



**Public Participation  
Network** Cork City

# Local Economic & Community Plan Submission 2023

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**YOUR VOICE  
YOUR COMMUNITY**

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**Cork City Public  
Participation  
Network**

in consultation with its  
member groups have  
developed this LECP  
submission

Supported and Written by  
**Clare O'Connor**



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## INTRODUCTION

Cork City Public Participation Network is made up of groups and organisations from the community and voluntary, social inclusion and environment sectors across the City. The Public Participation Network allows groups operating in the city an opportunity to consider public policy issues in the city and to facilitate access to decision-making processes within the city-wide structures. There are currently more than 200 members in Cork City PPN.

This submission has been developed based on focus groups, one-to-one discussions, submissions and a large in-person consultation with member groups at our plenary in May. Ongoing relevant policy priorities from PPN Linkage Groups that took place in 2022/23 were also incorporated and those who contributed to these have been included in our list of those who have been consulted in this process. A list of groups consulted and engaged in this process is included in the Appendix.

Note: Where an action is already in operation or underway, we advocate for continued and further support for this action/process. We also advocate for the promotion of these existing actions so that individuals who are not aware of these can become aware and get involved if possible.



## A CITY VALUING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Cork City Public Participation Network recognises the crucial role of health and well-being in the quality of life for everyone in Cork City. Our vision for a healthy and well city extends beyond physical health and encompasses mental health, emotional health, social connections, community well-being and equality of outcome for everybody. Our members' consultations highlighted various concerns and priorities ranging from poverty and lack of access to mental health support to the importance of accessible public spaces for physical activity and space-making for connection, both intergenerationally and to bring different cultures together across communities. People spoke of the impact of poverty and marginalisation within communities and how difficult it is to live a healthy life when struggling to survive and eat.

The focus groups voiced a desire for people to engage more in their communities. They suggested more safe spaces for groups to meet, incentivising intergenerational connection in shared public spaces, and more city council support for community initiatives. Members spoke of their experience of and observations on health and well-being in the city, with access to resources, amenities, and the need for more services, central to most conversations. Our recommendations stem from the diverse insights informed by lived and professional experiences of our members. There was universal agreement that cost should not be a barrier to accessing adequate healthcare. Many of our members raised accessing a GP service as an issue, and the desire for primary health care services within communities was raised repeatedly. It was argued that if people could access timely healthcare services

when they need it, including in the evenings and at weekends, this might reduce hospitalisations and result to better health outcomes.

It was noted that mental health services, especially for vulnerable and marginalised groups, need to be easily accessible and adequately funded, which is currently not the case.

Contributions from members of the LGBTQIA+ community spoke of the additional mental health pressures faced by marginalised groups. Groups said of the positive work being done by volunteer and community groups in providing opportunities for activity with very little recognition or resources.

Our members want to see access to freshly grown, local food as something that is accessible to everyone. Freshly cooked meals should be available to everyone in Cork City, regardless of financial situation. Time poverty and confidence in cooking with fresh ingredients were noted as another barrier, and we would like to see community gardens and cooking classes made available across all communities. Access to high-quality, well-resourced counselling, addiction, and rehabilitation services in communities, when people need them, is vital to health and well-being, alongside access to residential rehabilitation services. Members spoke of the work being done to support individuals affected by drug-related harm, their families, and communities and how under-resourced this work is. We want Cork City to be a place where socioeconomic circumstances, disability, and marginalisation should never act as barriers to health and well-being. While our members spoke highly of the work being done by the youth sector, there is a clear need for more staff, resources, and additional detached street outwork services within youth work to meet the needs of young people in communities adequately.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A commitment to eradicating child poverty, which negatively impacts whole families' health and well-being and a child's physical and mental health, educational attainment, and future economic status.<sup>1</sup>
2. Support access to assessment of need services for young children within a reasonable time frame.
3. Support early intervention programmes with young children that provide whole family support. This will provide families the support they need, when they need it, and may reduce the necessity for more serious interventions in the future.
4. The council should ensure that mental health services are easily accessible and adequately funded across Cork City. This action should ensure that services are qualified to support the specific needs of diverse groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community, Travellers, young people, migrant and refugee groups and disabled people.
5. Establish health and wellness as a priority in urban planning so that public spaces are designed and maintained to encourage physical activity and interaction. To include more pedestrian-friendly pathways, walkways, bicycle lanes and public parks with

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<sup>1</sup> Ratcliffe, C., & McKernan, S. (2010). Childhood Poverty Persistence: Facts and Consequences. *Childhood and Intergenerational Poverty: The Long-Term Consequences of Growing Up Poor*. National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP).



fitness amenities. These goals are laid out in the Cork City Development Plan (2022-2028)<sup>2</sup> and should also align with the Healthy Ireland Framework (2013-2025)<sup>3</sup>

6. Increase accessibility to sports facilities and playgrounds across the city, with particular attention to areas of social and economic disadvantage. These spaces should be intergenerational and provide meeting and active spaces for all ages, including teen spaces, spaces suitable for the needs of girls and women, and opportunities for intergenerational engagement.
7. Ensure that every community has access to a local, well-resourced, and free-to-access community centre.
8. City council should collaborate with community groups to provide free exercise classes within communities. These classes can serve the dual purpose of promoting physical health and fostering a sense of community.
  - a) More resources should be allocated to community groups already providing physical activity opportunities. To include space, insurance, resources and practical support.
9. Offer comprehensive mental health training for local employers, public sector staff and community leaders to provide them with the skills to signpost and interact with people in need of better support.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.corkcity.ie/en/cork-city-development-plan/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e8f9b1-healthy-ireland-framework-2019-2025/>

10. Evaluate the impact of insurance costs on community activities, investigating alternative solutions to reduce this barrier, such as group schemes managed by the city council or a state body.
11. Foster partnerships between the council, healthcare providers, and community groups to promote health and wellbeing initiatives.
12. Facilitate programs for healthy eating in partnership with local markets and businesses.
13. Encourage schools to participate in health and wellness programs, fostering a culture of healthy living among young people.
14. Practically and financially support establishing support groups for individuals dealing with various health and disability issues, providing a platform for shared experiences and mutual support.
15. Increased access to public health nurses and home help services
16. Invest in training and resources for first responders to deal with mental health crises effectively and compassionately.
17. Develop a robust system for health impact assessments of future urban development projects, ensuring they contribute positively to community health and don't inadvertently perpetuate health inequities.
18. Ensure all council staff are trained in trauma-informed practice. This is important for public-facing staff, and everyone involved in developing and implementing projects and policies to ensure trauma-informed design. Along with training, this requires

investment in supervision and operational practices and should align with the Cork Trauma Sensitive Cities Strategy 2022-2025<sup>4</sup>.

19. Increased funding for Street Fests, community gatherings and programmes for intergenerational and community social gatherings.
20. Increased funding, space, and resources for community gardens to encourage connection, physical exercise, and the growing of local food.
21. Support local drug and alcohol task forces to deliver targeted and universal support to their communities.
22. Ensure well-funded and resourced youth work services in all communities. Youth services should be supported to provide both universal youth work services and targeted youth work under UBU funding. Where volunteers are providing universal youth work programmes, they should be supported with admin, insurance, and programme costs from local funding.
23. Develop and fund detached street outreach youth work programme<sup>5</sup> across Cork City to engage with young people who are not engaging with centre-based youth work services. Detached youth work meets young people where they choose to be, acknowledging that it is often the young people not accessing services or those excluded from services who are most in need of engagement.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.corkcity.ie/en/council-services/services/community/cork-trauma-sensitive-city/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.ywimonaghan.ie/detached-youth-work/>

# A CITY BUILT ON PARTNERSHIP, INCLUSION, AND EQUALITY

Cork City Public Participation Network is committed to the principles of partnership, inclusion, and equity. Our members have made clear their commitment to creating a city that is vibrant and diverse, a place where every person feels seen, valued, cared for and able to participate fully in their community and city. We are dedicated to contributing to a city where cost, disability, or marginalisation do not act as barriers to an individual's participation in community or civic life. During focus groups, our members overwhelmingly shared a desire for inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and diverse communities. Of the need for space-making to share culture, meals, and traditions with both new communities and old. Our members made a compelling case for urgent hate crime legislation to ensure a safe and inclusive city for all. The need for the state to be more transparent and active in fulfilling its public sector duties on rights and equality was expressed strongly. As one member passionately stated,

*"There needs to be a process like the public accounts committee where the government reports on their public sector duty on rights and equality and how they actively fulfil these duties."*

Our members would like to see the establishment of community workshops, awareness campaigns, and inclusive cultural festivals that highlight the diversity of Cork City. These programmes will need to have special financial and organisational resources and support to

ensure that they are delivered with maximum impact. Developing strategies to promote the participation of all citizens, particularly marginalized groups whose voices are often unheard and who are often disproportionately negatively impacted by policy decisions, in community planning and decision-making processes is essential. We would like to see specific additional funding for youth and community services to deliver anti-racism programmes and bystander training programmes to work towards addressing racism in our communities. Our members have also expressed a need for a more accessible city.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advocate for comprehensive hate crime legislation, implementation, and enforcement at local council level to safeguard our communities from hate and intolerance.
2. Facilitate the implementation of public sector duty<sup>66</sup> at a local government level, including a transparent reporting process on progress made.
3. For Cork City Council to lead the way on addressing barriers to recruitment of marginalised groups. To exceed the target of 6% of persons with a disability/disabled people being recruited and retained at all grades in Cork City Council. City Council should become a safe environment where positive disclosure

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<sup>66</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/50a2f2-our-public-sector-equality-and-human-rights-duty/#:~:text=Section%2042%20of%20the%20Irish%20Human%20Rights%20and,our%20%E2%80%98Public%20Sector%20Equality%20and%20Human%20Rights%20Duty%E2%80%99.>

of a protected status should be normalised and never have a negative impact on a person's career.<sup>7</sup>

4. That Cork City Council undertake an in-depth, proactive Equality Impact Assessment of its Housing Allocation Policy for compliance with its statutory, positive Public Sector Equality & Human Rights Duty (PSEHRD), with a particular focus on Equality of Outcomes.
5. Develop an Inclusive City Strategy that tackles the barriers to inclusion faced by marginalised groups.
6. Enhance the accessibility of all city services, with specific attention to digital accessibility, making the Cork City PPN and Cork City Council websites more user-friendly.
7. Foster the creation of inclusive community spaces, both physical and digital, to support the connection of community groups.
8. Develop comprehensive anti-discrimination training for city staff and public representatives to foster an inclusive culture.
9. Review and enhance the protection of public representatives from targeted abuse, particularly women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, Travellers, disabled people, and migrants.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://nda.ie/monitoring/monitoring-2-2/employment-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-public-sector#:~:text=The%20minimum%20statutory%20employment%20target%20for%20persons%20with%20disabilities%20to,\)%20\(Amendment\)%20Act%202022](https://nda.ie/monitoring/monitoring-2-2/employment-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-public-sector#:~:text=The%20minimum%20statutory%20employment%20target%20for%20persons%20with%20disabilities%20to,)%20(Amendment)%20Act%202022)

10. Encourage transparency in local governance by live streaming all public meetings, and publishing minutes.
11. Develop mechanisms to support continuity in government to ensure sound policies are implemented and not discarded with political change.
12. Allocate resources to support community groups that prioritise inclusion and equality.
13. Ensure all urban planning is proofed for accessibility and disabled people, including those with sensory needs, are involved in the consultation and proofing process.
14. Strengthen partnerships with NGOs, community groups, and other key stakeholders to drive social inclusion initiatives.
15. Encourage businesses to adopt equality and diversity practices, perhaps through incentive schemes or awards for outstanding practice.
16. Additional funding for youth and community services to deliver anti-racism programmes and bystander training programmes to work towards addressing racism in our communities.

## A CITY OF LEARNING AND CULTURE

Our members believe that Cork is a city rich in its diversity of learning and cultural experiences for those that can access it. Our members recognise that learning and culture are intrinsic to the city's social fabric and that they shape individual and collective identities, drive personal and community development, and influence our sense of belonging and shared heritage. We believe that promoting access to learning and cultural opportunities for everyone in Cork City, regardless of socio-economic status, disability, age, ethnicity, or identity, is central to us being a true city of learning and culture.

During focus groups, our members highlighted the importance of diverse representation, voicing concerns that often, the loudest voices dominate discussions and decision-making. They have called for a shift towards more inclusive and diverse spaces of dialogue and decision-making in which all voices are heard and valued. Members spoke of the desire for more transparency in the city's decision-making processes.

Members spoke of the need for more intercultural spaces to celebrate diversity, recognise different cultural needs, and promote languages. Suggestions include food events featuring dishes from various cultures and initiatives to integrate migrants and refugees into the community alongside a proposal for training for community groups to better engage with different cultures.



Our members feel strongly that communities need intergenerational spaces to foster dialogue and connection between different age groups. The importance of recording and preserving lived histories and local traditions were discussed, reflecting respect for heritage. Community filmmaking is suggested to capture and share these stories.

While members are proud of the strong culture of volunteerism in Cork City, the need to support value and resource volunteers was noted alongside the belief that community services need to be staffed and resourced adequately to have a strong impact.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Establish Inclusive Dialogue:** Develop and promote frameworks for inclusive dialogue that encourage diverse representation and participation in cultural and learning discussions and decision-making processes.
2. **Leadership Against Discrimination:** Foster a strong city-wide stance against all forms of discrimination, establishing clear policies and protocols to address hate crimes and discrimination.
3. **Transparency in Governance:** Transition towards a culture of transparency, making meeting minutes, committee memberships, and other decision-making processes accessible and available to all citizens.

4. **Promote Inclusion:** Embed principles of equality and inclusion in all city operations, from policies to programs.
5. **Public Libraries and Cultural Spaces:** Enhance accessibility and inclusivity in public libraries and cultural spaces and ensure that every community has access to a high-quality library that is accessible seven days a week, and in the evenings.
6. **Educational Opportunities:** Facilitate and fund opportunities for lifelong learning, ensuring cost is not a barrier for individuals seeking to expand their knowledge and skills. Offer diverse routes into learning for people outside of the standard educational system. Work with the Universities to develop top-up programmes and recognition of prior learning (RPL) so that those who have part qualifications and work/volunteer experience can progress to full qualification at Levels 7, 8 and 9.
7. **Promote Local History and Heritage:** Develop programs to educate residents about Cork City's local history and heritage, fostering a sense of shared identity and belonging.
8. **Recording Oral and Visual History.** Fund community filmmaking and the recording of oral history throughout communities.
9. **Cultural Events:** Fund and facilitate city-wide cultural events that celebrate the diversity of Cork City, providing opportunities for different communities to showcase their unique cultures.

10. **Cultural and Learning Programs for Marginalised Groups:** Develop and implement cultural and learning programs specifically for marginalised groups, ensuring their histories and experiences are recognised and valued.
11. **Public Art Initiatives:** Encourage public art initiatives that reflect the city's diversity, facilitating community-led projects and collaborations with local artists.
12. **Access to Technology:** Ensure all citizens have access to digital technology and the internet, recognising it as an essential learning tool and recognising the digital divide and additional barriers faced.
13. **Community Learning Spaces:** Increase community learning spaces across the city where people can access digital resources, and free, quiet spaces to work or study.
14. **Youth Sector:** Ensure Youth services are well-funded and have the autonomy to work with young people struggling in education or outside of the education system so that youth workers and young people can work together to develop a plan for the future. Provide funding for alternative routes into education and training for these young people.
15. **Resource and Training Support:** Our members feel that essential services, such as youth clubs, should not rely on volunteers alone but also need professional staff. Services need increased resources and funding alongside cultural training to foster a better understanding of different cultures in the community.
16. **Accessible literature.** Ensure that all information from educational organisations, local councils and state institutions is provided in an easy-to-read format, accessible

language, and multiple languages. Where possible, provide a visual representation of data in the form of infographics.

17. **Accessible Education for Everyone.** Support those with different sensory needs to access the city's cultural and learning opportunities through set quieter times and other initiatives.

# A CITY DRIVING ECONOMIC AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Cork City's economy is a diverse one, made up of many international companies, vibrant start-ups, and local small businesses. However, areas of concern raised during focus groups include unequal access to employment opportunities, the need for a more sustainable and inclusive local economy, and increased access to affordable housing. Cork City Public Participation Network (PPN) wants Cork City to be a thriving economic hub that serves the needs of all its residents while also maintaining a commitment to a circular economy, fair working conditions, and equitable opportunities for enterprise development. Focus groups highlighted the need for more apprenticeship options and support for self-employment and sole traders, and a desire for a broader variety of job opportunities, particularly those that are accessible to people at all educational levels. Participants also emphasised the need for continuous professional development opportunities and called for mandatory dignity at work training.

The focus groups echoed a strong call for a more sustainable local economy, highlighting areas such as renewable energy, repair and recycling, and community banking as important factors. Participants voiced a need for services to be local, referencing the 15-minute city model. The value of passing on practical reuse skills through community projects was also noted, alongside the development of mending cafes and a library of things.

Our members are passionate about cultivating an economy that is accessible and beneficial to everyone, and accessing good quality, safe, stable, secure, and affordable housing was a significant concern raised by members. The desire for a diverse mix of social and affordable housing options was emphasised, particularly one to two-bedroom apartments suitable for younger people or older people looking to downsize. Members also expressed opposition to the sale of houses to vulture funds and raised concerns about the practice of block buying of estates by companies for rental, which prevents individuals and families from purchasing homes. Members noted the additional economic challenges facing certain members of our community, particularly those in the LGBTQIA+ community, Travellers, migrant and disabled communities who may face additional barriers in accessing secure, stable housing in the city. Our members were clear that it is not just homes we need to develop but sustainable communities with all the necessary resources and infrastructure for communities to thrive.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**To build an economy that is accessible and beneficial to all, we propose the following actions:**

1. Establish a Cork City Council Equality and Inclusion Charter that businesses can voluntarily sign up to. The charter could set out several equality and inclusion goals that businesses commit to achieving.

2. Improve employment opportunities for marginalised communities through targeted training programmes, funding schemes, and apprenticeships.
3. Advocate for legislation to protect workers' rights, particularly in sectors with precarious employment conditions. Cork City Council could work with local representatives to advocate for stronger worker protections at the national level.
4. Promote the development of small local business and artists by offering business support services, grants, and loans specifically tailored for these types of organizations.
5. Create a city-wide circular economy strategy. This strategy could involve partnerships with local businesses, promoting recycling and waste reduction, and implementing circular economy principles in city operations.
6. Radical investment in the development of secure, affordable homes by Cork City Council. To include smaller one and two-bedroom homes. Developments should focus on building communities, not just housing units, and ensure that all relevant amenities and social infrastructure is developed alongside homes.
7. Implement a city-wide affordable housing strategy that prioritises marginalised communities, ensuring they are not priced out of the city.
8. For the council to oppose the selling of estates, or multiple homes in estates to institutional investors. To acknowledge that homes are for individuals and families to live in and are not a source of profit.

9. That Cork City Council establish a local Traveller Homeless Task Force, which will be action and outcome focused to overcome the ever-increasing, disproportionate, and inter-generational degree of Traveller Homelessness
10. Promote LGBTQIA+ Friendly Business Environment: Encourage local businesses to establish themselves as safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces for the LGBTQIA+ community. This can be achieved through providing diversity and inclusion training and recognizing businesses that excel in this area.
11. Establish a city-funded "Innovation Hub" that provides resources, mentoring, and workspace for startups and small businesses.
12. Develop local supply chain programs that encourage businesses to source locally where possible, boosting the local economy and reducing carbon emissions.
13. Launch an annual "Cork City Business Awards" to recognize businesses and social enterprises that are leaders in areas like equality, inclusion, sustainability, and innovation.
14. Advocate for fair and equal pay and conditions across the city council and among city contractors, setting an example for other employers in the city.
15. Invest in digital infrastructure to support remote work and digital businesses, making Cork a leading city for the digital economy.
16. Develop programs to attract and retain a diverse range and size of businesses, fostering a robust and resilient local economy.



17. Offer business rates relief for organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability, equality, and inclusion.
18. Advocate for state-funded programs that support home-based and small businesses, as these are vital for economic diversity and resilience.
19. Establish and incentivise citywide apprenticeship and paid internship programmes across all sectors to offer alternative pathways into careers.
20. To create a thriving economy, we need an affordable, well-connected, reliable public transport system.
  1. Expansion of the TFI bike scheme
  2. Increased public transport options to ensure it is possible to travel anywhere within Cork City by public transport in a reasonable timeframe.
  3. The addition of seats at all bus stops
  4. Increased park and ride facilities to be made available throughout Cork City,
21. Support Local Artisans and Cultural Businesses: Encourage the growth and development of local artists, musicians, and cultural enterprises through grant programs and city-sponsored events. This will not only boost the local economy but also enrich the cultural life of the city.
22. Encourage Local Food Production: Support local food producers through farmers' markets, city grants, and promotional events to boost the local economy and ensure food security.

23. Accessibility Audit for Businesses: Conduct audits to assess the accessibility of local businesses and provide them with recommendations and support to improve.
24. Climate Conscious Procurement: Encourage businesses to follow environmentally friendly procurement practices, reducing the city's overall carbon footprint.
25. Community Benefit Agreements: Promote the use of Community Benefit Agreements in development projects, ensuring local communities share in the benefits of economic development.
26. Open Library of Things around Cork City
27. Establish a Rediscovery Centre
28. Cork City Council to ensure in planning that a % of city centre shopping units are used for local small businesses. Support the development of Live/Work Artisanal homes through which artisans and artist can make use of "above the shop" accommodation while enlivening the street and city with culture. Rents should be in aligned to income and more akin to a social housing model in recognition of the low income experienced by many artists in Ireland.

## A CITY OF SAFE, ACCESSIBLE, AND RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS AND COMMUNITIES.

Our members spoke of a strong desire for neighbourhoods that are not only physically secure and easy to navigate for all citizens but also socio-emotionally supportive and responsive to the varied needs of its residents. This includes marginalized groups such as the LGBTQIA+ community, Travellers, older people, migrants and disabled people, whose unique challenges and experiences contribute significantly to shaping this vision. Discussions highlighted the necessity of proactively combating hate crimes and fostering a safe and inclusive environment for everyone in Cork City, with members of the LGBTQIA+ community speaking of the increase in lesbophobic and homophobic attacks in the city.

Transportation and accessibility were raised as significant factors during focus groups, with concerns expressed about current public transport limitations and infrastructure inadequacies, particularly for people cycling and disabled people.

In terms of building community resilience, we must acknowledge that to have safe and resilient lives and communities; we must ensure that structural inequalities are addressed so that communities do not have to be unnecessarily resilient.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Urgent Legislation against Hate Crime:** Develop comprehensive legislation to address hate crimes, ensuring the safety of all residents, particularly those from marginalized groups.
2. **Public Sector Duty on Rights and Equality:** Regularly report on government actions and initiatives to fulfil public sector duty on rights and equality in a manner similar to the public accounts committee.
3. **Resource Allocation for LGBTQIA+ Support:** Recognise the emotional and financial costs of supporting marginalized communities and allocate resources accordingly.
4. **Proactive Policing against Hate Crime:** Enable community Gardaí to actively support communities against hate crimes by providing them with relevant training and resources.
5. **Promotion of Community Integration:** Facilitate greater opportunities for the integration of diverse groups within communities and provide necessary resources for supporting the unique needs of these communities.
6. **Infrastructure for Safe Mobility:** Develop infrastructure that prioritizes the safety of people cycling, walking, and wheeling, encourages sustainable transport, and supports individuals with disabilities. There needs to be an understanding that seating and resting points are key supports for safe walking and wheeling and the removal of these or lack of implementation of these, can make a journey unsafe for those with reduced mobility.

7. **Increased local participation:** Encourage initiatives like citizen panels & assemblies, focus groups, ensuring diverse community representation in policy-making processes and opportunities for engagement within communities.
  
8. **Ensure adequate street lighting in public spaces.**

# A CITY LEADING ON SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE ACTION

Cork City Public Participation Network members spoke of a future where Cork is not only the heart of Ireland's economy but also a beacon of sustainability and climate action.

Drawing from the diverse inputs of our members, we advocate for a holistic approach to sustainability, one that prioritises biodiversity and a just transition and examines structural causes of climate destruction rather than focus solely on individual responsibility.

During focus groups, suggestions ranged from Increased and improved recycling and waste management, green infrastructure, and promoting active travel to larger systemic changes such as energy transition, increased biodiversity and rewilding and increased local food production. Many members highlighted the urgent need to shift from a fossil fuel-based economy to a greener, circular economy that values resource efficiency and sustainability.

In the context of climate change, members stressed the importance of community education, awareness, and resilience building. The need for a just transition was mentioned frequently, ensuring that this transition to a greener economy is fair and equitable, leaving no one behind. The need for more trees was communicated. across most groups alongside more green space in developments and a call for more rewilding and biodiverse spaces.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Green Infrastructure Development:** Prioritise the development of green spaces, parks, urban forests, and rooftop gardens that contribute to carbon sequestration, biodiversity and improve the city's liveability.<sup>8,9</sup>
2. **Depaving Programme:** Support the depaving of concrete gardens and spaces to be replaced with permeable surfaces such as soil, woodchip or gravel that will allow rainwater to soak into the ground naturally rather than run off into drains and sewers. This will reduce the risk of flooding and replenish groundwater supplies.<sup>10</sup>
3. **Sustainable Transport Initiative:** Invest in infrastructure to promote cycling, walking, wheeling and public transport use. Implement policies to discourage the use of private cars, like congestion charges, and increase the availability and accessibility of EV charging stations. Make available a scheme for bike bunkers in urban areas where a community can request one for their street in lieu of a parking spot. Support the fast-tracking of Park and Ride at the key nodes as part of CMATS. Implement 30km speed limits in all urban areas.
4. **Climate Education Program:** Initiate climate education programs in schools, businesses, and community groups to increase awareness about climate change and the steps individuals can take to mitigate its impacts.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/review?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:04c2fde4-eb35-3d95-aafc-fd3f303d4147>

<sup>9</sup> [dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2021-12/dcc-green-blue-roof-guide-2021.pdf](https://dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/2021-12/dcc-green-blue-roof-guide-2021.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/environmental-services/flooding/flooding-prevention-reporting-information/what-depaving>

5. **Energy Transition Plan:** Develop a comprehensive plan for transitioning to renewable energy sources for both residential and commercial sectors. This should include retrofitting existing buildings, promoting solar panels, and investing in community energy projects. Grants and funding should be front-loaded to ensure that cost is not a barrier.
6. **Circular Economy Promotion:** Promote the concept of circular economy through waste management policies, encouraging repair, reuse, recycling, and composting. Offer incentives to businesses that adopt circular economy principles. Create and support mending cafes.
7. **Community Resilience Building:** Invest in community projects that build resilience against climate change impacts, like community gardens, flood defence mechanisms, and local food production systems. Investment should be financial in nature and include education and training resources.
8. **Local Food Production:** Encourage local food production and consumption to reduce food miles, promote seasonality, and support local farmers and food businesses. To include a public awareness campaign of where people can access locally grown food and of the benefits to the environment.
9. **Just Transition Strategy:** Ensure a just transition to a low-carbon economy that is fair and equitable, providing re-skilling and training programs for workers in transitioning industries and social support for those affected. In consultation with communities, agree on a definition of “Just Transition” to support collaborative policy implementation.



10. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Implement biodiversity conservation strategies in urban planning and development, protecting and enhancing local ecosystems and wildlife. To firmly acknowledge that our communities coexist with communities of other species and ensure that this local economic and community plan considers the rights of nature in all decisions and commitments made.
11. **Sustainable Public Procurement:** Adopt sustainable procurement policies in the public sector that prioritize environmentally friendly products and services.
12. **Climate Adaptation Plan:** Develop a robust climate adaptation plan for Cork City, addressing future climate risks and outlining steps to increase the city's resilience.
13. **Inclusive Climate Action:** Ensure that climate action policies and programs are inclusive and accessible to all, with special attention to marginalized communities who are often most affected by tariff or tax-based climate policies.
14. **Water Conservation:** Implement water conservation measures and raise awareness on the importance of water conservation.
15. **Youth Engagement in Climate Action:** Encourage and provide platforms for young people to participate in climate action and decision-making processes. Provide engaging educational and practical opportunities for young people to get involved and be heard in Climate Action.
16. **Net-Zero Emissions Target:** Set ambitious targets for Cork City to become net-zero, outlining clear timelines and action plans above the national goals.
17. **Community Composting.** Create opportunities for community composting.

18. **Biodiverse Action Plans.** Provide funding and resources for areas to create biodiversity action plans specific to their area.
19. **Preserve Wild Spaces for Wildlife.** Prioritise the protection of wild spaces to reduce the potential disruption of natural wildlife. Fund organisations committed to protecting wildlife.
20. **Support Air Quality Initiatives for both internal and external spaces.** Support and promote the appropriate de-paving of gardens and implementation of green roofs as other local authorities have done through an information campaign. Support micro-local leaf mould production as the issue of slippery leaves in autumn has been highlighted as a source of hostility to urban trees in gardens.

## CONCLUSION

During focus groups, our members shared a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities that exist in Cork City. We have heard the clear call for more robust community inclusion and the creation of spaces for people to connect and support each other. The need for accessible and affordable housing, coupled with the desire for enhanced green spaces, points to a vision of sustainable urban development in Cork City that balances environmental responsibility and quality of life for everyone. The economy of Cork City requires investment in infrastructure with opportunities for fostering a sustainable and inclusive local economy through the promotion of indigenous startups, the creation of more job opportunities, and the provision of quality, affordable childcare.

Drawing from these insights, the recommendations in this report offer practical, achievable steps toward a more inclusive and sustainable Cork City. They represent a commitment to progress, but they are not the end of the journey. In conclusion, the successful implementation of these recommendations will create a vibrant Cork City that is socially inclusive, economically thriving, and environmentally sustainable, ensuring a high quality of life for everyone who lives here.



# APPENDICES

## LIST OF GROUPS CONSULTED.

1. LINC
2. Ballyphehane Togher Community Development Project
3. Cork Gay Project
4. Cork Migrant Centre
5. Mayfield Community Development Project
6. Cork Community Media Hub
7. Couchsurfing BeWelcome
8. Cork Community Bikes
9. Cork Entrepreneurs Network
10. Blarney Vintage Club
11. St Josephs Community Association Ltd
12. Before 5 Family Centre
13. Cork Nature Network
14. Cork Cycling Campaign
15. Tabor Group
16. Together-Razem
17. Waterloo Renewal Group
18. Independent Living Movement Ireland
19. Ballincollig Mens Shed
20. The Sexual Health Centre
21. Family Carers Ireland
22. Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre
23. Meitheal Mara
24. Mayfield East Community Association

25. Kilcully/Ballincroilig Residents Association
26. Blackpool Community Centre
27. Irish Polish Society
28. Irish Senior Citizens Parliament
29. Glanmire Area Community Association
30. CDYS Youth Work Ireland
31. Let's Grow Together! Infant & Childhood Partnerships CLG
32. Arts at Civic Trust House
33. Aatma Dance
34. Cork Environmental Forum
35. Newbury House Family Centre CLG
36. Glanmire Area Community Association
37. Nash's Boreen
38. Pedestrian Cork
39. Traveller Visibility Group
40. UCC Green Campus Committee
41. Good Day Cork
42. Wallaroo
43. Trees Please
44. Ballyphehane Tidy Towns
45. Cork Simon
46. Foodcloud
47. Cork Access Group
48. Save Cork City
49. World Malayalee Council, Cork
50. Green Spaces for Cork
51. Comhairle Na nÓg
52. Peniel Christian Assembly

