people live they have access to local health services, green space, a community centre, age-appropriate play spaces for children and young people, and public transport within a 15-minute walk.

- Increased information for tenants on their rights and protections.
- Where families have to access emergency homeless accommodation, this should be own door, without restrictions on entry and exit times and policies should be rooted in dignity and respect.
- Where individuals access homeless accommodation, everyone should have access to their own room. Hostels are currently an extremely difficult place to remain drug free in and this needs to be addressed urgently.

Quotes from our members

“Facilities are key. As a society we cannot keep throwing up apartment blocks without associated facilities. We are just kicking the problem down the road for someone else to deal with while hiding behind an ideology that the ‘housing crisis’ is being dealt with”

High Level Goal 3: Health and Wellbeing

Within health and wellbeing, we want to acknowledge that the single most important element of health and wellbeing is people's basic needs being met. To experience wellbeing, people must have access to safe and secure housing, good quality food, and employment opportunities, live free of poverty and discrimination, and have the opportunity to engage with our natural environment. These social determinants have been shown to have more of an impact on our health than lifestyle choices and health interventions ², so how we plan our city and communities is vital to our health and wellbeing. Beyond that, a consistent theme across members was the need for a primary health centre in every community. From this centre, people should have access to health and wellbeing supports from newborn stage to old age. People want the opportunity to buy locally sourced food and access to beautiful green spaces and waterways and outdoor exercise facilities. All of these resources contribute to good mental alongside physical health.

- Every community must have access to an adequately staffed and inclusive healthcare system that leaves no one behind, with increased services for communities currently underserved including the Traveller community and Trans community.
 - A primary care centre local to every community, with access to clinical health teams, mental health supports, dentistry, and emotional and physical health services.

² https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

- An increase in community and public health nurses from this centre including outreach into the community.
- Primary care services within the community to make healthcare local and accessible where possible and to reduce the burden of hospitals.
- To include mental health services. Occupational health, medical, dental
- Walkable communities, with green-blue infrastructure and flourishing biodiversity
- Access to housing for all
- A rights-based approach to our community with freedom of expression to support well-being
- Accessible walkways, cycleways, outside exercise and leisure spaces and equipment should be available and accessible to everyone within a reasonable distance.
- A continued commitment to investing in diverse sports and leisure facilities and activities across communities so that people can keep their mind and body active.
- Publicly available training on defibrillator use, first aid training, and increased defibrillator access across the city.
- Communities must have local, accessible, evidence-led addiction services
 - Available locally, when needed, for as long as required.
 - Well-resourced across the continuum of care
 - Strategically led by local and regional drug and alcohol task forces
- Enhanced harm reduction approach to drug and alcohol services
 - To include public injection facilities and consumption rooms.
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- Publicly available training on Naloxone training alongside increased availability in all public buildings.

- Provide space and practical support for community gardens so that communities can have access to sustainable, fresh, locally grown food.
- Interdisciplinary supports for young people and families includes assessments, occupational therapy, family support and play therapy.
- Increased one-to-one counselling supports, including support groups and trauma support.
- Trauma-informed training for council staff who are often dealing with people in traumatic situations. Supervision for staff to prevent reverberated trauma.
- Increased availability of public health nurses across all age groups and including mental health support nurses within the community.
- Dual Diagnosis services available in the community and with twenty-four-hour access in hospitals for crisis care.
- Dedicated support services for LGBTQIA+ people .

Quotes from our members

“We need more connected thinking around our health. It’s not just the department, the council are right in the centre of our communities and need to be a part of that conversation too. They’re the ones implementing most of the on the ground initiatives in communities.”

High Level Goal 4: Community Development and Enhancement

During conversations on community development, space was one of the most consistently recognised barriers. Members shared experiences of having to meet in people's homes or meeting less often than they would like due to lack of access to a room. Community and youth services spoke of how this restricted the services they can provide and therefore limits the reach they can have within the community. Physical space was also raised as an important factor in community integration and placemaking across different cultural groups. Increased space would mean increased opportunities to share food and culture with new communities, which people feel would help reduce the tensions currently being experienced across communities. A well-resourced and adequately sized community centre in every community is vital. Dublin City Council should engage in a process of mapping the availability of community centre resources across its communities to identify areas most in need of spaces for community gathering and engagement. People spoke extremely positively about the value of local libraries in creating space and providing somewhere to go that does not require money. However, communities need similar spaces that can facilitate socialising, dropping in for a cup of tea and a conversation, particularly for people living alone within the community.

- Ensure that every community has a community centre and physical spaces where people can come together in placemaking, to share social and cultural and contribute to a thriving community. Regular opportunities should be created for

members of a community to come together for intergenerational and intercultural socialising and engagement, leisure, sports, and interests' classes

- High-quality, well-maintained local authority indoor and outdoor sports and leisure spaces and support for communities to provide affordable access to sports and leisure activities across age groups and interests.
- Indoor community spaces should give priority to community groups and projects before for-profit activities and ensure there is enough space for everyone in the community to share access.
- Community Centres should include a central source of information about the whole community so that everyone is aware of events, resources, and local news.
- Adequate, affordable childcare spaces should be provided within communities to remove the lack of childcare as a barrier to education, employment, and community participation. Council funded projects should consider the barrier this can create to attending programmes.
- Volunteers, who are the backbone of our communities, should be adequately supported in line with the national volunteering strategy ³
- Communities require a significant commitment to and investment in youth work. Every child should have access to a youth centre and the opportunity to engage in the transformational nature of youth work. This youth work should be provided by qualified, paid youth workers.

³ <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3cba6-national-volunteering-strategy/>

- Councils should engage with and support the expansion of local detached street outreach work^{4, 5}. To ensure that we continue to engage with young people who have disconnected from school, community, and other youth work services. To meet them where they are, with the resources to continue to engage in this work without requiring specific measurements of success. To acknowledge that building trust and a relationship over long periods of time can have a life-changing impact on young people and on the wider community.
- Access to affordable extracurricular leisure activities for young people.
- Support for membership-based sports, leisure, environmental and activity groups which are organically formed to deliver a core purpose. These groups provide community cohesion beyond their core activity, often have a crossover of membership, and contribute to community building and cohesion.
- A commitment to retaining libraries in all communities. Acknowledging that libraries are a vital community space where people can meet, learn, collaborate, and spend time without the requirement to spend money.
- Well-maintained green spaces and parks that are biodiverse, have seating spaces for intergenerational mixing and feel safe and inviting.
- World-class accessible playgrounds and play spaces for all ages in all communities. People should be able to walk to their local playground.
 - Families with additional needs should be consulted in the planning stages of parks and play areas.

⁴ <https://ywicm.ie/detached-youth-work/>

⁵ <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/kb5/rbkc/fis/advice.page?id=q-nW2PZ99ks#:~:text=Detached%20and%20Outreach%20Youth%20Work%20%E2%80%93%20what%20is,their%20needs%20and%20creating%20projects%20which%20support%20them.>

- All parks should have fully accessible access points and gates.
- All parks should have fully accessible toilets and changing rooms.
- Outside exercise equipment and callisthenics along greenways and waterways.
- Adequate waste, recycling, and dog foulage bins in public spaces.
- An increase in swimming pools across the city so that every community has access to a swimming pool within an acceptable distance at an affordable price.
- A focus on community policing that has strong links with the community, with young people and all local services.
- Planning processes to consider perceptions of safety in all planning designs, to incorporate adequate lighting and visibility in public spaces.
- Communities must be designed for everyone and be accessible to all.
 - Changing Spaces
 - Disability friendly toilets
 - Gender neutral family friendly baby changing facilities
- All information created for public dissemination must be available in plain English and in multiple languages. Many participants described difficulty in engaging with Dublin City Council policies and information as the language and layout is overcomplicated.
 - Visual representations of policies and documents should be provided where possible in the form of infographics. Plain English should be used throughout all public documents. NALA ⁶provide this service and consideration should be given to engaging NALA in training or reviewing public policy

⁶ <https://www.nala.ie/plain-english/>

- DCC to reduce the burden on community groups in holding events in local green spaces, parks, and outdoor spaces.
 - Increase the resources available to DCC events team to support more community events and reduce the barriers to groups making applications.

Community groups shared that the about the amount of paperwork required to organise a community even in local public space can be an onerous and a barrier. Processes should be simplified, and practical support should be provided to ensure that this is not a barrier to any group.
- Provide increased financial and practical support to groups working to bring diverse communities of people together.
- DCC to provide training for local community volunteers to increase skills and confidence in taking on active participation within the local community. These courses could include governance and finance skills, practical organising and management skills, self-development, and accessing funding. Priority should be given to seldom-heard voices within our communities.
- Increased opportunities for community members to be heard. Investment in proactively reaching out to seldom-heard voices and removing the barriers to participation.
- When people are consulted and share their experiences and opinions, they need to see that this is acted on. Prompt communication with consulted groups is vital, along with regular updates on any work committed to. If any commitments made cannot be fully completed, a thorough explanation must be made to the community.
- Reduction of barriers to operating community and voluntary groups.

- To include governance support, plain English support.
- A group insurance scheme operated by Dublin City Council would reduce the administrative and financial burden on small community groups of insurance.
- Increased governance support for community and voluntary organisations. All non-profit boards are voluntary, and many organisations are run by volunteers. The legal responsibility of governance is preventing people from stepping into leadership positions, and we must increase the training and practical support available to volunteers engaging in governance and leadership roles.
- Increased support for Garda Vetting. A centralised garda vetting operation to ensure volunteers can be vetted once yearly rather than once for each organisation they volunteer with.
- A commitment within the council to long-term planning processes that go beyond electoral cycles and groupings on the council. Some projects do not fully fit within the parameters of a 5-year plan and commitment should be made to long term visions.
- Opportunities to engage in local democracy and organising should be made accessible to everyone. This should include flexible meeting times, remote access to meetings, and the provision of information in advance of all meetings to provide enough time for volunteers to be prepared.
- All representatives on SPC and JPC committees should have parity of esteem
- Publicise and celebrate positive stories of community groups impact when engaging in local democracy.
- A directly elected mayor for Dublin City. This will increase the democratic input into Dublin City Council and a sense of accountability at all levels.

- Hosted community forums to ask questions, and connect with local officials and Gardai
- Utilise technology to encourage people to connect, especially those who are isolated. Ensure that the digital divide is not a barrier to this and that all people have access to the necessary internet connection and equipment.
- Funding for local folklore projects. For the recording of verbal, written and video recordings of community stories.
- Financial and practical support for initiatives that bring communities together and encourage intergenerational and intercultural placemaking and community building.
- Provision of accessible, affordable courses in Irish crafting, the Irish language and traditional Irish music to preserve and introduce new communities to traditional Irish culture.
- Funding and support for diverse communities to share their arts, food and culture with their new community. This could include community meal sharing, cultural storytelling workshops, intercultural music and art events. This will require physical space for placemaking along with practical and financial supports.
- Preserve historical buildings and provide city space for independent retailers, artists and crafters.
- Street names in the city could include a historic plate detailing previous names and information about historical events in the locality. This could be expanded on through the use of a QR code.
- Creating space for dialogue, to bring people with diverse experiences and outlooks together to develop a shared understanding of the world around us.

Quotes from our members

“Increase participation of young people in Dublin City Council.”

“Engagement should be through interest forums that actually impact young people's lives, such as climate action, sustainable fashion, social enterprises, the arts”

“Ensuring people understand the services available to them and how to engage in them”

“Acknowledgement of local participation in the form of a PPN award to say thank you to people newly engaged or volunteering in a grassroots way”

“Human rights must be at the heart of good governance “

“Emphasise interdependence and foster community solidarity”

High Level Goal 5: The Promotion of Economic, Enterprise, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development

Members spoke of the need for increased workers' rights across all sectors to ensure that people can live a happy and well life from the earnings of one. Employment should be meaningful, and all workers should be treated with dignity and respect and have advance notice of their schedule. Members spoke of making a healthy work-life balance possible and access to well-resourced local communal working hubs was raised multiple times. We want to see more artists, crafters and local, small and indigenous businesses provided with the opportunities to grow and succeed, and this will require practical and financial support and city centre space for showcasing their work and products. An investment in young people to develop their creativity, innovative instincts and entrepreneurial skills is also required to embed a culture of possibility into future generations.

- Accessible and affordable local working hubs reduce commuting time and contribute to more sustainable working practices.
- DCC to lead on public sector duty implementation
- Recognition of business in the form a pledge or award that commit to employing people from marginalised communities.
- Policies that care for those who care for us. Reasonable working hours and protections for care staff, healthcare staff and community workers.

- Information campaign about the circular campaign and donut economics. In accessible literature and multimedia options so that people have practical examples of why it is important and how to embed into their lives.
- Increased publicity of our rediscover centre, and increased collaboration with schools, colleges, men and women's sheds and community groups to visit.
- Create more opportunities for apprenticeships and paid internships across all sectors, including those that require a degree qualification to become employed in. People from marginalised communities who face educational barriers and people for who learn best outside of academic traditional learning have a wealth of talents and experience to bring across society.
 - Dublin city council is perfectly placed to lead on these initiatives and should prioritise apprenticeships to create a new generation of council employed staff across all sections and move away outsourcing to private companies.
- Information about community wealth building should be developed and delivered across communities. Support for cooperatives in the form of information, training, administrative set up support and start up grants should be introduced alongside the current programmes we have for individuals to start their own business.
- Ringfenced funding for community can create issues for organisations spread across the whole city. When groups have to apply for funding individually, the skills required are needed in all groups, and where this is not possible, groups are losing out on badly needed funds to operate which also limits growth and impact. Groups need increased support to track and identify funding

opportunities alongside practical support in making applications. Where possible, this process should be simplified so that nobody is excluded from accessing funding.

- Social enterprises that also meet a local social and community need should also be prioritised.
 - An example suggested was a youth café, collaborating with a youth service, operational during evenings and weekends to provide a social space for young people to meet and socialise in an age-appropriate space.

Quotes from our members

“End zero-hour contracts, pay a living wage, encourage employment of people age 60+”

“Support social enterprise activities. I see this through community foundation Ireland and the wheel but nothing from DCC. Lease vacant/derelict shops for pop-up or start up enterprises.”