CLOSE TO HOME
EXPLORING 15-MINUTE URBAN LIVING IN IRELAND

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Close to Home — Exploring 15-Minute Urban Living in Ireland

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IIP is the voice of institutionally financed investors with significant international backing in the Irish real estate market. The mission of IIP is to promote the development of a sustainable world class real estate sector in Ireland which benefits members, the economy, communities and wider society.

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Hassell is a multidisciplinary architecture, design and urban planning practice with offices in the United Kingdom, Australia, China, Singapore, and United States. Hassell's mission is to connect insights with creativity to design sustainable, world-class places — places people love.
The introduction sets the scene for the report, by sharing an executive summary of our findings and a brief overview of the Irish urban development context. Chapter One defines the 15-minute city concept, and explores how and why such places might be created. Throughout the chapter, the experiences and perceptions of the Irish people are presented alongside the urban theory. Chapter Two takes a closer look at the development challenges and opportunities for each of the five Irish cities. Together with new research findings, we discuss how the 15-minute city concept might apply in these places. The third and final chapter charts a path forward. By listing the key barriers and enablers, alongside a catalogue of interventions, the chapter aims to inspire action and help catalyse change. The appendix outlines how and where this report has found its inspiration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting the Context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS A 15-MINUTE CITY?** | 13 |
| Introduction | 15 |
| Part 1: The Core Amenities | 18 |
| Part 2: The People’s Experience | 32 |
| Part 3: Creating 15-Minute Cities | 38 |
| Part 4: The People’s Perceptions | 46 |
| Summary | 51 |

**CHAPTER 2: WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE IRISH CITIES?** | 53 |
| Introduction | 55 |
| The Five Irish Cities | 58 |
| Waterford, Galway, and Limerick | 60 |
| Cork | 68 |
| Dublin | 72 |
| Summary | 81 |

**CHAPTER 3: WHAT DO THE NEXT STEPS LOOK LIKE?** | 83 |
| Introduction | 85 |
| Part 1: Barriers and Enablers | 86 |
| Part 2: Catalogue of Interventions | 91 |
| Conclusion | 105 |

**APPENDIX** | 107 |
| How We Learned & Contributors | 108 |
| Endnotes & Table Notes | 110 |
| Literature List | 118 |
| Survey Details & Image Rights | 120 |
| Authors & Team | 121 |
The mission of IIP is to promote the development of a sustainable world class real estate sector in Ireland which benefits members, the economy, communities and wider society.
FOREWORD
BY PAT FARRELL
CEO OF IIP

At this time, when policymakers and citizens alike are rethinking many aspects of how we live today and interact with the built environment, we believe that this report on 15-minute urban living in Ireland is a timely contribution, bringing fresh thinking and new insight to light.

Irish Institutional Property (IIP) is the voice of institutionally financed investors and real estate providers with significant local and international backing in the Irish real estate market. IIP members are backed by a diverse group of investors, including Irish and international pension funds. Post the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) institutional capital has become a significant component of both the global and Irish real estate markets, providing stable long-term funding to enable sustained delivery of the required supply of critical infrastructure, housing and workplaces.

IIP members manage approximately €15bn of Irish property, targeting delivery of circa 50% of the projected private market housing output in Ireland, including a significant amount of higher density apartment delivery. IIP members directly employ over 6,000 people, indirectly employ a further circa 23,000, while IIP tenant companies employ more than 36,000 people.

The mission of IIP is to promote the development of a sustainable world class real estate sector in Ireland which benefits members, the economy, communities and wider society. We are bringing our mission to life by enabling the development of a high-quality built environment: new places to work, live, study and socialise, thereby building sustainable communities. We seek continued partnership and engagement with the State and its citizens and all stakeholders to unlock Ireland's full potential – a future built on sustainable and inclusive development which delivers for citizens, workplaces, those seeking to acquire a home and communities.

In January 2020 we set out our policy priorities which complement our mission, including emphasising the need to undertake a public education campaign which makes the case for compact city growth, clearly setting out the societal and economic case for action, made even more urgent by the onset of climate change.

A more informed public understanding of the positive benefits of compact growth is necessary to build and sustain public support for this concept. At the heart of realising this ambition is the vision of the 15-minute city. At this time, when policymakers and citizens alike are rethinking many aspects of how we live today and interact with our built environment, we believe this report is a timely contribution to that discussion bringing as it does fresh thinking and new insight to bear on this important topic.

€15bn
of Irish property managed by IIP members.

13,000
new homes delivered by IIP members.

2.6m
square feet of hospitality, retail and office space delivered by IIP members.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"Close to home: exploring 15-minute urban living in Ireland" uncovers the popular "15-minute city" concept and its potential application in Ireland. The report brings fresh perspectives and new findings to light, informed by secondary research, original interviews, and a global population survey.

In the past year, the 15-minute city has become a popular concept world-wide, capturing hearts and minds in the middle of a global pandemic and escalating climate emergency.

In Ireland, the concept has been championed both politically and in the popular media, as an attractive approach to delivering the Government’s compact growth agenda.

SCOPE
This report provides an introduction to the 15-minute city, and an evaluation of the conditions, benefits, and challenges associated with making this idea a reality. The study is also relevant for understanding the parallel concepts of 20-minute neighbourhoods and 10-minute towns.

In analysing the concept’s real-world use, the report is focused on Ireland and the five Irish cities, ordered by ascending size of population: Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin.

Literature, interviews, and surveys
The study has been informed by a broad review of academic articles, media coverage, policy documents, and online available data.

We have also been speaking to 22 high-level stakeholders, representing the public and private urban development sector in Ireland. These conversations have helped form a nuanced understanding of the country’s current and future development challenges.

Finally, we draw on insights from an original population survey, commissioned for this report. Fieldwork was carried out by YouGov Plc. in June 2021, collecting responses from 1,004 people in Ireland, and more than 4,000 people across the UK, the US, and Australia.

FINDINGS
The study finds considerable alignment between Ireland’s push towards more compact, sustainable, and equitable urbanism, and the key tenets of the 15-minute city. Notably, both development forms require a combination of medium-to-high population density, amenity-richness, and excellent walking, cycling, and public transport networks.

By living closer together and sharing more resources, people benefit from greater levels of access to services and social opportunities, while the environment benefits from more efficient land, material, and energy use.

What goes in a 15-minute city?
The 15-minute city sets out to bring at least six core aspects of life closer to home: education, work, transport, nutrition, health & care, and recreation & culture – as illustrated overleaf. By
having access to these categories of amenities within a short walk or bike ride, people are (theoretically and practically) more likely to be able to live a healthful life within the planet’s ecological boundaries.

**How do you make a 15-minute city?**

In 15-minutes, at an average walking pace, a person can reach an area of 3−5 km². This figure in turn produces a required amenity density of at least six different types of destinations (education, work, transport, nutrition, health & care, recreation & culture) per 3−5 km². At a walking pace of 5 km/hour, that’s about one destination every 200 linear metre.

By reviewing a range of studies of the ideal densities to support these high service levels, we find that a residential population of 5,000 people/km² is the absolute minimum requirement, while 10−20,000 people/km² tends to be the recommended ideal. A rich diversity of people is equally important, supported by a wide range of housing options.

When both the amenity provision and density aspects are met, it is essential that a high proportion of journeys can be completed by foot, bike, and public transport in order to avoid congestion (from private vehicles). Concurrently, it will also become easier (viable and feasible) to deliver a high-quality active travel and public transport experience in a denser, more amenity-rich environment.

**AMENITIES IN A 15-MINUTE CITY**

- **EDUCATION**
  - Discovering new knowledge

- **WORK**
  - Finding meaningful work

- **TRANSPORT**
  - Making useful connections

- **NUTRITION**
  - Sourcing healthy groceries

- **HEALTH & CARE**
  - Accessing kind support

- **RECREATION & CULTURE**
  - Enjoying leisure time

**The experience of the Irish people**

The study finds a range of opportunities, but also some challenges, for applying the 15-minute city concept in Ireland — especially relating to people’s experience with, and perceptions of, compact urbanism.

In terms of current and desired access to amenities in the six main categories, the YouGov population survey finds:

- 10% of the Irish population can currently walk to all six kinds of amenities within a quarter of an hour.
- If given the choice, 33% say that they would like every type of amenity within a 15-minute walk from home.
- Public transport connections, grocery shops (nutrition), and leisure activities (recreation & culture) are the most popular types of amenities.

**The Irish people’s perceptions**

The YouGov population survey also interrogated people’s perceptions of different conditions that make the 15-minute city possible. We find that:

- Support for “compactness” is low overall, while support for “walkability” is high overall.
- People generally rate compact, high-density neighbourhoods as less beneficial for the environment than low-density, sprawling places.
- Younger people (18-34 year olds) are more supportive of compact urbanism than the older age groups, and more likely to appreciate the benefits of denser developments and resource sharing.
- Older people (55+) are most likely to value walkability as a neighbourhood feature, but least likely to value compactness.

**33% of the Irish population would like to be able to access amenities in all six categories within a 15-minute walk from home. At the moment, only 10% can.**

- People travel the furthest for work. If given the choice, only two in five people who work (43%) would want to be able to walk to their place of work in 15 minutes or less. Meanwhile, 44% of the working population want their work further than a 15-minute walk from home.

**15-MINUTE WALKABLE PLACES**

- 1.25 km
- 3-5 km²
- 6+ types of amenities
- 15 minutes

- People travel the furthest for work. If given the choice, only two in five people who work (43%) would want to be able to walk to their place of work in 15 minutes or less. Meanwhile, 44% of the working population want their work further than a 15-minute walk from home.

- 37% of the Irish population say that fewer buildings on more space makes a place more environmentally sustainable. Only 15% believe that compactness helps to increase sustainability.

- 59% of the Irish population say that walkability makes a neighbourhood desirable as a place to live and work. 41% say that a place becomes more desirable by having easy access for cars.
Despite these challenges, the Irish population is generally still more supportive of the 15-minute city urban conditions than people in the three other surveyed countries: UK, US, and Australia.

**State of the Irish cities**

Looking at the urban development and future potential of the five Irish cities, the study finds that:

- All the studied cities (Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin) are strategically located by key natural amenities (such as rivers); but after a century of industrialisation and suburbanisation, this potential is now untapped.

- The cities were built as dense, walkable, amenity-rich clusters up until the mid-19th century, when a significant period of population decline stagnated urban development. Suburban sprawl and a lack of human-centred urban planning from the mid-20th century and onwards further detracted from the city centres.

- Today, all the cities struggle with high levels of car-dependency, low levels of density, and large areas of amenity-poor neighbourhoods.

- The national compact growth agenda has been adopted in the local development plans, and there is substantial land to develop in all five cities. But with much higher construction costs for higher density developments relative to lower density developments, and a negative public view of compact urbanism, the reality has yet to catch up with the vision.

**CONCLUSIONS**

It is clear that the 15-minute city could be both an appealing and useful approach to addressing the needs of the Irish people, as well as the country’s economic ambitions and environmental obligations. The 15-minute city idea could help connect with the population around the benefits of urban living, and provide a framework for making places that are desirable to live in and exciting to visit.

**Barriers and enablers**

In order to build a sustainable Irish urban future, we find five overarching challenges to address, and five key opportunities to harness.

Key roadblocks to address include:

- Getting the public on board with urban living to help raise population densities (especially in the city centres) to more sustainable and viable levels.

- Covering the upfront costs and risks associated with building high-density, amenity-rich neighbourhoods, including addressing current viability challenges.

- Building on a weak platform of urban form and compact growth experience.

- Transcending political cycles in favour of long-term, sustainable plans.

- Establishing mutual trust between citizens, and the public and private sectors.

Key opportunities to harness include:

- Demographic shifts, societal trends, and changing values are slowly turning the tide in favour of urban living.

- The 15-minute city concept is a fresh compelling narrative for sustainable development.

"The actual delivery is the difficult part, particularly in terms of infrastructure development. Some things have to be front-loaded and that is a problem that we haven’t tackled yet."

Stakeholder interview
urbanism, with the potential to counter existing negative perceptions of ‘compactness’ and ‘high-density’.

→ Everyone – from local authorities to institutional investors – are keenly focused on designing for people and to improve people’s quality of life.

→ Government, local authorities, and private developers and landlords are all moving towards a more active land management model that will help deliver long-term, sustainable and successful neighbourhoods.

→ There is an appetite in the urban development sector for establishing more productive public-private partnerships, with local authorities taking charge of the overall vision and quality, and private developers pitching in where there is certainty around the rewards.

From vision to reality

The study concludes that the biggest challenge (and opportunity) might be Ireland’s relative lack of experience with high-quality, compact urban living – while the rural identity remains incredibly strong.

"I think people have connected with the idea of 15-minute cities because they can imagine what it is like to have a better work-life balance."

Stakeholder interview

Though people desire to live a convenient, walkable lifestyle, the realities around how these types of services and amenities are implemented does not appear to be well understood, or appreciated, by the general public.

To address this gap between perception and reality, we recommend further citizen engagement and dialogue to better link people’s motivations, urban strategy, and policy objectives.

We also recommend that the conversation around amenities, density, and accessibility in the Irish cities moves away from focusing on binary options (building up or building out) towards a more holistic, multifaceted, and creative approach.

In the final chapter, we outline a range of interventions to catalyse and inspire action. We suggest that the sooner the Irish cities can start showcasing the benefits of different urban models (through engagement, real-world experiments, urban innovation, and best-practice projects), the better.

A new era of Irish urbanism

Our exploration of 15-minute urban living in Ireland concludes that by adopting the 15-minute city concept and making it their own, the Irish cities have a unique opportunity to increase the quality of the urban lifestyle, catalyse local economies, and support the country to live and work more sustainably.

In realising this vision, the cities will not only be defining 15-minute urban living in Ireland, but a new, exciting future for Irish urbanism altogether.
In the face of significant population growth, socio-political pressures, and climate change, Ireland has launched a compact growth agenda, placing cities at the heart of the country’s future like never before.

In Ireland, it’s a well-known fact: the population is set to grow by one million people up to 2040, bringing the total population from five to close to six million people.1

**Demographic change**

To support the anticipated population growth, the country is preparing to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs and homes across every county, from Donegal in the north to Cork in the south, from Dublin in the east to Galway in the west.

In addition to requiring new places to work and live, the pressure on the country’s public services and civic infrastructure is also set to increase.

Not only will there be more people needing utilities and using the public transport networks, but projections also suggest an increase in the dependency ratio from 53% to 65%, largely driven by an ageing population.2 Children will continue to need childcare and education, and more seniors will need healthcare and personal care, relative to the working population.

**Patterns of living and working**

In addition to demographic change, people are also changing how they live and work. Between 1991 and 2016, the average household size has decreased from 3.34 to 2.75 persons per home,3 while just in the last year, the number of people who require facilities to work from home has starkly increased.4

**Responding to climate change**

Like the rest of the world, Ireland is also facing serious disruption caused by climate change. Rising temperatures are creating more erratic weather conditions, leading to a greater risk of extreme weather events interfering with everyday life.5 Heavy rainfall, storms, and water shortages are all risks that must be mitigated, to avoid floods, power cuts, droughts, biodiversity loss, and the pollution of soil, air, and water.

At the moment, Ireland is contributing substantially to the worsening of these conditions, while the built environment (including public infrastructure) is poorly prepared to deal with the effects.6 As the environmental pressures mount, public and private infrastructure must be adapted to reduce carbon emissions and increase resiliency in case of disruption.

**Planning for growth**

Dealing with these and other challenges, the Government of Ireland has created the National Planning Framework (NPF), also known as Project Ireland 2040. The NPF is supported by the National Development Plan (NDP), 2018-2027, which details the budget allocation (almost €116 billion) to be spent over a 10-year period, and by the Regional Spatial and Economic Planning.
The idea of using time as a measure of compactness and accessibility has gained significant traction in Ireland in recent years.

This experience has helped to start a conversation about the provision of amenities in different communities, bringing the idea of proximity-based urban planning to the forefront.

Planning for 10 or 15-minute proximity

In July 2020, the Southern Regional Assembly published an accessibility and framework report on “10-minute towns”, looking at Carlow, Ennis, and Tralee as case studies.8

In September 2020, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce published a ‘15-minute city’ planning vision, calling for improvements to the city’s public transport network, public realm, and provision of community amenities, as well as increased urban density to unlock new economic, social, and environmental benefits.9

And in February 2021, Dublin City Council published the results of a citizen survey testing the concept with the city’s residents. The survey found that 36% of the respondents were familiar with the concept of the 15-minute city and understood its meaning.10

These reports accompany numerous articles, blogs, and discussions that have also been commenting on the subject, proving the idea to have some existing resonance with the Irish population.

Connecting the dots

The 15-minute city concept draws together many of Ireland’s current policy objectives, while taking a decidedly people-centred approach to spatial planning.

Within the NPF and NDP, the 15-minute city concept aligns with at least seven of the ten strategic outcomes and investment priorities outlined:

- Compact growth facilitated by investments in housing and sustainable urban development (Priority 1).
- Sustainable mobility facilitated by investments in environmentally sustainable public transport (Priority 4).
- A strong economy facilitated by investments in enterprise, skills, and innovation capacity (Priority 5).
- Enhanced amenity and heritage facilitated by investments in culture, heritage, and sport (Priority 7).
- Transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society facilitated by investments in climate action (Priority 8).
- Sustainable resource management facilitated by investments in water infrastructure (Priority 9).
- Access to quality education, childcare and health services, facilitated by investments in these areas (Priority 10).

Throughout this report, we will continue to make reference to these national development objectives as we outline the details and benefits of the 15-minute city ideal.
“If you want to encourage people to live closer together, you have to bring them along on the journey.”

Stakeholder interview
CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS A 15-MINUTE CITY?
Cities across the world, from Melbourne in Australia, to Paris in France, to Ottawa in Canada, have launched urban development plans centred around variations of the 15-minute city idea.
The 15-minute city describes a place where every citizen might access everything (or almost everything) they need to live healthfully and happily within a quarter of an hour’s walk or bike ride from their home – hence the 15-minute moniker.1

The concept is fundamentally about creating opportunities for people to live locally, while also ensuring that no neighbourhood – and no community – is deprived of critical amenities, services, or facilities. The availability of fresh food, health and social care, public transport networks, and schools is key, together with access to jobs and places to enjoy free time.

In the name of neighbourhood living
In urban planning, the idea of designing around proximity and access has existed for several decades, arguably since the American author Jane Jacobs first wrote in favour of the neighbourhood unit in the 1960s.2

From Melbourne in Australia, to Barcelona in Spain, to Ottawa in Canada, variations of the 15-minute city concept are inspiring change in world-class cities across the globe, by driving locally oriented urban planning frameworks.

The specific “15-minute city” vision discussed in this report has been gaining traction in Europe in the past year, since the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, launched her 2020 re-election campaign around the concept – and won.3

From climate change to pandemics
In 2020, the world was struck by the devastating coronavirus pandemic, at once confining millions across the globe to stay within their local environments. People who might never before have thought to question the quality of their neighbourhood, suddenly came to realise exactly how far away the park was, and what stock the local shops might carry.

These experiences further contributed to the momentum of the developing “15-minute city” narrative, with everyone from the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group to Dublin Chamber of Commerce publishing new material in the last 18 months in support of the concept.

Responding to criticism
With the growing interest in local-living urbanism, several critics have also spoken up to voice their concerns.4

Why confine people within a geographic boundary when we know that cross-pollination between communities is a key factor for building a stronger, more equal society?

Why encourage people to work locally, when they might benefit from taking a more challenging job elsewhere? What happens to culture if every neighbourhood becomes a homogeneous unit without any degree of friction to help push boundaries and challenge perceptions?

These concerns are all valid and worthy of serious consideration.

It’s not a bubble – it’s a platform
One answer is to think of the 15-minute city not as a bubble of restrictions, but as a platform to entry; no one is confined to their local environment, but no one is impaired by it either.

The fact of the matter is that around the world, thousands of neighbourhoods exist that do not meet the basic requirements of their citizens. People who live in “food deserts” struggle to eat well. People who live without access to work struggle to support their families. The consequences of deprivation are poor health and a seriously diminished quality of life.5 Which in turn comes with a high societal and economic cost.

By making sure that everyone – on a fair basis – is living with easy access to essential amenities, the 15-minute city can also be a strategy for addressing social deprivation and inequality.6

READING ON
This chapter presents a common definition of 15-minute cities along with considerations for how and why such places might be built.

Throughout the chapter, we also present findings from the YouGov population survey, to interrogate how the concept and its conditions resonate with the Irish population.
The 15-minute city is defined by what a person can reach within a 15-minute walk from home. As walking speeds vary, every person's experience must be taken into account. Based on averages, the 15-minute city is practically created from a collection of 3–5 km² neighbourhoods.

The 15-minute city concept generally prioritises active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport as the main mobility modes to connect people and amenities.

**A walking radius of 3–5 km²**

At an average walking pace, it takes about 15-minutes to walk 1.25 km. Some people, such as children and the elderly, might not be able to get as far, while others could walk even further.

In built-up areas, where people's routes are likely to be broken up by traffic lights, buildings, and different bits of infrastructure, the 15-minute journey depends as much on the quality of the environment as on a person's pace and abilities.

When these considerations are taken into account, the area that covers a single 15-minute walking radius typically ranges between 3–5 km².

**A cycling radius of 50 km²**

In addition to walking, people might choose to travel by bike or scooter to reach their destinations within the local neighbourhood.

At an average speed, it is possible to cycle around 4 km in 15-minutes, significantly expanding the area within a person's reach. A 15-minute cycling radius may cover an area of up to 50 km² – equivalent to 10 times the maximum walking range. The area is even greater for people on electric bikes and scooters.

For this report, we have focused on interrogating pedestrian access levels as the highest benchmark (and lowest common denominator) of the 15-minute city.

**Relying on public transport**

Access to public transport is an important tenet of the 15-minute city concept (see next page), but time travelled on the public network does not technically count for measuring the accessibility of the local environment itself. This is due to the fact that there is always likely to be some waiting time involved with taking a bus, train, or tram. At low service hours, this would skew the assessment and potentially give a false impression of a place's convenience.

The user costs associated with public transport also tends to make it a less accessible mobility mode than both walking and cycling.

**Providing a variety of amenities**

The core amenities that should be provided within the 15-minute neighbourhood are presented on the following pages.

Theoretically, a place may classify as a 15-minute neighbourhood if every core amenity is present within a person's 15-minute walking radius.

In reality, only that person’s experience can determine what qualifies as a decent level of access (and what doesn’t). For example, it makes no difference that there's a park on the map, if you do not feel safe to use it – or if you cannot physically get to it.

**Population density and diversity**

In addition to considering the variety of amenities and the level of access, it is also critical to consider the corresponding concentration and diversity of the place's residential and visiting population.

Places that have a higher concentration of people require more amenities to avoid overcrowding at any one destination, while places that serve a diverse community require diverse amenities too. A greater population (and customer) base also increases the financial viability for providing services. Meanwhile, a low concentration of people might result in an under-provision.

5,000 people/km² tends to be the lowest population density proposed for compact walkable places. Studies suggest that the ideal range is 10–20,000 people/km², and sometimes up to 25,000 people/km². Within 3–5 km², that's equivalent to a residential population of anywhere in-between 20,000–100,000 people.

If the population density is lower than this, people tend to be too spread out to support a richness of amenities, thereby increasing the car-dependency of the community and decreasing the walkability of the streets.

We will discuss these aspects, together with the importance of ensuring accessibility, in more detail further on in the chapter.
THE GEOMETRY OF 15-MINUTE WALKABLE PLACES

Regional scale of a 15-minute walk, average range 3−5 km²
Number of residents, average range 20,000−100,000 people
Population density range, average range 5,000−25,000 people/km²
or 50−250 people/hectare
or 18−90 homes/hectare*

*At 2.75 people per home.
Sources: Reference the main text overleaf and literature list on density benchmarks in the Appendix. Illustrative map of Dublin City Centre. Densities for this area average above 10,000 people/km². See the map and CSO sources on page 72 for details.
The 15-minute city is about securing people’s access to core amenities within a reasonable walking distance from home. But what, exactly, defines a “core amenity”?

As the idea of 15-minute cities is fundamentally about unlocking local experiences, there is no single, global definition of the concept’s criteria. Whether reading about 15-minute cities, 10-minute towns, or 20-minute neighbourhoods, the listed amenities tend to be tailored to local contexts. Viewed side by side, the different versions of the concept all paint a picture of a place that’s equally healthy, productive, and enjoyable.

A public sector stakeholder confirms:

“Our objectives are on quality of life and better placemaking: We’re asking people: how can infrastructure improve your quality of life?”

By reviewing a broad range of sources, we have summarised six core categories of amenities as the foundation for this report and study. These are presented overleaf.

Categorising the core amenities

Educational facilities, transport connections, and healthcare are included as core neighbourhood amenities in every framework that has been reviewed for this study. Other types of care, such as childcare, elderly care, and community care, are sometimes mentioned. These amenities can either fall into their own category, or be combined within a broader requirement for a “health & care” provision.

Access to healthy food and groceries is generally considered a core amenity – though sometimes with a greater emphasis on commerce (i.e. for the purpose of supporting local economies) than health (i.e. for the purpose of providing a nutritional diet).

Places to work is included in some, but not all, of the reviewed material. This suggests that work is either not considered essential for a person’s local quality of life, or that it is not considered a feasible criterion to include in the concept’s definition.

For this report, we maintain that opportunities to work close to home should be available to some extent, especially for people who tend to work long hours or odd hours, such as essential workers and people who are employed in the service and hospitality industry.

With the increase in the number of people working from home at least a few days per week, all neighbourhoods are also likely to need some work facilities in the future.

The last category that we have included is also the broadest. Amenities such as recreational facilities, leisure activities, access to nature, entertainment destinations, cultural venues, hospitality venues, tourism, retail, and commerce are mentioned in some definitions, but not in all.

For this category, the common thread is the need for people to engage with activities in their free time, and that these activities should ideally help to facilitate a connection with nature and with other people.

More details of the categories are provided further on in the chapter.

It’s still quality over quantity

The realisation of an “ideal local lifestyle” will naturally be different from person to person, from place to place, and it is unrealistic for everywhere to be and do everything.

Therefore, the 15-minute city is practically a collection of 15-minute neighbourhoods that overlap and connect to make the city. In this equation, quality and appropriateness is as important as quantity and coverage. As one stakeholder said:

“It is not just about access to amenities within 15-minutes, but access to quality amenities.”

Close to home

The home is at the centre of the 15-minute walking radius. A great supply of amenities relies on a compact and diverse residential and visiting population, which in turn relies on a variety of housing and accommodation options.

Therefore, the provision and variety of the neighbourhood housing stock must be reviewed alongside the evaluation of amenities in order to determine how well people’s needs are truly met.
## SIX AMENITY CATEGORIES

See note of sources in the main text and reference the literature list for amenity categories in the Appendix.

### EDUCATION
**Discovering new knowledge**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Primary schools
  - Secondary schools
  - Third-level institutions
  - Special needs schools
  - Libraries
  - Online courses (and online access)
  - Community classes
  - Educational environments
  - Skills hubs

### WORK
**Finding meaningful work**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Offices
  - Co-working hubs
  - Workshops and factories
  - Institutions, facilities, and services
  - Remote/online jobs
  - Field jobs and jobs in the community
  - Building and construction sites
  - Print shops and tech support
  - Banks and post offices (supporting)

### TRANSPORT
**Making useful connections**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Bus stops and stations
  - Light rail stations
  - Train stations
  - Safe pedestrian networks
  - Safe cycling networks
  - Active travel facilities
  - Bicycle and scooter sharing stations
  - Car sharing schemes
  - Assisted mobility services

### NUTRITION
**Sourcing healthy groceries**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Grocery shops
  - Markets
  - Allotments
  - Community gardens
  - Community kitchens
  - Food banks
  - Supermarkets
  - Places selling healthful meals
  - Open orchards

### HEALTH & CARE
**Accessing kind support**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Health centres and GPs
  - Dentists
  - Pharmacies
  - Physical and mental therapy
  - Childcare and nurseries
  - Senior care and nursing homes
  - Community support
  - Faith groups and places of worship
  - Legal and financial support

### RECREATION & CULTURE
**Enjoying leisure time**

- Such as (but not limited to) access to:
  - Parks and green space
  - Cafés, pubs, and restaurants
  - Shops and retail stores
  - Sports grounds and gyms
  - Playgrounds
  - Post offices and newsagents
  - Theatres and cinemas
  - Museums and art galleries
  - Hotels and tourism destinations

### HOUSING
**A place to call home**

- Designed in all shapes and sizes (from single studios to a family-sized homes)
- Offered through a range of tenancy model (public and private and both)
- Accessible at all cost levels, and offered with multiple financing options
- Available for shorter and longer periods of time, and homes with assured tenancy
- Accessible for ownership, co-ownership, rent, and rent-to-buy
- Designed to meet sustainability and liveability goals

*The home is the centre of the 15-minute city concept, creating a base from which to explore the amenities of the local neighbourhood and beyond.*
The 15-minute city is about living close to educational institutions and places that can offer learning opportunities and facilitate knowledge exchange.

Access to education can be facilitated by formal academic institutions, like schools and universities, and by informal learning environments, like libraries and community hubs. Places like these help people to discover new knowledge, learn useful skills, and develop new ideas, leading to personal growth and economic and societal progress.

By having access to places of education within a 15-minute walk from home, some people will benefit from engaging in specific training programmes, while others will be exposed to beneficial serendipitous opportunities for knowledge exchange. Both forms of learning are valuable and should be encouraged through the design of the neighbourhood.

In order to maximise these opportunities, places of education should be as open as possible. A school might, for example, teach children during the day and seniors at night.

Places that aren’t traditionally used for education (such as a transport facility or a building site) can also be made to incorporate some aspects of knowledge exchange, for example through interactive exhibitions and online content.

Table 1. Access to Education in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5min</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15–30 min</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34% of the Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from a place to study and learn.

51% would like to be able to access educational facilities in 15 minutes or less.
FINDING MEANINGFUL WORK

The 15-minute city is about living close to places of employment and near a variety of opportunities for finding and engaging with meaningful work.

Access to employment is a key requirement of urban living. At a basic level, people need work to support themselves and their families. At a deeper level, work is a means for people to utilise and develop their faculties, leading to a greater sense of fulfilment and satisfaction with both work and life.11

Work does not merely have to mean time spent at a desk, but also time spent childminding, growing food, cleaning streets, and so on. Any activity that contributes to the overall wellbeing and productivity of society can fall into this category.12

Before the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic, work and life had become distinctly different activities for many people, often separated by a lengthy commute. YouGov population survey results from Ireland, the UK, the US, and Australia show that access to work is one of the rarest 15-minute city amenities.13

The 15-minute city promises to bring people closer to work, and to enable more enjoyable journeys that contribute to, rather than detract from, the day’s experiences. An enjoyable commute may help people to reset between work and home, and build physical movement into the daily routine.

Of course, the concept does not preclude people from travelling further for a job that they love. It only means that people who want to live closer to work, or work closer to home, can do so. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the provision of workplaces is as diverse as the needs of the urban population.

BUILDING THE 15-MINUTE CITY

→ Create more small and medium-scale workplaces in primarily residential neighbourhoods, for example by building on vacant sites and by retrofitting vacant properties.

→ Establish co-working hubs and maker-spaces, especially in primarily residential neighbourhoods, to provide people working from home with shared facilities, such as access to fast internet, printers, and networking.

→ Create more homes in primarily commercial neighbourhoods and residential districts, for example by building on vacant sites and renovating derelict buildings.

→ Mix working and living environments within the same buildings, for example by building offices or production facilities on lower floors and apartments on upper floors.

→ Provide a mix of housing options around large workplaces to support a diverse working population, such as renting options for transient workers and expats, and family-sized homes for employees with children.

Table 2. Access to Work in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30 min</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19% of the working Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from their main place of work.

43% of people who work would like to be able to walk to their place of work in 15 minutes or less.
The 15-minute city is about living close to convenient, reliable, and sustainable transport connections, reaching local and regional destinations.

The idea of a 15-minute city is built around walking as the primary means of transportation, followed by cycling and public transport. People are physiologically built to walk, and psychologically wired to appreciate the world at a walking pace. Walking is free, healthy, and carbon neutral, making it the single most inclusive and sustainable mode of transport. Everybody walks. Even people who drive must walk to and from the car. Cycling (and other emerging modes of micro-mobility) is a little more physically demanding and resource-dependent, but still much cheaper, space efficient, carbon efficient, and healthier than driving.

Both walking and cycling benefit from a high-quality public realm, with continuous connections, safe routes, and supporting amenities, such as benches, bike stands, and water fountains.

Access to public transport helps to expand the 15-minute circle beyond the immediate neighbourhood. It is important that people have the opportunity to travel further afield, to access unique destinations, experience other neighbourhoods, and visit friends and family. A well-serviced public transport network helps to reduce the car-dependency of a community, thereby increasing the opportunities for using the public realm for public activities.

Bus, light rail, metro, and train networks must connect with places through high-quality transit stops, offering seating and shelter, and adequate information to help people plan their journeys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5min</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30 min</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Access to Transport in Ireland

57% of the Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from a public transport connection.

70% would like to be able to access the public transport network in 15 minutes or less.
CYCLING IN COPENHAGEN

In 2018, 49% of all journeys in Copenhagen to work and education were carried out by bicycle, an increase from 41% in 2016. The City’s goal is to get a 50% cycling modal share.15

Over the past ten years, the City of Copenhagen has invested 2 billion Danish Kroner (around € 269 million) in cycling infrastructure. The City is making these investments expecting an even greater return, with 4.80 Danish Kroner (€ 0.65) saved for every kilometre travelled by bike, and 10.09 Danish Kroner per person switching from a car to a bike.16
SOURCING HEALTHY GROCERIES

The 15-minute city is about living close to places that grow, share, and sell fresh, healthy, and affordable food.

Access to food is an essential physiological requirement. People need energy in order to survive, and they need long-lasting, stable energy in order to thrive. Without a balanced diet, people’s physical and mental well-being suffers, causing issues that could last a lifetime.17

Beyond addressing food poverty (where the quantity of food is lacking), the 15-minute city also addresses the quality of food that is accessible.

Studies have shown that people who live in places without access to healthful food (known as food deserts) are at an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease,18 while their children are at risk of suffering nutritionally, behaviourally, and academically.19

People tend to make choices that are the most convenient to them, especially when they are busy, tired, or stressed.20 If access to nutritional and healthy food is difficult, such as if the grocery shop is located out of the way, it will literally impact a person’s ability to eat healthfully. Furthermore, the pricing of these items must be considered in relation to the societal benefits associated with healthy eating. Access is not just a physical issue, but an economic challenge too.

Therefore, living close to places that sell fresh and affordable fruit, vegetables, dairy products, whole grain, and so on, is not just a ‘nice-to-have’. It's critical.

The principle of providing access to healthy food can also be beneficial in other ways, by creating opportunities for people to come together in the process of growing crops, cooking dinners, and sharing meals.

Table 4. Access to Groceries in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5min</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30 min</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUILDING THE 15-MINUTE CITY

- Locate grocery shops in visible and convenient locations, such as on street corners and next to transit stops. Concurrently, reduce the number of fast-food chains located in these places.
- Provide adequate space in front of shops for outdoor displays of fresh fruit and vegetables.
- In high-density neighbourhoods, co-locate food growing and cooking facilities within commercial buildings, for example by making rooftop gardens for herbs, vegetables, and bee-keeping, and ground-floor community kitchens.
- Create spaces that can be used for hosting weekend produce markets. These can be sports grounds or parking lots at other times of the week.
- In low-density neighbourhoods, locate grocery shops by other community destinations, such as next to the school.

55% of the Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from places selling fresh food and groceries.

68% would like to be able to walk to places selling fresh groceries in 15 minutes or less.
ACCESSING KIND SUPPORT

The 15-minute city is about living close to places that offer every kind of care, supporting people from the nursery to the nursing home.

The requirement of having access to care covers everything from being able to see a doctor about a physical illness to finding support from a neighbour to carry groceries up the stairs.

Care is also about being able to drop off your children at the nursery before going to work, and finding time to visit your grandparents in the senior home on your way back. For many people, care might also be found in places of worship and in communities joined by a common faith.

Studies have shown that people who trust their local support networks are less anxious and quicker to recover from an illness than people who live in isolation. When care is inaccessible, it puts additional pressure on people to handle already difficult situations, which can in time exacerbate the need for care.

People who need care can have very different mobility requirements. Some won’t be able to drive a car, while others may struggle to walk. Generally, by bringing people closer to the places that offer care, and by prioritising the most vulnerable users (such as children and elderly people), these mobility challenges can be mitigated, helping to ensure that people quickly and easily find the support they need to maintain their quality of life.

Additionally, by creating places that bring communities closer together, people who live in 15-minute places may benefit from the informal care offered by family, friends, neighbours, and even strangers.

BUILDING THE 15-MINUTE CITY

→ Co-locate healthcare facilities with other community destinations, such as next to libraries and in train stations.

→ Co-locate health, wellbeing, and childcare facilities in commercial office buildings to make business districts more supportive of people’s ‘whole-of-life’ experiences.

→ Create more childcare facilities where people live and work, enabling parents to drop off and pick up their children en route. Next to grocery shops and doctors is also helpful.

→ Locate care facilities in places that are easily accessible by foot, bike, and public transport, with some temporary parking for vehicle drop-offs.

→ Locate care homes on local high streets and next to other community destinations, enabling the elderly to access shops and activities and benefit from greater levels of autonomy.

→ Identify the specific range of community facilities (such as places of worship and after-school programmes) that are needed for specific population groups to thrive locally.

Table 5. Access to Care in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5min</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30 min</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40% of the Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from places offering healthcare, social care, and community care.

59% would like to be able to walk to places offering care in 15 minutes or less.
RIVER SWIMMING IN ZURICH
The water in the Limmat River that runs through the heart of Zurich is so clean that people can enjoy a swim through the city in the warm summer months.
Equipped with a flotation device, the flow of the river carries swimmers safely from one end of the city to another. It is both a recreational activity and an alternative transportation mode.

URBAN SPORTS IN LONDON
International Quarter London (IQL) is a new community in Stratford, established as part of the 2012 Olympic Games legacy. The neighbourhood comprises housing, workplaces, retail and hospitality destinations, 560 acres of parkland and world-class sporting facilities.
ENJOYING LEISURE TIME

The 15-minute city is about living close to places for social, communal, and wellbeing activities, such as parks, sports venues, and community hubs.

A key benefit of creating places where everyday amenities are brought a little closer to people’s homes, is the time this saves in a person’s day. Time for socialising, time for relaxing, time for play and exploration, for creating and enjoying culture, time to connect with other people and with nature.

“Leisure” is the broadest amenity category in this 15-minute city definition, encompassing a range of facilities and activities, from parks to pubs, from the sports field to the theatre. Hence, it is very important that the specific variety of options is developed with a deep understanding of each community’s needs and, where appropriate, by the community itself.

While leisure activities may initially seem as a “nice-to-have”, studies have shown the wide health and well-being benefits of people having access to green and blue space, and to cultural and communal destinations.

To deliver leisure activities, the same place can have multiple functions at different times of the day and year. A playground may, for example, also be a rich, biodiverse environment, and a café can be a co-working hub and a book club.

In the provision of leisure amenities, it is also important to distinguish between communal and commercial activities. If a place is fully commercial, it may be economically very vibrant, but socially exclusive, whereas a place with purely communal activities might have viability issues. Again, layering is a tactic to help ensure inclusion alongside viability.

Table 6. Access to Leisure Activities in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walking Time</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;5 min</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5–15 min</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–30 min</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–45 min</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;45 min</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BUILDING THE 15-MINUTE CITY

- Map the existing provision of leisure activities against the community’s needs in order to identify gaps.
- Balance unpaid and paid activities to ensure that all members of the community have places to go in their free time.
- Increase the provision of green space, trees, vegetation, and access to water everywhere possible.
- Consider all ages and genders in the provision of leisure activities; be mindful of typically under-represented groups, such as teenagers, women, and especially teenage girls.
- Layer leisure activities with other uses and as a way to activate “dead” space, for example by turning blank facades into climbing walls and empty car parks into hopscotch arenas.
- Get creative with existing natural amenities; how many different ways might you use a river?

44% of the Irish population experience living within a 15-minute walk from places to socialise, exercise, and relax.

61% would like to be able to walk to leisure destinations in 15 minutes or less.
Diverse housing is essential for a successful 15-minute city. People need opportunities to choose a house that's right for them – in a place that's right for the many.

The home is the place where people live privately, alone, or in a community of close family, friends, and neighbours. Practically, the purpose of a house is to provide shelter and safety, protecting people while they sleep, relax, and recharge. As soon as this baseline requirement is met, the 'house' takes on a deeper meaning as an anchor for establishing a sense of belonging, and as a vessel for expressions of identity and self. Therefore, housing security and a sense of control over the environment is incredibly important for health and well-being.

People's housing needs will naturally vary throughout a lifetime. By providing a diverse housing stock on a variety of tenures, a city may not only attract, but also retain its residential population.

While the term 'house' describes the four walls that encase a person's belongings, studies have shown that the idea of 'home' warrants a much broader definition. In addition to forming attachments with the private living space, people will also – where the conditions permit – seek to establish bonds with the local environment, essentially expanding their territory and tribe (in evolutionary terms). In the 15-minute city, the home is the entire neighbourhood.

This reinforces the importance of housing diversity, which enables people to go through several life phases in appropriately sized accommodation, while maintaining a connection to place and community.

Table 7. Access to All Six Amenity Types in Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&lt;5min</th>
<th>&lt;15 min</th>
<th>&lt;30 min</th>
<th>&lt;45 min</th>
<th>45+ min</th>
<th>Accumulated walking time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Current: 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Housing is a critical part of people's lives – without good, stable housing, it is very difficult to live well and focus on your future.”

Fiona Cormican, Director of New Business, Clúid Housing
SUSTAINABLE LIVING IN FREIBURG

The Sun Ship (Das Sonnenschiff) is a sustainable mixed-use development in Freiburg, Germany, built in 2004 as part of the Vauban quarter.

Designed by the architect Rolf Disch, the Sun Ship is powered entirely by solar energy, generating four times more energy than it uses.

The development comprises sixty individually designed PlusEnergy Homes located on top of office and retail space.
Imagine living within close reach of all the essential amenities that make for a healthy, happy life. What would your 15-minute neighbourhood comprise?

THE 15-MINUTE CITY

EDUCATION
Discovering new knowledge

WORK
Finding meaningful work

TRANSORT
Making useful connections

NUTRITION
Sourcing healthy groceries

HEALTH & CARE
Accessing kind support

RECREATION & CULTURE
Enjoying leisure time
"The 15-minute city is a state of mind."

Stakeholder interview
THE PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE

The YouGov survey of the Irish population suggests that, while there is definite support for the 15-minute city concept overall, creating the ideal city is not as easy as simply putting everything close to everyone.

When we surveyed the Irish population about how far they currently have to walk to reach amenities in the six categories, and how far they would ideally like to walk, it was clear that there is a gap between the ideal situation and current reality. But, we also found that the gap was not as big as it might have been, with some people saying that they would keep some amenities a bit further from home than a mere 15-minute walk if given the choice. Such nuances are important to consider when delivering the concept locally.

Being close to (almost) everything
10% of the Irish people currently experience being able to walk to every single type of the listed amenities. Meanwhile, one in three people (33%) would choose to be within a 15-minute walk of all six types amenity types if they could. These numbers suggests that around one third of the Irish population would like to live in a "complete" walkable 15-minute neighbourhood, a tripling of the current number of people benefitting from 15-minute access levels.

Public transport and nutrition (fresh food) are the most popular categories, with 70% and 68% of people wishing to have access to these types of amenities within a 15-minute walk. 35% of people would even prefer to have a transport stop less than 5-minutes away. Meanwhile, the work and education categories are the least important for people to have within the 15-minute walkable neighbourhood.

“The 15-minute city should be about the quality of interaction between people and the feeling of community.”

Stakeholder interview

Reviewing demographic differences

The page overleaf describes some of the differences in people’s preferences by gender, income, and living situation. The next pages look at age differences for a more detailed spread of destinations.

People who are younger and people who live in apartments are generally more likely to desire to live within a 15-minute walk of any of the six amenities than the average Irish person. This finding might be explained by the fact that these demographic groups tend to be more reliant on walking, cycling, and public transportation, as private vehicle ownership can be expensive and inconvenient for parking purposes in and around denser neighbourhoods.

Table 8. Current and Ideal Walking Times for All Amenity Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMENITY CATEGORIES</th>
<th>TABLE KEY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Current walking time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Ideal walking time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition (groceries)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation &amp; culture</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

...
GENDER GAPS

The experience of access is fairly equal between men and women, except that women feel they are further from places to socialise, exercise, and relax. Men are slightly more likely to say that they currently have access within 15-minutes to leisure activities (48%) compared to women (40%). Since the desirability levels are quite similar at 62% and 60% respectively, it means that the gap experienced by women is equivalent to one in five women wanting, but not having, access to such amenities (within a 15-minute walk).

Only 6% of men have said that they would never walk anywhere, compared to almost one in ten women (9%). Other differences for this question were statistically insignificant, suggesting a good basis for creating gender-balanced 15-minute cities in Ireland overall.

SINGLES AND FAMILIES

People who live alone are most likely to have – and want – easy access to work.

People who live alone (and who are working) are much more likely to experience being able to walk to work in less than 15-minutes (27%) than the average Irish person (19%). They are also more likely to desire to be close to work, especially compared to people who live with children. People who live with children are less likely to feel that they can walk to places of leisure within a 15-minute walk (37% compared to 44% on average). They are slightly more likely to want places of education close to home.

INCOME DISPARITIES

People on lower incomes are generally more amenity-poor than people on higher incomes, with the exception of access to work; in fact, the more people earn, the less likely they are to be able to walk to work.

People who earn less than €25,000 annually are less likely to be within a 15-minute walk of education (29%), care (35%), leisure facilities (38%), and transport (52%) than the average Irish person.

Meanwhile, for access to work, the distance to the workplace tends to increase with the level of income. People who work in a job where they earn more than €50,000 annually are almost twice as likely to be over half an hour’s walk from work (65%) than people who earn less than €25,000 annually (38%).

27% of people who work and earn less than €25,000 annually can walk to their place of work in under 15 minutes, compared to just 13% of people who earn more than €50,000 annually.

In terms of desired access, the differences are less stark. People earning less than €25,000 annually are slightly less likely to say that they want to be able to walk to groceries, transport, and leisure facilities within a 15-minute walk than the average Irish person, while people who work and earn more than €100,000 annually are less likely to want their workplace within the 15-minute walkable neighbourhood.

A more in-depth study of community preferences is required to understand what might be driving these choices.

HOME AND HOUSE

People who live in apartments are much more likely to live in places that fulfil the 15-minute city criteria than people who occupy a whole house.

The survey asked people about their living situation, categorising people who live in apartments in purpose-built blocks, people who live in apartments in converted houses, and people who live in households with a whole house to themselves.

Generally, the access levels are much higher for people living in apartments than for people in whole houses.

People living in apartments in purpose-built blocks are much more likely to say that they have access to care (56%) within a 15-minute walk than people who live in whole houses (37%). They are also significantly more likely to be able to walk to places selling fresh groceries in 15-minutes or under (79% compared to 50%), to places of recreation (67% compared to 39%), and to public transport (86% compared to 52%).

People living in flats in converted houses tend to be somewhere in the middle. The differences for access to work and education are less significant, though still following the same trend.

The differences for desired access are less pronounced. Generally, people living in a whole house are less likely to want to walk to amenities than people who live in apartments. People who live in purpose-built apartments are much more likely to say that they want groceries (85%) and public transport (84%) within a 15-minute walk from home than the average Irish population.

“People from different communities are attracted by different types of services and amenities in the city. It’s important that we think about individual people’s needs, and that we consider minorities alongside the general population.”

Stakeholder interview
In order to explore the nuances in people's preferences within the core amenity categories, we also asked people to choose between 10 different types of destinations.

**THE SIX CORE AMENITIES**

- **EDUCATION**
- **WORK**
- **TRANSPORT**
- **HEALTHY NUTRITION**
- **HEALTH & CARE**
- **RECREATION & CULTURE**

**10 TYPES OF DESTINATIONS**

- **EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**
  - Such as schools, libraries, skills hubs, etc.

- **PLACES TO WORK**
  - Such as jobs, offices, workshops, factories, etc.

- **PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS**
  - Such as train stations, Luas stations, bus stations, etc.

- **PLACES TO ACCESS FRESH FOOD**
  - Such as grocery shops, markets, allotments, etc.

- **HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE FACILITIES**
  - Such as health centres, pharmacies, social services.

- **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**
  - Such as community hubs, childcare, places of worship, etc.

- **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**
  - Such as playgrounds, sports facilities, gyms, etc.

- **GREEN & BLUE SPACES**
  - Such as parks, gardens, lakes, beaches, etc.

- **CULTURAL DESTINATIONS**
  - Such as cinemas, museums, theatres, etc.

- **RETAIL & HOSPITALITY DESTINATIONS**
  - Such as shops, stores, cafés, etc.

**PRIORITISING DESTINATIONS**

In addition to asking people how close they currently are, and how close they would like to be, to the six core amenity categories (Table 1-8), our YouGov population survey also asked respondents to choose specific types of facilities and destinations over others.

In this exercise, the broad categories for “leisure” and “care” were separated into a few different types of destinations.

By asking people to choose what five out of ten destinations they would most like to have access to within a 15-minute walk from home, we find additional nuances in people’s preferences, especially by age.

While "leisure" as an amenity category is highly desired overall, different types of leisure activities have significantly different levels of appeal.

Recreation is, for example, more important to the younger population, while retail & hospitality and culture rank high for the over 55’s.

Building the 15-minute city is not only a matter of taking these needs into account in the present, but about creating enough flexibility in the built environment that uses can change as people age.

The full table of findings is presented overleaf, and a comparison to global benchmarks is presented on the next spread.
Table 9.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amenity</th>
<th>18-34 year olds</th>
<th>35-54 year olds</th>
<th>55+ year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLACES TO ACCESS FRESH FOOD</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINKS</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RETAIL &amp; HOSPITALITY DESTINATIONS</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GREEN &amp; BLUE SPACES</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH &amp; SOCIAL CARE FACILITIES</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECREATIONAL FACILITIES</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLACES TO WORK</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULTURAL DESTINATIONS</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY FACILITIES</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"What five (if any) of the ten listed destinations would you most like to have access to within a 15-minute walk from home?"

Access to places that sell fresh food is a top-five priority for 58% of the population on average, making it the most popular amenity out of the ten listed options.

18-34 year olds rank places for recreational activities, like playgrounds and sports facilities, higher than other age groups; for 25-54 year olds, green and blue spaces are the most popular type of leisure destination.

Cultural destinations are most popular amongst the 55+ year olds, with 1 in 5 (22%) ranking it as a top priority; for this age group, retail and hospitality is the most popular leisure destination.
Compared to the UK, US, and Australia, people in Ireland are much more likely to prioritise having workplaces, educational facilities, community facilities, and recreational facilities within a 15-minute walk from home.
The global YouGov population survey suggests that the Irish population are generally more likely to desire a variety of destinations within a 15-minute walk from home than the UK, US, and Australian populations.

More people in Ireland than in any of the other three countries have picked the maximum of five destinations, with people in the US least likely to pick the full five options.

When asked to choose up to five out of the ten listed destinations to have within a 15-minute walk, the Irish are much more likely to pick workplaces, educational facilities, community facilities, and recreational facilities than any of the other nationalities.

Access to public transport connections also rank highest in Ireland, though closely followed by Australia and the UK. The UK is also similar to Ireland in prioritising places to access fresh food, retail & hospitality destinations, and health & care facilities.

People in Ireland are less likely to choose green and blue spaces as one of the five prioritised destinations compared to the UK and Australia. This may be because people (when asked to prioritise) are choosing recreational facilities instead - perhaps as an indicator of Ireland's strong connection with sport, or perhaps because Ireland is a country already rich in green and blue spaces. Still, overall, green and blue spaces are prioritised by more people than recreational facilities (also see Table 9 for age differences).

"What stands out about Ireland is the friendliness and warmth of the people. If a city doesn't work for its citizens, it won't work for its tourists."

Stakeholder interview
CREATING 15-MINUTE CITIES

If a neighbourhood is to provide a range of amenities within a 15-minute walk from home, the place must have a minimum density of people, pedestrian connectivity, and diversity of uses and users, all in a human-scale environment.

As described in the chapter’s introduction, a person can walk 1.25 km in 15-minutes on average, and a 15-minute neighbourhood typically covers an area of 3–5 km². Within this space (and along this journey), at least one of every type of amenity must be present to meet the concept’s criteria. That’s potentially 2 destinations/km², or one every 200 linear metre.

Every one of these destinations, services, and facilities have to be supported by enough people (i.e. a critical mass of customers, users, visitors, etc.) to be financially viable and operationally feasible. They must also be easily accessible.

PEOPLE NEED AMENITIES

Imagine this: a place where you have access to most of your daily needs within a short 15-minute walk. Maybe you can walk to the shop, passing by the local library and busy bus stop. Looping back, you may walk through a park to get to the pharmacy on the corner, where you pick up a prescription. Before coming back, you drop by the office to send an email. Except for stop-over time, the journey has taken less than half an hour, 15-minutes there and back again.

This neighbourhood easily fulfils all your essential daily needs. It’s a 15-minute city.

AMENITIES NEED PEOPLE

Now imagine the needs of the places that you have just visited.

The shop needs customers to service. The library needs visitors to justify its operational costs. The transit stop needs travellers to warrant a frequent schedule. The park might not technically need human users, but it’s nice to see other people around, especially in the evening when it can otherwise feel unsafe. The pharmacy, like the shop, needs customers, and patients coming in for health checks. And without people like you to work in the local office, the branch would close and your journey to work would be much longer.

In order for you to have access, the neighbourhood needs enough people to match the supply of amenities.

STREETS NEED PEOPLE

In addition to having places to visit, and places having visitors, connecting routes between these users and uses are equally essential.

You were able to visit the shop because there was a street connecting you there. The shop was able to have stocked shelves because there was a street connecting it to the places of production. You were also able to carry out multiple errands in a single journey because the streets were organised in a practical network, helping you to easily join the dots. If any one route had been a dead end, the trip would have taken twice as long. If any stretch of road made you feel unsafe, you might not have gone at all.

In order for people to have access, the neighbourhood needs a fine-grain street network connecting them to destinations.

STREETS NEED PEDESTRIANS

In theory, driving might be faster. You might even find it to be more comfortable. However, in practice we find that this mode of transportation essentially undermines all of the other ideal conditions.

First, consider that the car needs a place to park, both at home and at each of the destinations. This requires space. If everyone who lives in your neighbourhood chose to drive, it would require a lot of additional space, which in turn would spread out the distance between your home and the places you desire to visit. Now you have to travel further. With other people travelling by car too, you might even get stuck in traffic.

On the streets you use, pedestrians will feel less safe, have less space for walking, and suffer from a poorer air quality. They will also be forced to stop at every intersection, making their journeys seem longer. To get away from this
This section of the report describes the urban conditions of density, amenity-richness, and access that enable 15-minute convenience. Further on, we also list the wide variety of benefits that the concept unlocks.

**Density benchmarks**

The Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP) recommends a minimum of 15,000 people/km² to support a neighbourhood to be fully walkable. Other guidelines, such as from the US, UK, and Australia, suggest densities in the range of 5,000–25,000 people/km² are needed to make compact, sustainable, walkable neighbourhoods.

**Accessibility benchmarks**

In 2018, Transport for London set a target for 80% of trips in the UK capital to be made by foot, bicycle, or public transport by 2041, up from 65% today. Buenos Aires achieved an 82% sustainable modal share in 2018 and is now targeting 85%. Copenhagen's long-standing target is for 75% of all journeys to be made by walking, cycling, or public transport.

**ENABLING ECOSYSTEM**

Mapping the relationship between people, amenities, and access

- **Community density & diversity**
  - Sustainable population density of around 5,000–25,000 people/km² (50–250 people/hectare)
  - More amenities require more people, and vice versa
  - More people increase the need for sustainable travel, and vice versa

- **Amenity richness**
  - Baseline 15-minute city requirements to be met for every citizen (6 amenity types / 3–5 km²)

- **Sustainable access**
  - Target of 80% walking, cycling, and shared transit

A greater active and shared travel provision increases the need for amenities to access, and vice versa

See note of sources in the main text and reference the literature list on density benchmarks in the Appendix.

“Walking as a means of transportation is easiest in dense cities. Density is not the same as access, but density is necessary for access.”

The Institute for Transportation & Development Policy (ITDP)
THE NEW URBAN CONDITIONS

FROM BEING FAR AWAY...           TO BEING NEARBY

The Close City
In the 15-minute city, nothing essential is ever very far away.
This means that it will be easier to coordinate multiple activities in one errand, and people who cannot move far for themselves - such as children and the elderly - will experience increased levels of autonomy.
In order to be able to supply things nearby, the 15-minute city requires a population density and diversity that is commensurate with the minimum service level.

FROM FILLING OPEN SPACE...       TO ENJOYING OPEN SPACE

The Compact City
Connecting with nature is essential for enjoying a healthy lifestyle, and therefore an important component of 15-minute cities.
In order to ensure that all people can find places to enjoy nature, the 15-minute city requires a higher concentration of both buildings and green/blue space.
By encouraging people to share space, live closer together, and travel more efficiently, the 15-minute city can preserve critical natural environments for people and wildlife to enjoy.

FROM ONE SPACE / ONE USE...      TO INTEGRATED PLACES

The Adaptable City
The health of a community depends on the health of our planet. For everyone to live well and with access to everyday amenities, we also have to live smarter and more sustainably.
To safeguard people's quality of life – especially in the face of disruption – the 15-minute city layers diverse functions and multiple uses within the same space.
When every space does more than one thing, it is more efficient in the present and better prepared for change.
The Social City
The 15-minute city is a social way of life.
By clustering people around essential amenities, the 15-minute city creates the conditions for people to connect with one another, building friendships, partnerships, and social empathy.
By encouraging people to share facilities, travel at a human pace, and engage in more activities within the neighbourhood, the 15-minute city helps to grow stronger, healthier, more productive, and more resilient communities.

The Slow City
In the 15-minute city, every minute counts.
Instead of losing valuable time on the road going between places, people will have more time to spend in the place that is their local community – if they so choose.
Having more time is a by-product of being closer to essential amenities, while being able to enjoy that time is a by-product of having a pleasant, human-scale, walkable local environment with parks and recreational facilities nearby.

The Active City
The 15-minute city is all about walking, cycling, active travel, and public transport – mobility modes that keep people healthy and engaged.
This requires a shift from car-dependent planning to making places that prioritise experiences at the human scale and at walking speed.
By reducing the amount of through-traffic, the environment in the 15-minute city also benefits from cleaner air and quieter, greener, and cleaner streets.
UNLOCKING A WEALTH OF BENEFITS

By promoting a local lifestyle centred around community access and sustainable mobility, the 15-minute city brings a wealth of benefits to people, the economy, and the environment.

The 15-minute city is associated with a range of positive outcomes for people and planet.

A few key benefits include:

- By walking and cycling to destinations, people are more physically active, which has been shown to help keep both the body and the mind healthy. Walkable neighbourhoods also promote social cohesion and community trust.
- By having greater access to essential amenities, people are more likely to exercise, eat healthy food, and establish a sense of community. This in turn increases population health.
- By living closer together, the pressure from human activities on the environment is reduced, both through better land use and from fewer transportation needs.
- By building compact places, it becomes significantly cheaper (financially and resource-wise) to implement high quality infrastructure and shared amenities and services.
- Walkable, amenity-rich places are more equitable, creating opportunities for a wider range of people to participate in civic life and contribute to societal development.

In addition to these primary benefits, the economy benefits through greater productivity and innovation catalysed by serendipitous encounters, and from the significant health cost savings that follow when people enjoy a better, healthier quality of life.

The table overleaf lists further outcomes that can be unlocked by moving towards the more compact, sustainable urban form of the 15-minute city. The list is not exhaustive.

Mitigating adverse effects of density

The table overleaf also presents a few of the challenges that must be addressed when building compact places. The environmental impacts of construction have to be mitigated, along with the economic and social inequalities that may occur from rising land values and ensuing gentrification and displacement of existing communities. Mitigating these adverse effects is key to creating sustainable and equitable cities, and should be considered alongside the benefits of densification.

The people’s perception

In Part 4 of this chapter (page 46), we take a closer look at the Irish population’s understanding and acceptance of these conditions and benefits.

“"You have to get people to understand the benefit of having 15-minute cities, and the importance of communities and healthier lifestyles.”

Stakeholder interview
# Chapter 01 – Part 3 Creating 15-Minute Cities

**Table 13. Environmental, Economic, and Societal Benefits of 15-Minute Cities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRODUCTIVE ECONOMY</strong></th>
<th><strong>HEALTHY &amp; HAPPY COMMUNITIES</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A. LOWER ENERGY USE PER CAPITA</strong></td>
<td><strong>A. LOWER INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS PER CAPITA</strong></td>
<td><strong>A. MORE TIME TO SPEND TOGETHER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the sharing of heat and energy between buildings and spaces.</td>
<td>By reducing the distances travelled for people and goods.</td>
<td>Through reduced hours spent on the road commuting between work and home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By reducing the transmission distances in the energy grid and thereby the power losses between the power plant and consumers.</td>
<td>By increasing the amount of people that share the same network (whether streets or spaces).</td>
<td>By creating opportunities for people to combine daily errands with meeting people and socialising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By using space more efficiently, with more people occupying less space more of the time.</td>
<td>By reducing the wear and tear on roads through more people using lighter mobility modes (like walking and cycling).</td>
<td><strong>B. MORE INCLUSIVE &amp; EQUITABLE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B. LOWER CARBON EMISSIONS PER CAPITA</strong></td>
<td><strong>B. MORE PRODUCTIVITY &amp; INNOVATION</strong></td>
<td>Through cheaper travel fares (and reducing the strain on household economies to pay for personal vehicles and petrol).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By reducing the need for carbon-intensive transport modes like private cars.</td>
<td>By unlocking agglomeration economies, network effects, and economies of scale.</td>
<td>By distributing essential amenities equally across all communities (note that typically deprived communities may need more amenities to level out systemic disadvantages).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the sharing of essential infrastructure that produces carbon through material use and construction.</td>
<td>By reducing the amount of time and energy that people spend commuting.</td>
<td>Through increased connectivity between people, places, services, opportunities, and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the greater sharing of materials and resources between individual households.</td>
<td>By collating a bigger talent pool for businesses to recruit from and a bigger job market for employees to engage with.</td>
<td>By creating a mobility system that is centred around the cheapest, most accessible mode of transport: walking (while also accommodating people with mobility impairments).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C. CLEANER AIR &amp; STREETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>C. THRIVING LOCAL ECONOMIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>C. INCREASED SOCIAL COHESION</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By reducing the use of personal vehicles that emit nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, and other pollutants.</td>
<td>By increasing the volume and diversity of the customer base for local businesses.</td>
<td>Through the greater interaction of people in public spaces like streets, parks, and community destinations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By increasing the amount green space and vegetation (through the re-purposing of vehicular infrastructure) to help absorb pollutants.</td>
<td>By aligning local requirements with local supplies and supply chains.</td>
<td>By improving people’s access to the public transport network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Irish EPA have estimated that pollution from fine airborne particles is responsible for around 725 deaths in Dublin annually.</td>
<td>Through increased business hours made feasible by more mixed-use neighbourhoods used by people all day and evening.</td>
<td>A study of data from Oslo finds that public transport accessibility is associated with higher social cohesion.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. GREENER CITIES &amp; COUNTRY</strong></td>
<td><strong>D. HIGHER LAND VALUES</strong></td>
<td><strong>D. HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the preservation of rural and agricultural land (by the compact use of land for buildings and human activities).</td>
<td>Through the decreasing availability of land paired with the increasing desirability of neighbourhoods.</td>
<td>Through increased walking and cycling improving physical and mental fitness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By increasing the biodiversity of the built environment to ensure everyone’s access to green space and nature.</td>
<td>By increasing the quality of the built environment and its services.</td>
<td>By increasing social interaction in the neighbourhood and reducing loneliness (and associated adverse health effects).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By re-purposing vehicular infrastructure for green space and vegetation.</td>
<td>Daft.ie finds that buyers in Dublin pay 34%, more than the average house price to live close to a DART or Luas station.5</td>
<td>By reducing crime and improving perceptions of safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. MORE RESILIENT ENVIRONMENTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>CHALLENGES</strong></td>
<td><strong>CHALLENGES</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By increasing the amount of porous surfaces and tree canopies that can mitigate floods and heat waves.</td>
<td>Increased vehicle miles travelled for business and personal deliveries, due to higher demands on the goods delivery systems.</td>
<td>Lack of adequate green space reducing the benefits of a more compact environment and creating adverse health outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By reducing the reliance on long-distance travel for both people, energy, and essential resources like food and water.</td>
<td>Gentrification of neighbourhoods pushing out long-term local businesses and communities.</td>
<td>Some communities might be less likely to engage with the traditional amenity planning processes, leading to an unequal distribution of services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. In 2014, the UK-based organisation Living Streets linked public realm improvements in the Temple Bar District in Dublin to a 300% increase in employment.4
2. A US study found that patent applications fell by 8–18% during the 1920s prohibition era because important social hubs (i.e. bars) were closed.3
3. Daft.ie finds that buyers in Dublin pay 34%, more than the average house price to live close to a DART or Luas station.5
4. A Canadian study found that “sprawl costs the public more than twice as much as compact development.”
5. An Australian study finds that participating in 15 minutes of walking a day, five days a week, can reduce the disease burden from physical inactivity by 13%.7
6. A study of data from Oslo finds that public transport accessibility is associated with higher social cohesion.
7. An Australian study finds that participating in 15 minutes of walking a day, five days a week, can reduce the disease burden from physical inactivity by 13%.7
LETTNONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

OTTAWA, CANADA

Size: 295 km²
Population: 710,584 people
Population density*: 4,532 people/km²

Canada’s capital city has launched a “15-minute Neighbourhood” plan, along with a goal to have residents complete at least half of their journeys by foot, bike, public transport, or car-pool.

With a relatively low population density, the city is planning to “intensify” existing urban areas over the next 25 years, to support the projected population growth (set to double or even triple in size) without expanding further into the suburbs.

Ottawa has defined a 15-minute neighbourhood as a place where “you can walk to get to the grocery store, where you can easily walk to frequent transit, and where children can safely walk to school.”

PORTLAND, OREGON, US

Size: 947 km²
Population: 1,655,686 people
Population density*: 2,648 people/km²

Going back to 2006, Portland was one of the first places in the world to develop a planning policy on 20-minute neighbourhoods. The idea emerged from community feedback on the Portland 2035 development plan, which revealed that many more people desired easy access to a range of amenities.

A key part of Portland’s approach is to retrofit lower-density residential areas. The plan also explicitly states a need for the elderly to live closer to amenity centres.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

Size: 1,610 km²
Population: 3,468,084 people
Population density*: 3,509 people/km²

The “20 Minute Neighbourhood” concept has underpinned Melbourne’s urban development strategy since 2018, and it is a core pillar in the city’s 2017-2050 plan.

Melbourne is motivated by a goal to create more inclusive, vibrant, and healthy neighbourhoods. With a relatively low population density and a need to build 1.9 million homes by 2056, better land use is an important part of the future.

The city defines the concept as a place where the journey out only takes 10 minutes, making a round-trip a full 20 minutes. Melbourne settled on that time frame after a study found that 10 minutes was the average time people were willing to walk somewhere. In practice, the concept plays out through the design of “neighbourhood activity centres”.

Key moves

The city has been engaging extensively with the public, through community days, direct consultation with groups, and online surveys. They have also carried out technical evaluations.

In 2018, three local councils were selected across Melbourne to serve as pilot project locations.

A “green light” initiative helps to streamline the approval process for best practice development, aiming to showcase “density done well”.

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN

Size: 361 km²
Population: 1,305,076 people
Population density*: 4,631 people/km²

Sweden has taken a slightly different approach to the idea of proximity, proposing a “One-Minute City” vision to improve urban living.

The strategy, led by the public Swedish innovation agency Vinnova, is focused on interrogating what people can literally access right on their doorstep. Together with local communities, the agency is identifying opportunities to reclaim street space for shared amenities, such as bicycle racks and bench seating.

FURTHER EXAMPLES

→ Southern Regional Assembly, Ireland: “10-Minute Town Concept”.
→ Singapore Land Transportation Authority: “20-Minute Towns & 45-Minute City”.
→ Hailsham, East Sussex, UK: “10-Minute Town”
→ Boulder, US: “15-Minute Neighbourhoods”.
→ Shanghai 2016 Masterplan: “15-Minute Community Life Circles”
→ RTPI, Scotland: “20 Minute Neighbourhoods”.

*Population density = weighted population density

Data Sources:
Size of cities: GHSL Global Human Settlement Layer, Urban Centre Database UCDB R2019A.
PARIS, FRANCE

Size: 1,638 km²
Population: 9,711,652 people
Density: 10,380 people/km²

Paris proposed as far back as 2016 to become a "Ville du Quart d'Heure", meaning a town of 15-minutes. The concept has been developed by Professor Carlos Moreno, and was championed by the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo for the (successful) 2020 re-election campaign.

With an existing high population density, Paris's 15-minute city strategy is focused on enabling better movement networks, and maximising the use of existing amenities and infrastructure.

Key moves
Since 2018, the OASIS project has been transforming school playgrounds into green spaces across the city, which remain open for the local community to enjoy outside school hours.

Semi-public organisations have been charged with supporting small independent businesses, and a "Made in Paris" label is being used to promote shopping local.

Existing grey streets are being transformed into green corridors with reductions in traffic lanes, lower speed limits, temporary closures on weekends, and better bus and cycle networks between suburbs.

"Citizen kiosks" have been set up as a new community amenity, helping local residents with everything from general enquiries to handing over keys.

Paris has one of the largest participatory budgets in the world, encouraging residents to actively propose and decide how public money should be spent.
The People's Perceptions

People in Ireland value places that are walkable and multi-functional, but without support for higher-density developments, it will be difficult to unlock true 15-minute neighbourhoods.

The research findings presented earlier on in this chapter suggest that people in Ireland would like to live with easy access to services like public transport, fresh food, and retail and hospitality destinations. Yet when it comes to rating the neighbourhood features that make this service provision possible, not all conditions are equally desirable.

When asked what makes a desirable place to live and work, only 14% of the Irish population say "a place that is compact", while 39% say "a place that is spread out". Younger people tend to be more supportive of compactness than the average population, but there are still almost twice as many young people on the side of sprawl than density.

Younger people are also considerably more likely than older people to express an understanding for, and appreciation of, the environmental and economic benefits of compact places over lower-density places.

**The tall buildings debate**

Ireland has engaged in a heated debate around tall buildings for at least the past decade. On the one hand, existing communities tend to speak up in favour of preserving the existing character (and height) of their neighbourhoods. On the other hand, people are consistently told that the solution to the country's sprawl and housing crisis is to "build up, not out".

**“There is a fear around high rise and changing the skyline of our cities.”**

Stakeholder interview

The 15-minute city concept is not concerned with the height of buildings, but rather with the density of the population and the quality and character of the public realm and amenity provision. In some cases, increasing building heights will be key to providing the supporting conditions for amenity-richness and walkability. In other cases, the solution might be to retrofit, adapt, add-on, extend, infill, or even build down. In neighbourhoods that meet the residential density requirements, the focus should instead be on improving pedestrian and bicycle access, together with increasing the service provision.

When asked about tall buildings as a potential solution to meeting the current demands for housing, workplaces, and community amenities, the YouGov population survey found that:

- 24% of people would support buildings of more than 6 stories being built in existing suburban neighbourhoods.
- 46% of people would support buildings of more than 6 stories being built in existing city areas.
- Amongst 18–24 year olds, support for tall buildings increases to 56% for building in existing city areas and to 35% for building in suburban areas.

People in Ireland are more likely to say that a low-density, sprawling environment is ecologically sustainable than a compact, high-density environment.

People in Ireland are more likely to say that a place with multiple functions is economically productive than a place with just a few functions.

People in Ireland are more likely to say that walkability makes a neighbourhood desirable as a place to live and work than a place that is accessible by car.

...
Table 14. Comparing Different Neighbourhood Features

**ENVIROMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE PLACES**

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18−34 year olds</th>
<th>35−54 year olds</th>
<th>55+ year olds</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A place that is compact</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A place that is spread out</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A place the has multiple functions</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A place that has few functions</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A place that is walkable</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A place that has easy access for cars</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ECONOMICALLY PRODUCTIVE PLACES**

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood economically productive?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18−34 year olds</th>
<th>35−54 year olds</th>
<th>55+ year olds</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A place that is compact</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A place that is spread out</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A place the has multiple functions</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A place that has few functions</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A place that is walkable</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A place that has easy access for cars</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DESIRABLE PLACES TO LIVE AND WORK**

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood desirable as a place to live and work?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18−34 year olds</th>
<th>35−54 year olds</th>
<th>55+ year olds</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A place that is compact</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A place that is spread out</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A place the has multiple functions</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A place that has few functions</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A place that is walkable</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. A place that has easy access for cars</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PERSONAL LIFESTYLE CHOICES & TRADE-OFFS

Compared to the three other surveyed nationalities, the Irish population is more supportive of urban conditions that help to make a 15-minute city work.

To better understand how people might feel about living in walkable, compact neighbourhoods – and to what extent they would accept the potential trade-offs required to make such places possible – our survey asked people to consider different types of lifestyle choices.

First, we asked about people's attitude to sharing resources; specifically, how they felt about the sharing of facilities, spaces, and vehicles. Second, we asked people to weigh up the value of car-ownership, home-ownership, and house-living in relation to living in more walkable, amenity-rich environments.

Sharing vehicles, spaces, and services
Living in compact, amenity-rich places requires people to share more resources, to ensure equal and greater access for all.

The Irish population is more supportive towards the idea of sharing a variety of amenities than any of the other surveyed nationalities.

In Ireland, three out of four (74%) think that people should be encouraged to share neighbourhood facilities. 68% support the sharing of space, and just over half (53%) support the sharing of vehicles.

We also found that people in the 18-34 age group are generally much more supportive of sharing than the older age groups.

Considering different trade-offs
More than half (56%) of the Irish population would choose to live in a place that prioritises active travel (walking and cycling) over driving by car. Compared to the other surveyed countries, this is a significantly higher proportion of the population, with the biggest gap being to the US (39%). Irish 18-34 year olds are much more likely to strongly prefer walking and cycling over driving (32%) than the Irish population on average (25%).

People in Ireland are also generally more likely to prefer apartments and renting over houses and home ownership than the other surveyed nationalities, if the former choices lead to greater access to amenities and destinations.

Encouraging developments
People in Ireland are more likely to be supportive of the public sector using the private sector to deliver housing and community amenities than the three other surveyed countries.

49% of Irish people say that the public sector should support more private sector development to help meet the demand for affordable housing and community amenities. That's compared to 34% in the UK and US, and 44% in Australia.

Table 15.
ATTITUDES TO SHARING FACILITIES, SPACES, AND VEHICLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing Facilities</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74% of people in Ireland agree or strongly agree with the statement: "People should be encouraged to share facilities (like gyms, recycling stations).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing Spaces</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68% of people in Ireland agree or strongly agree with the statement: "People should be encouraged to share space (like offices, parks, shop fronts)."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sharing Vehicles</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53% of people in Ireland agree or strongly agree with the statement: "People should be encouraged to share vehicles (like cars, bikes, trains)."
### Living in Walkable vs. Car-Centric Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16.

56% of the Irish population agree or strongly agree with the statement: “I would prefer to live in a place that prioritises walking and cycling, over living in a place that prioritises car ownership and driving.”

Compared to the other surveyed countries, the Irish population is most likely to choose walking and cycling over driving.

### Renting in Amenity-Rich Places vs. Owning in Amenity-Poor Places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17.

42% of the Irish population agree or strongly agree with the statement: “I would prefer to rent a home in a neighbourhood that meets most of my daily needs, over owning a home in a neighbourhood that meets few of my daily needs.”

2 in 5 people in Ireland would prefer renting over owning if it meant that they could live in a more amenity-rich place.

### Apartments with Great Access vs. Houses with Limited Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>% Strongly Agree</th>
<th>% Agree</th>
<th>% Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>% Disagree</th>
<th>% Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18.

36% of the Irish population agree or strongly agree with the statement: “I would prefer to live in an apartment with easy access to social, cultural, and commercial destinations, over living in a house with limited access to social, cultural, and commercial destinations.”

1 in 3 people in Ireland would prefer to live in an apartment over a house to access a greater variety of amenities.
Barcelona is one of Europe’s densest cities, with around 16,000 people/km² overall. With a building height around six stories, the popular Eixample district is home to around 36,000 people/km².

In 2020, 61% of all journeys in Barcelona were completed by active travel and public transport.

Above and right, images of the Eixample neighbourhood.

Hammarby Sjöstad is a new high-density district in Stockholm, Sweden, with a projected density of around 15,000 people and 7,500 jobs per km². The development has been driven by the City of Stockholm through a dedicated project team. The project is both a showcase in sustainability and in transportation and infrastructure delivery.

Left, an image from the Stockholm development.
The idea of a 15-minute city draws together aspects of compactness, walkability, and amenity richness to create a more sustainable, productive, and equitable urban environment. Though many of these benefits resonate with the Irish population, some are better appreciated than others.

By comparing the 15-minute city theory to Ireland's overall planning policies and the results of the YouGov population survey, we find several opportunities for alignment, especially when it comes to providing amenities and improving walkability.

“We should absolutely strive towards making 15-minute cities, going back to walking and cycling and ensuring that people can get to the services they need locally.”

Stakeholder interview

At the same time, we found that some of the enabling conditions (especially the need to increase residential population densities) are perceived as less desirable, running counter to Ireland's historic preference for rural and spacious living.

SUMMARISED FINDINGS

Access to amenities

- At the moment, 10% of the Irish population can walk to all six kinds of amenities within a quarter of an hour.54
- If given the choice, 33% say that they would like every type of amenity within a 15-minute walk from home.55
- Grocery shops, public transport connections, and destinations for leisure activities are amongst the most popular amenities.
- Out of the six core categories, people travel the furthest for work. The more people earn, the further they are likely to be from their place of work (other than their home).
- If given the choice, two in five people who work (43%) would want to be able to walk to their place of work in under 15-minutes, while a small majority (44%) want a bit more distance between their home and workplace.

Support for 15-minute city conditions

While there is wide support for walking and public transport, higher-density developments and taller buildings generally generate more opposing than supporting views.

- People rate compact neighbourhoods (more buildings on less space) as less beneficial for the environment than sprawling places (fewer buildings on more space).
- Younger people (18-34 year olds) are generally more supportive of compact urbanism and more likely to express an understanding of the benefits of denser developments and resource sharing than older people.
- Out of the three age groups, older people (55+) are most likely to value walkability, but least likely to value compactness.
- People are generally more supportive of building tall buildings (to help meet the demands for housing, workplaces, and leisure destinations) in existing central city areas than in suburban neighbourhoods.56

Overall, the Irish population is more supportive of the 15-minute city conditions than people surveyed in the UK, US, and Australia.

NEXT STEP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Investigate the detailed motivations behind people's choices through citizen engagement and dialogue.
- Map perceived access to amenities and services against actual distances, in order to identify (and address) physical and mental gaps.
- Develop a more nuanced conversation around the relationship between amenities, density, and accessibility, linking to personal lifestyle and mobility choices.

READING ON

In the next chapter, we look closer at the development of the five Irish cities to try to understand these challenges in the context of the present lived urban experience.
“The planning authorities have to be the thought leaders in terms of setting an urban vision.”

Stakeholder interview

“The value of cities in Ireland is under-appreciated. It is only in the last planning framework that the Government has recognised that it is cities that drive the economy.”

Stakeholder interview
CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE IRISH CITIES?
The Irish cities went through the biggest period of urban development in the 18th and early 19th century. Today, the city cores are still largely shaped by 100+ year old buildings and infrastructure.
Ireland has never experienced well-planned, community-centred, environmentally responsible urbanism at scale. Now the country’s cities stand ready to show the population exactly how great – and green – urban life can be.

The Republic of Ireland is a country of almost 5 million people, settled across four provinces: Leinster, Munster, Connaught, and Ulster. In 2016, the Central Statistics Office recorded that a third of the population lived in cities (33%), while 37% are in rural areas. Only five cities exceed a population of 50,000 people, with Dublin, the capital city, as the largest, followed by Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford. The capital city dominates in both economic and demographic terms, with an excess of a million residents, more than twice the size of the four second-tier cities combined. The population of Cork City has just passed 200,000 people, while the three other second-tier cities are all at the small end of the urban scale, at less than 100,000 residents apiece.

Compared to the rest of North-Western Europe, these numbers show a relatively low rate of urbanisation across the Irish island. Coupled with a weakly developed regional public transport system, high levels of car dependency, and the prevalence of detached houses as a residential dwelling typology, Ireland’s carbon footprint per capita is struggling to meet the benchmarks set by its European counterparts.

Now, as the country prepares to grow by one million people up to 2040, the Irish cities are finally coming into their own. But first, they will have to address the gaps left by a century of urban stagnation.

A century of urban stagnation

Ireland’s five main cities were established more than a thousand years ago. The cities grew as thriving hubs of culture and commerce up until the mid-19th century, when the country was struck by The Great Famine, a period of mass starvation and disease that cast its shadow on the century to come.

At the turn of the 20th century, when most other North-Western European countries benefited from rapid economic and population growth, Ireland was still struggling to recover from the Famine and subsequent emigration that saw the island’s population reduced by several million people. While other countries in Europe embraced large-scale industrialisation, Ireland’s economy remained relatively small-scale and agricultural.

The emigration of the Irish population continued up until the 1960s, when the country’s population hit a low of 2.8 million people, down from 5.1 million exactly a century earlier.

By the time the population volume started to rise again, the country – and especially its cities – had already missed out on the development boom that had accelerated the rest of Europe into the modern, largely city-based, economy.
Developing the urban form

As a result of these demographic trends, by the mid-20th century, the development of the Irish urban form had effectively not evolved beyond the Georgian era – at least not at scale or with the backing of any significant political agenda.

In comparison, almost half of the buildings that make up the City of Paris today were built in the period between 1851−1939, while in Copenhagen, 13 new neighbourhoods were encompassed by the city in 1901−02, followed by the construction of major civic infrastructure projects, such as new schools, institutions, a new City Hall in 1905 and a Central Train Station in 1911.

At a time when other European cities focused on cultivating their sense of status and identity, Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford were largely focused on survival.

A few decades of unchecked growth

Ireland’s population has been growing steadily since the 1960s, and with the boost of the Celtic Tiger era in the mid-1990s, the country’s economy has been able to catch up with, and in many cases surpass, its European neighbours.

Overall, this development has brought new prosperity to the country, but the gap left by the preceding century’s slump, and the continued lack of a strong spatial strategy coinciding with the rise of the middle-class and the normalisation of vehicle ownership, has also created serious imbalances between the regions and a largely unsustainable urban development pattern.

Centred around Dublin, the east has outgrown the west, and centred around a powerful (though also often unrealistic) house-and-garden lifestyle ideal, the suburbs have been allowed to swallow up the countryside and outweigh the cities, creating issues with congestion and unsustainable land use patterns.

Between the city and the suburb

Ireland is not alone in facing these growth and expansion challenges; between the 1960s and the 1990s, car-centric, suburban living was the ideal that shaped the surroundings around most European cities, while urban living in many cases became synonymous with deprivation, crime, and low-quality housing estates.

However, with a 21st century resurgence of city culture and the improved quality of urban amenities, this image has changed again.

In the past decades, places like Copenhagen and Vienna have, for example, been able to repopulate central neighbourhoods, attracting diverse resident populations and creating some of the most liveable places in the world.

Where Ireland differs is in its lack of the middle-ground; an absence of a collective urban memory that precedes the late 20th century housing estates and single-family suburban homes, but comes after the pre-industrial era that built the characterful 18th century city centres.

In terms of the urban form, today’s Irish cities are generally characterised by having very walkable, if quite small, city centres, surrounded by much larger, low-density, car-dependent settlements. Between the very old housing stock and the many detached houses, more urban-scale developments tend to stick out. But that doesn’t mean that they can’t also be high-quality, liveable, and – most importantly – uniquely Irish. Several stakeholders pointed out the need to see:

“... good quality affordable urban living apartments.”
Preparing for an Irish urban future

The National Planning Framework recognises a need to drive towards a more sustainable compact urban form, placing a hitherto unseen emphasis on the Irish cities as drivers of the nation’s future. Environmental and societal changes are also giving rise to an urban revival, with younger generations more likely to choose a car-free urban lifestyle than their predecessors, and climate change putting pressures on human settlements to operate more efficiently, self-sufficiently, and sustainably.

Though the aging population may struggle to adopt a late lifestyle change, there is also significant evidence that more compact places help to reduce loneliness and prolong independence. Addressing the needs of the older generation and creating more walkable, amenity-rich neighbourhoods with better land use are largely complimentary agendas.

As the National Planning Framework talks about compact urban growth and sustainable mobility, it is very much in line with the idea of the 15-minute city. However, it is not yet clear what the ambition is for the look and feel of these new and improved urban places – nor is it clear how this vision might best appeal to the population. As one stakeholder said:

"We need to showcase what living in an urban environment can really look like.”

The dawn of the Irish city

With Ireland set for continued economic and demographic growth, the next decades present a unique opportunity for the Irish cities to define and show – perhaps for the first time – what they are really made of.

READING ON

The following pages present an overview of the development potential that exists for Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford.

One by one, we dive deeper into the history and context that make each place unique.
THE FIVE IRISH CITIES

The following pages present the five Irish cities by looking at their development histories, current form, and future 15-minute city potential.

The chapter is ordered by population size, starting with the smallest city and ending with the largest.

YouGov population survey responses from people living in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick are presented together, in order to secure a larger survey base.

Population survey data for Cork is presented separately, while data for Dublin has been separated by Dublin City Council and the three County Councils.

As identified in Chapter One, 5,000 people/km² tends to be the minimum population density proposed for creating more compact, walkable neighbourhoods (see further details on sources in the Appendix). For ease of comparison, this is the threshold that is referenced throughout.

Our analysis of the cities’ potential has largely been informed by our conversations with stakeholders in the Irish public and private urban development sector.

Data sources:
Census 2016, Central Statistics Office.
Note that the “urban settlement area” is not related to the local authority area, but a geographic boundary used by the CSO to report on built-up areas, (Table E2014).

The number of people living in compact neighbourhoods has been calculated at the electoral district level (Table E2013) in relation to the population in the urban area.
“What makes cities attractive is that they are not stagnant places, but dynamic and always on the move.”

Ali Grehan, City Architect, Dublin City Council

Chapter 02 The Five Irish Cities

**LIMERICK/LUIMNEACH**

- Population of the urban area: 94,192
- Urban area in km²: 59
- Population density: 1,591 people/km²

**CORK/CORCAIGH**

- Population of the urban area: 208,669
- Urban area in km²: 174
- Population density: 1,198 people/km²

**DUBLIN/BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH**

- Population of the urban area: 1,173,179
- Urban area in km²: 319.0
- Population density: 3,678 people/km²

**POPULATION IN COMPACT PLACES**

- **LIMERICK/LUIMNEACH**: 200,808
  - 11% of the population lives in places with more than 5,000 people/km².
  - 12 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods could fit within the existing urban settlement area.

- **CORK/CORCAIGH**: 661,331
  - 16% of the population lives in places with more than 5,000 people/km².
  - 35 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods could fit within the existing urban settlement area.

- **DUBLIN/BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH**: 421,821
  - 39% of the population lives in places with more than 5,000 people/km².
  - 64 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods could fit within the existing urban settlement area.
A brief history of Waterford

Founded in 914 AD in a sheltered bay on the mouth of the River Suir, Waterford claims the title of Ireland’s oldest city. This rich history is made evident in the present-day city centre by the presence of historic monuments (Reginald’s Tower, see map) and neighbourhoods (Viking Triangle).

Waterford prospered in the 18th century as Ireland’s third-largest port, and many of the city’s prominent buildings and denser neighbourhoods were established during this time, mainly along the quays on the south bank (between map key C and Reginald’s Tower). In the 19th century, industries such as glass making and ship building thrived in the city.

Today, Waterford is the fifth-largest city in the Republic of Ireland, with a population of over 50,000 people living in the urban settlement area, and a further 60,000 in the county. The city plays a significant role as a gateway to, and economic driver of, the South East Region. The central government has put forward plans to grow the urban population by more than 30,000 people up to 2040.
With an urban population of just over 50,000 people, Waterford could be a small and thriving compact city. The greatest potential exists by the river front, with both the city and nature in close reach.

15-MINUTE WATERFORD

On the south side of the river
Waterford has almost exclusively developed on the southern side of the River Suir. The current city centre lies west of the historic core, though the distance across can easily be crossed on foot in under 15 minutes.

Though Waterford has preserved several areas of important built heritage, the city has also suffered from de-industrialisation, resulting in leftover under-utilised lands. The south quays are, for example, now primarily used for parking, separating the city from the river by rows of metal, while the north quay (except for the presence of the railway station) is largely vacant.

Meanwhile new areas have been developed south of the city centre, such as the housing estate Ballybeg (map key B) and campuses for the regional institutions.

Sprawl and population growth
With the urban population having left the city for the suburbs throughout the 20th century, today Waterford has a low population density at just over 1,100 people/km² in the settlement area. Fewer than 1 in 10 residents of Waterford City and Suburbs live in an area with urban-level densities of more than 5,000 people/km², while 81% of all households in the City and County own at least one private motor vehicle. As a result, the city’s public realm is marred by the volume of people arriving daily by car, making it less attractive as a place to live. For example, almost 70% of journeys to work and education are undertaken by car, with less than 5% public transport usage.\(^{16}\)

An economic gateway to the region
Within a 3–5 km radius from the city centre, Waterford is well served by third level institutions and a regional hospital; 8–10 km out, by an airport and a successful port. Though previously known for its glass-making, today the city’s employment base is primarily within the pharmaceutical, healthcare technology, and engineering/advanced manufacturing sectors.

The city has also grown to be a nucleus for a network of regional urban centres in the surrounding counties, and is celebrated as a gateway to the South East region.

A city between two counties
The city is governed by Waterford City and Council, a unitary authority formed from the merger of Waterford City Council and Waterford County Council in 2014. However, a significant part of the metropolitan area lies in County Kilkenny, and this cross-boundary issue has proven challenging in the past in terms of strategic planning.\(^{17}\)

The recent Waterford Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan (MASP) sets out an ambitious vision for the city, aspiring to expand the city centre north of the river to form a more concentric city overall.

10/15 minute cities in Waterford
In the MASP, Objective 6b specifically identifies the development of a “10 minute city concept” for Waterford as a way to drive the integration of sustainable mobility with land-use planning, zoning, and transport infrastructure (particularly public transport) in local level planning. The development of a more walkable city is a linked objective, and this could be achieved through harnessing key environmental attributes such as the river Suir and Waterford Harbour as amenity anchors for blue and green space.

Regenerating the North Quays
North Quays Innovation District is a planned 8.3-hectare site, stretching almost 1 km along the river front. The development promises to serve a future population of 83,000 people as the first ever real extension of the city centre north of the river (map key A).

With plans to integrate housing, retail, food, office space, hotel, and leisure, the North Quays is likely to be a true mixed-use 15-minute neighbourhood, with green walkways and cycle ways connecting back to the old city.

In order to fast track the planning and development of the area, Waterford City and County Council has designated the lands as a Strategic Development Zone.

Looking ahead
It is clear that there is significant ambition within Waterford to drive sustainable population and employment growth.

The current regional level services and the attractive natural amenities of the coastline, river, and harbour, provide the levers with which new enterprises and workers can be attracted to the city.

Still, Waterford requires major upfront capital investments to provide the basic infrastructure and public amenities that are ultimately required to attract people and, thereafter, further private investments into the city’s regeneration.
A brief history of Galway

Based on the Atlantic seaboard where the River Corrib meets the ocean, Galway was originally established as a fishing village before becoming an important trading city in the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{18}

In the 15\textsuperscript{th} century, the city benefited from the trade led by 14 merchant families, earning it the nickname of “The City of Tribes”.\textsuperscript{19} Several prominent medieval buildings and streets have survived to this day, such as Lynch’s Castle, located in Galway’s city centre, in the dense Eyre Square district (map key A).

Galway suffered significant decline from around the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, and especially in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and has only recently started to recover its residential population, with many settling in the suburbs of the surrounding county.

Today, Galway is the fourth largest city in the Republic of Ireland with a total population of around 80,000 people (CSO, 2016). The National Planning Framework has targeted a population growth of 50-60% up to 2040, with 50% settling within the existing footprint of the city and suburbs.
Galway has developed around a characterful, walkable, historic centre with strong connections to the sea and river. Today the challenge is to reduce through-traffic and increase the city centre’s residential population.

15-MINUTE GALWAY

A heart that beats every 15 minutes
The urban settlement area of Galway City and Suburbs is spread across 54 km², but the city centre is still no more than 1 km wide and 500 metres across, and easily crossed in a 15-minute walk.

The medieval streets winding from the River Corrib to landmarks such as Eyre Square, the Spanish Arch, and Galway Cathedral, have been at the heart of the city’s cultural and commercial activities for almost a thousand years, laying the grid for the city’s most close-knit and characterful neighbourhood. Here, people enjoy easy access to a variety of amenities, including the retail destinations on Shop Street, trails along the river, and regional trains departing from Ceannt Station.

Only one electoral district in Galway (Eyre Square, map key A) has a population density of over 5,000 people/km², and the human-scale street grid in the city centre struggles to deal with large volumes of vehicles arriving from the hinterlands.

From the city to the seaside
Further down the coast is Salthill (map key B), the city’s second-densest neighbourhood, benefiting from a beach front, several leisure destinations (like the National Aquarium of Ireland), and a short direct route back into to the city centre.

From 1879–1918, the development of this neighbourhood was catalysed by a tramway connection to the central station – a journey that could now be cycled in less than 15 minutes.

Serving long-distance commuters
With the suburbs stretching across the City and County, Galway has a large catchment area, and most long-distance commuters arrive into the city by private motorcar. In spite of rapid growth over the past 50 years, Galway’s road network is perhaps the least developed of all the Irish cities, with no arterial routes to help deal with high volumes of traffic and, as a result, the city struggles with congestion.

At the same time, Galway City and Suburbs have the highest pedestrian modal share of all the Irish cities, with 16% of people travelling by foot and 6% cycling.20

The Galway Transport Strategy aims to push the number of pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport commuters up by providing new, improved connections and reclaiming the public realm in the city centre for people and nature. In this transformation, the absence of 20th century large-scale car-centric infrastructure may turn out to be an advantage.

Preparing for economic growth
Galway is the only metropolitan area within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, and it has a pivotal role to play in the social and economic development of this region, and as an anchor of the Atlantic Economic Corridor.

The city has world-class clusters in medical devices and ICT, and benefits from productive synergies between the city’s businesses and the third-level educational institutions. Furthermore, the city enjoys a year-round influx of tourists, coming for the history, nature, and vibrant cultural scene.21

Now, with the population set to grow by up to 45,000 people by 2040 (with 50% settling within the existing urban area), there is an urgent need for Galway City Council to ensure that the city centre is capable of also attracting and retaining a residential population. And in order to do this, the inflow of car-based workers and visitors from the County must also be mitigated.

Urban regeneration plans
Galway City Council has set a key policy objective to develop more sustainable, compact, high-quality neighbourhoods, supported by sustainable transport.

The Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan has identified up to 170 hectares of residentially zoned land suitable for higher density mixed-use neighbourhoods, proposing to increase the current norm from 35 to 50 homes/ha. These new developments will be sequenced to ensure that at least 50% are built on infill or brownfield sites.

Opportunity areas have been identified in all parts of the city, aiming to make better use of land previously occupied by industry and infrastructure, such as around the station, at the former airport, and by the inner harbour. Augustine Hill beside Ceannt Station, for example, promises to be a new mixed-use city centre neighbourhood with 11 fully pedestrianised streets and four large public spaces.

Making the most of the water
While the ocean and river are key attributes of Galway’s character, the coastal location also makes the city vulnerable to climate change and flooding. A combined green/blue strategy will help to both enhance the city’s public realm and make the city more resilient for the future.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Galway City is surrounded by extensive suburbs, with many of the City’s workers and visitors arriving by car from the County.
- 8 out of 10 households own a car (CSO 2016), and 1 in 3 people (31%) cannot walk to the supermarket within 15 minutes (CSO 2019). Low-density neighbourhoods will need investments to become more convenient.
- With no recently built examples to showcase the benefits of compact, urban living, new neighbourhoods may struggle to surpass existing negative perceptions.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- The city centre is a natural 15-minute neighbourhood, with easy access to culture and nature, and distinctive, human-scale streets.
- Galway City Council has put forward an ambitious strategy to increase the city’s active travel and public transport provision.
- The City is planning to attract at least 20,000 new residents to settle within the existing urban fabric by 2040, creating a much needed population base for building new sustainable, mixed-use, high-quality neighbourhoods.
LIMMERICK/LUIMNEACH

A brief history of Limerick

Limerick is the third largest city in Ireland. Founded by the Vikings at the mouth of the river Shannon around 922 AD, the city (and 13th century landmark King John’s Castle) was since developed by the Anglo-Normans, before serving as a thriving port-city for transatlantic trade during the Georgian era in the late 18th and early 19th century.22

The Georgian and Edwardian era accelerated the development of the current city centre, building characterful neighbourhoods such as Newtown Pery (map key A and C) and the market district (map key B), which to this date are still some of Limerick’s densest areas, with more than 8,000 people/km².

Today, the 2016 population of the urban settlement area is just over 94,000 people, with an average density of 1,600 people/km².

The central government has set a target of growing the population by around 50,000 additional people by 2040, with at least 50% settling within the existing urban area.

LIMMERICK CITY AND SUBURBS (BUILT-UP AREA)
Population: 94,192 people
Area: 59 km²
Population density: 1,591 people/km²

CITY & COUNTY COUNCIL (ELECTORAL AREA)
Population: 194,899 people
Area: 2,661 km²

The population of the urban settlement area make up 48% of the total population of the local authority area, Limerick City & County Council.

15-MINUTE CITY CONDITIONS
Area with >5,000 people/km²: 1.30 km²
Population in compact areas*: 10,122 people
Percentage of urban population: 11%

Just 11% of the urban population live in areas that meet the minimum density requirements to support amenity richness and walkability.

16% of all households living in the Limerick City & County Council electoral area rely on walking, cycling, and public transport to get around (i.e. households not having a motor car).

Data Sources & Notes:
Census 2016, Central Statistics Office.
Further details are provided in the Appendix on page 114.
*The report defines a compact area as a place with more than 5,000 people per square kilometre.
Limerick city centre is relatively compact, with a good amount of key amenities. By developing on industrial sites, the city’s heart can be further strengthened as an enjoyable and sustainable place to live in and visit.

The original walkable city

Looking at the historic development of Limerick’s urban fabric, it is clear that pre-20th century settlements tended to cluster around the key destinations that supported people’s lives and livelihoods; along the river, by the port, and close to the market. The need for people to live within walking distance of critical amenities resulted in the development of the city’s densest neighbourhoods, and a central district that naturally fulfilled the 15-minute city criteria. Should you, for example, attempt to walk from the Georgian residential neighbourhood of Newtown Pery (map key A and C) to St John’s Cathedral just north of the hood of Newtown Pery (map key A and C), the journey would be around a quarter of an hour.

The low-density car-centric city

From the 20th century, and since the advent of the private motor vehicle, the city has become much more spread out, with just 1,600 people per square kilometre in 2016 across a 59 km² area. If the city was a perfect circle, it would take almost an hour to walk from the centre to the fringe. If the city was a collection of 15-minute neighbourhoods, there would be 10–12 town centres. Of course that would also require at least a tripling of the urban population to reach a viable density to support the presence of amenities and community facilities in these places.

As it is, for the average present-day Limerick resident, access to amenities is low while car ownership and carbon emissions are high.

Preparing for population growth

The National Planning Framework has set an ambitious 50-60% target for population growth in Limerick up to 2040, representing an increase of up to 55,000 people. If everyone settled within the existing urban settlement area, the overall urban density would reach 2,500 people/km² – a significant improvement from today’s levels (note that the policy goal is for only 50% to settle within the existing urban area).

This growth target is both a major opportunity for creating a larger population base to support a greater variety of public amenities and commercial activities across the city, and a challenge in densification that will require careful planning and consultation with existing communities.

Regeneration and urban development

Limerick has been the subject of urban regeneration initiatives for more than a decade, aiming to recreate the appeal of the city centre as a place to live, work, and visit, and increase the opportunities for disadvantaged communities to access the “social, economic, and cultural life” of Limerick. The Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 will be the first Development Plan to cover the entire city and county area, since the merger of the two authorities in 2014. The Council has assured that compact growth will be at the heart of the Plan, further signalling a revival of the lively, walkable urban centre.

Local leadership

Further governance changes are underway following the public plebiscite in favour of a Directly Elected Mayor (DEM) (to be elected in late 2021). The DEM Implementation Advisory Group has pointed to the potential for a DEM to lead on implementing the central government’s Town Centre First initiative, and in particular promoting placemaking, good quality urban design, and sustainable mobility.

Making future plans

Looking ahead, there is every sign that Limerick stands before a significant period of change. In addition to the high-level strategic plans being developed at national and local level, the Land Development Agency is currently developing a spatial framework to propose a new multi-functional development on a 50-hectare site by the central transport hub of Colbert Station. The site promises to be the perfect testbed for creating an exemplar 15-minute neighbourhood, on top of existing public transport connections and close to the original heart of the city.

In order to support this and other developments across the city, the council has identified a need for further infrastructure investments, such as to provide utility services and sustainable travel opportunities. The implementation of such amenities will key to enable the creation of future sustainable neighbourhoods, just as the river was once the key to the city’s creation itself.
### PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOOD FEATURES

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and a desirable place to live and work?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood features:</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood economically productive?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood a desirable place to live and work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Compactness (high density)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Sprawl (low density)</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<td>✓ Pedestrian-friendly (walkable)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<td>✓ Easy access for cars</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
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<td>✓ Good public transport</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Multi-functional land use</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Mono-functional land use</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Shared green space (parks)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Private green space (gardens)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 21.**

Only 16% of people who live in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick believe that a higher density of buildings makes a neighbourhood more environmentally sustainable.

**SUPPORT FOR 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**

57% of people who live in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick say that walkability is likely to make a neighbourhood economically productive, compared to 51% of people on average.

People are more than twice as likely to say that a place that mixes multiple functions (such as housing, offices, and retail) is more desirable as a place to live and work than a single-use place.

**AGAINST THE 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**

Only 67% of people living in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick believe that a place is more environmentally sustainable if it has lots of shared green space, compared to the average at 76%.

People in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick are also less likely to rank public transport as a driver of environmental sustainability, economic productivity, and desirability than the average Irish person.
PERCEIVED AND DESIRED PROXIMITY TO SIX TYPES OF AMENITIES

Table 22.

Education
Work
Care
Transport
Groceries
Leisure

number of people who would like to live more than half an hour’s walk away
number of people who currently live more than half an hour’s walk away
gap between the number of people wanting to live within a 15-minute walk, and the current number of people with 15-minute access

POOREST ACCESS

39% of people who work are currently able to walk to their place of employment within 15 minutes, while only 35% are within 15 minutes of educational facilities.

59% of people who work would choose to live within a 15-minute walk from their workplace if they could, which is much higher than the overall average for the Irish population (43%).

BIGGEST GAPS

The biggest gap in perceived and ideal 15-minute access is for work, with a desired access level increase of 51%.

Half (52%) of the Waterford, Galway, and Limerick residents want to be able to walk to educational facilities within 15-minutes or less. That is a 49% increase from the 35% who currently can.

BEST ACCESS

63% of people living in Waterford, Galway, and Limerick experience being able to walk to buy fresh food and groceries in 15 minutes, making this the most accessible amenity overall.

Still, with almost three in four (73%) people wishing they could walk to a grocery store in 15 minutes or less, there’s a gap to close.
CORK/CORCAIGH

CORK CITY AND PART OF THE SUBURBS
Population density (people/km²) by electoral districts (CSO, 2016)

A brief history of Cork
Cork was built on an island in the tidal estuary of the River Lee. Here, early settlers benefited from easy access to the large natural harbour by Lough Mahon, with the waterways offering a useful, defensible boundary around the site.

The city centre was expanded by the growing population in the 18th and 19th century, developing into dense neighbourhoods north (such as around Shandon bell tower, map key C) and south (around St Fin Barre’s Cathedral) of the island.

Cork has operated as the principal port in the south of Ireland since medieval times,²⁶ with mercantile activities as the main economic driver until the mid-20th century, when the city started developing as a hub for the pharmaceutical industry instead.

In 2019, Cork City’s boundaries were redrawn to encompass more of the urban settlement area, increasing the city authority’s population from 125,000 to 210,000 people. The urban population is expected to grow even further, with a target to reach at least 315,000 people by 2040.

CORK IN NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY &amp; SUBURBS (BUILT-UP AREA)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>208,669 people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area:</td>
<td>174 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density:</td>
<td>1,198 people/km²</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CITY COUNCIL (ELECTORAL AREA) 2016 &amp; (2019)⁴</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population:</td>
<td>125,657 (210,853) people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area:</td>
<td>38 (187) km²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cork City Council’s boundary was expanded in 2019, so that today, the population of the local authority is equal to the urban settlement area.

15-MINUTE CITY CONDITIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area with &gt;5,000 people/km²:</th>
<th>4,46 km²</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population in compact areas*:</td>
<td>33,121 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of urban population:</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just 16% of the urban population live in areas that meet the minimum density requirements to support amenity richness and walkability.

30% of all households living in the Cork City Council electoral area rely on walking, cycling, and public transport to get around (i.e. households not having a motor car).

Data Sources & Notes:
Census 2016, Central Statistics Office.
Further details are provided in the Appendix on page 114.
*2019 numbers based on the local authority boundary extension.
*The report defines a compact area as a place with more than 5,000 people per square kilometre.
Cork city centre has a population density and area size to be a perfect 15-minute neighbourhood. By building new compact places on central former industrial sites, the city is helping to catalyse a full urban revival.

### KEY CHALLENGES
- There's currently a lot of empty and vacant urban fabric in Cork, adversely impacting the pedestrian experience and fuelling car-dependency.
- Public transport infrastructure is currently under-developed in relation to the scale of ambition for population growth in the city.
- The city has a strong appetite for urban development, but has struggled to attract investments in the past.

### KEY OPPORTUNITIES
- There is significant opportunity to densify parts of Cork city centre and, in particular, the south docklands if appropriate infrastructure is put in place.
- Cork City Council are at an advanced stage in creating the planning frameworks necessary to enable and support densification and re-population of the city core.
- Cork’s location on the river and close to the sea is a great natural amenity that should be integrated with urban living.

### 15-MINUTE CORK

**An island of 15-minute proximity**

Cork’s core city centre is encircled by two channels formed by a parting in the River Lee. At just 1.25 km across and 500 m from top to bottom, the natural island is easily crossed in under 15 minutes. In the 1880s, the bulk of the island was completely built-up, to the extent that overcrowding became an issue. However, the ensuing urban population decline in the 20th century saw the city centre later struggling with high levels of vacancy and dereliction, creating a more tattered urban fabric.

Today, the central island (around map key B) supports a population of just 4,000 residents, and vacancy rates for dwelling units are high at around 13.5%.

**A vibrant and diverse economy**

By becoming the hub for the Irish pharmaceutical industry in the 1960s (Pfizer settled in Cork in 1969), Cork expanded its economy and cemented itself as a powerful second-tier city. Since the 1980s, business parks supported by the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and the private sector were developed in the city’s hinterlands, helping to catalyse this economic shift and attracting further large campus-based businesses like Johnson & Johnson, Apple, and Amazon. Today, in addition to the pharmaceutical sector, Cork is a leading destination for businesses working in life sciences, technology, and cyber security.

While these large global industries have undoubtedly been critical in catalysing the present-day success of Cork City region (last year, the Financial Times ranked Cork 6th on its “Small European Cities of the Future” list), their presence on greenfield sites outside the city centre have also enabled the continued sprawl and high car-dependency of the city.

**Growing the city population**

In the 2016 census, the population of the urban settlement area was in the range of 210,000 people, with less than 16% of the population living in places with more than 5,000 people/km². In 2019, the local authority boundary was expanded to give the City Council better power to shape this full metropolitan area.

Now the National Planning Framework has set a target for Cork to increase its population by a further 105,000–125,000 people up to 2040, with 50% of the new population settling within the existing footprint of the city. For an authority that has recently grown in size by a factor of five, Cork City Council is already at an impressive stage of planning for this new, more urban and sustainable future.

**Urban regeneration and revival**

The ambitious growth targets are a great opportunity for reviving Cork city centre, creating denser neighbourhoods supported by quality amenities and pedestrian and cycling networks.

In addition to making better use of vacant sites in the existing urban fabric and renovating historic buildings to serve as 21st century quality homes, former industrial areas are becoming available for regeneration and reintegration with the city’s modern economy.

In recent years, schemes have come under way to redevelop the north docks, supported by highly effective public-private partnerships, and the south docks are next on the scene.

**Cork City Docklands**

At the moment, the greatest development potential in Cork is in the south docklands (the electoral district is indicated with an A on the map). Here, Cork City Council and the Land Development Agency are planning the regeneration of 146 hectare of land over 20 years, creating a new mixed-use neighbourhood, known as the Cork City Docklands.

According to the Land Development Agency, the Docklands are expected to house a population of 25,000 residents, a workforce of 29,000, and a student population of 3,700, all of whom will benefit from the convenience of living and working within walking distance of the historic city centre, and with easy access to the River Lee.

**Amenities first**

In addition to building new homes and workplaces, Cork needs a greater quality of amenities and better active travel and public transport connections to unlock truly desirable and sustainable urban living. Being built on an estuary, the city will also need to mitigate flood risks across most of the urban settlement area.

The connection with the River Lee is bound to be a key feature in the future urban landscape, as both a natural amenity and flood mitigation measure, while the 70% of commuters currently arriving into the city by private car will need alternative means as the public realm is reclaimed for people and nature.
WHAT PEOPLE SAY: CORK CITY AND SUBURBS

PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOOD FEATURES

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and a desirable place to live and work?"

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<tr>
<td>✓ Compactness (high density)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Sprawl (low density)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pedestrian-friendly (walkable)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Easy access for cars</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Good public transport</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Multi-functional land use</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Mono-functional land use</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Shared green space (parks)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Private green space (gardens)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 16% of people who live in Cork City and Suburbs believe that a higher density of buildings helps to make a neighbourhood more environmentally sustainable.

**SUPPORT FOR 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**
People living in Cork City and Suburbs rank compactness slightly higher than average Irish person for desirability (17% compared to 14%), and sprawl slightly lower (36% compared to 39%). 46% of people living in Cork say that lots of shared green space is good for economic productivity, compared to 41% on average.

**AGAINST THE 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**
People living in Cork City and Suburbs are 38% more likely to say that a neighbourhood is environmentally sustainable if it has lots of private green space (59%) than people living in Dublin City (43%).
People living in Cork City and Suburbs are less likely to rank multi-functional places and more likely to rank mono-functional places as economic drivers than the average Irish person.
PERCEIVED AND DESIRED PROXIMITY TO SIX TYPES OF AMENITIES

POOREST ACCESS
Less than one in three people (29%) who work are currently able to reach their place of employment within a 15-minute walk. Meanwhile, almost half (48%) of the working population in Cork are more than a 30-minute walk from work. Care (such as healthcare, social care, and community care) is the second-poorest ranking amenity for 15-minute access.

BEST ACCESS
78% of people living in Cork experience being within a 15-minute walk of public transport, and 65% can also walk to buy groceries within a quarter of an hour.
Cork has the most people out of all the cities with educational facilities within a 15-minute walk, at 51%, while a further 22% can walk to places to study and learn in 15–30 minutes.

BIGGEST GAPS
At the moment, 29% of people living in Cork and working can walk to work in 15-minutes or under. 47% would like to, indicating a gap of 18% percentage points (or an increase of 62%).
The second-biggest gap is for access to care. Here, 68% would like to be able to walk to a place offering healthcare, social care, or community care within 15 minutes; a privilege that 46% of people currently enjoy.
Chapter 02  The Five Irish Cities

DUBLIN/BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH

DUBLIN CITY AND PART OF THE SUBURBS
Population density (people/km²) by electoral districts (CSO, 2016)
Chapter 02 — The Five Irish Cities

DUBLIN IN NUMBERS

CITY & SUBURBS (BUILT-UP AREA)

Population: **1,173,179 people**
Area: **319 km²**
Population density: **3,678 people/km²**

ELECTORAL AREAS

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL

Population: **554,554 people**
Area: **116 km²**

DÚN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL

Population: **218,018 people**
Area: **126 km²**

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

Population: **278,767 people**
Area: **221 km²**

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Population: **296,020 people**
Area: **454 km²**

The population of the urban settlement area make up 87% of the total population of the four local authorities combined.

15-MINUTE CITY CONDITIONS

Area with >5,000 people/km²: **67.2 km²**
Population in compact areas*: **458,936 people**
Percentage of urban population: **39%**

39% of the urban population live in areas that meet the minimum density requirements to support amenity richness and walkability.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DUBLIN

Dublin can trace its history back more than a thousand years, with evidence of a monastic settlement existing on the River Poole before the Vikings arrived in the 9th century. Dubhliainn, meaning Blackpool, was hence named.30

In the following years, a thriving Viking trading town grew around the harbour settling a little way up the River Liffey, strategically located for accessing both the surrounding fields and the Irish Sea.

By the Middle Ages, Dublin fell under Norman rule, and with a population of 5,000–10,000 people,31 street patterns and prominent buildings started developing. The settlement occupied less than 3 km² of land at this time, making it about the size of a 15-minute city.32 This was also the time when Dublin was declared the capital of the English Lordship of Ireland, attracting new English residents, while banning native Irish people from living within the city walls.

Instead, Irish people seeking the economic opportunities of the city, settled in the surrounding county, and the city soon expanded beyond the walls.

By the Georgian period in the 18th and early 19th century, the city was a nucleus for growth and prosperity, and much of the medieval cityscape was rebuilt with wider roads and Georgian terraces. The Mountjoy neighbourhood (map key A1 and A2) was, for example, built during this time, today one of Dublin’s densest areas with around 18,000 people/km².

By the second half of the 19th century, more than 400,000 lived and worked in Dublin, with many working-class families cramped into overcrowded tenement buildings.33 This, together with the increased presence of industrial activities within the city, prompted many wealthier families to relocate to the suburban townships developing beyond the canals.

The first 20 years of the 20th century were characterised by political instability before the Free State came into existence in 1922. Some areas of Dublin were damaged by the war, while post-independence the city struggled to provide quality housing and amenities for new and displaced residents.34

Today, Dublin’s extensive footprint is a product of the last century’s suburbanisation of the city, developed hand-in-hand with the car-dependence of its residents.

For decades, new neighbourhoods have been built from scratch on the city’s constantly expanding fringes, making poor use of greenfield land and often lacking in services and infrastructure. Only since the 1990s has the city attempted to develop a more compact urban form again, with areas like the Docklands and Smithfield demonstrating the potential for intensification and re-population of the city centre.

Spread across four local authorities, the population of the city and suburbs has now surpassed 1.17 million people and occupies 319 km² of land. Up to 2040, the target is for the capital’s population to grow by another quarter million people — a substantial growth target, but still proportionally smaller than the ambitions set out for the other Irish cities.

15-MINUTE DUBLIN

The original 15-minute city

Pre-industrial Dublin is perhaps the clearest example of a full-scale 15-minute city within the Irish urban history, with high numbers of people living in a compact environment, close to a range of amenities (albeit primarily serving commercial activities).

With an 1820s population of almost 250,000 people35 on a built-up area of less than 10 km², population densities would have been up to 5 times the present-day average36 — and still most people would have been within walking distance of the countryside.

Leading up to this time, the city saw the implementation of important civic and social infrastructure, such as the expansion of the port, the construction of the Grand and Royal Canals, the provision of financial services, the growth of higher education, together with the building of...
15-MINUTE DUBLIN (CONTINUED)

important civic functions from the customs house to the court house. Learning from the past

Putting aside the many issues that also accompanied pre-industrial urban living (such as poverty and disease), it is still worth reflecting on the agglomeration of buildings, spaces, and people that naturally occurred before our access to large-scale, fast-moving modern transportation and production methods.

The iconic 4-storey Georgian terraces are great examples of dense neighbourhoods developed not from a desire to build tall, but from a need to live with easy access to services, jobs, and amenities.

Today, the heart of Dublin is still very much a walkable place, by and large as a product of serving pre-industrial urban living and working requirements.

Learning from the present

Having suffered from an urban exodus in the 20th century that saw the city centre losing out to the suburbs, in recent decades Dublin has taken great strides to increase its residential population.

Catalysed by the state-led 1986 Urban Renewal Act, the city has been regenerating former industrial areas and revitalising dilapidated historic districts, creating new opportunities for people to work and live in the capital.

Dublin Docklands, the southwest inner city, and Smithfield all demonstrate the potential for modernising the compact urban form, and a desire to increase the city’s attractiveness. At almost 8,000 people per km², the Docklands (map key D) is one of the densest new developments the capital has seen since the early 19th century, though still in the lower end of the compactness scale and just half of the density of the area around Dublin Castle and Temple Bar (around map key B).

Matching people and amenities

Dublin’s regeneration projects have been highly successful in creating new volumes of office space and housing, attracting international businesses and talented workers to the capital.

But in terms of making a 15-minute city, the amenity provision has often not kept pace with commercial and residential developments. As a result, some new developments have been criticised for being too mono-functional, for lacking a sense of identity and place, and for putting undue pressures on the existing infrastructure provision and adversely affecting neighbouring communities.

Some suburban areas, like Dundrum, Sandyford, Tallaght and Clongriffin, have for example seen substantial densification of employment opportunities around existing transport hubs without a matching increase in the public transport provision. Consequently, congestion has become a rising problem during peak hours in these neighbourhoods.

The city and the suburbs

While the city centre is amenity-rich, but in need of a greater residential population, there is significant unmet demand in the outer local authority areas (South Dublin, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown and Fingal) for more leisure opportunities and educational facilities.

In these places, facilities closer to home could become key anchors in new multi-functional places. Providing these amenities within new developments has the potential to minimise traffic congestion at peak times but also create more vibrant and inclusive inter-generational communities.

Developing business districts like Citywest, Sandyford, and Cherrywood all provide an opportunity for becoming anchors in a polycentric 15-minute city. These places have also been identified by the local authorities as important employment and residential hubs.

Travelling between work and life

Due to the general mismatch in the location of residences and workplaces, large-scale and long-distance commuting is a key feature of Dublin living.

The average daily commute in Dublin is almost one hour, making it one of the longest travel times of any European capital.

In the YouGov Population Survey we also found that only 14% of residents across the four Dublin local authority areas who work can access their place of employment within a 15-minute walk.

Travelling by public transport

Compared to the other Irish cities, Dublin has a well-developed public transport system with buses, trains, and the Luas light rail. Still, the network struggles to meet the peak hour demands (pre-pandemic), and integration across the network is lacking.

There have been discussions around expanding the public transport network for decades, but plans for a metro have been put on hold due to objections by residents in some areas. Instead, a Bus Connect solution is being implemented, which will meet some, but not all of, the city’s transport needs.

Growing the city and the region

The City and Suburbs account for approximately 1.1 million people, while the larger
Dublin is a thriving European capital with a resident population of more than one million people and around 11 million overseas visitors per year. With large areas around the urban centre already built-up, the challenge is to find new ways to increase the residential density and amenity provision within the existing urban fabric.

KEY CHALLENGES
- Dublin City and Suburbs sprawls across an area of more than 300 km², with vast mono-functional districts creating the need for long-distance (car-based) travel.
- For more than a century, many new large-scale developments have been built without proper services, facilities, or amenities, reducing people’s levels of access overall.
- The urban region is managed by four different local authorities with differing (political) agendas and competing goals.
- The quality and affordability of homes in the city centre is lacking, making it virtually impossible for many people to choose a more sustainable, compact, high-quality city lifestyle.
- Vast suburban areas lack a critical residential density to support the implementation of a variety of community facilities and amenities to enable 15-minute living; consequently, they also lack the amenities.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES
- Dublin City Centre is a perfectly walkable 15-minute neighbourhood, with characterful streets and a variety of community amenities.
- The City and Suburbs stand to grow by 235,000–290,000 people by 2040, bringing new residents to help increase the diversity and thereby resiliency of the city.
- The size of Dublin warrants the creation of multiple 15-minute places, increasing the polycentricity of the capital; with proper coordination, the four local authorities can all thrive in this scenario.
- Dublin continues to attract large international businesses and direct foreign investment, making it a European hub of economic productivity and innovation.
- Younger populations are much more likely to choose city and car-free living, and these new residents and workers will undoubtedly help the city move in a more sustainable direction.

Functional urban area extends across 11 counties. This Greater Dublin Area is home to approximately 40% of the national population and accounts for almost 50% of the country’s economic activity. Though a clear sign of the capital’s success, this development trajectory is no longer sustainable. Negative agglomeration effects, including traffic congestion, unaffordable housing, and overcrowded public transport, have become key issues for the city-region, exacerbated by a lack of coordination between the city proper and the commuter counties.

The Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan published in 2019 aims to address these challenges through more compact growth, with a strong focus on delivering more viable public transport, a greater housing supply, and more vibrant neighbourhoods.

Coordinating Dublin’s future
The NPF shows a shift towards a more balanced development of the country’s cities, with Dublin bearing the proportionally smaller brunt of the projected population growth.

Planning for a more sustainable future will require considerable coordination between the four local authorities to ensure that the health and wealth of one area does not come at the expense of another. Planning for 15-minute places may be one way to address the needs of all communities more equally.

Viability and desirability challenges
From an environmental point of view, the city cannot afford to continue to sprawl, though there are serious questions about the viability of building affordable homes in the city centre, along with questions about whether these places can successfully attract a mix of tenants.

On the one hand, developers have identified a baseline cost of more than €600,000 per city centre apartment, surpassing most people’s affordability levels. On the other hand, the Irish population has for a long time expressed a preference for houses over apartments.

Though it might be feasible to increase the compactness of the city through regeneration and intensification of the existing built fabric, both the financial incentives and the public’s perception of urban living will need an overhaul for compact growth to be the more viable and desirable option as well.

Post-Brexit and post-pandemic Dublin
The separation of the UK from the EU has created ripple effects across Europe, including for Dublin. Already a popular international employment centre, the city is seeing increased economic activity as an alternative destination to London.

The aftermath of the global coronavirus pandemic is a lot less certain. The retail sector in Dublin city centre has been impacted by lockdowns and reduced visitor numbers, and there are challenges for the recovery of these destinations. Office districts have also been rendered empty for long periods, presenting resilience challenges in mono-functional places.

Concurrently, the pandemic sparked a rise in public activities in residential and mixed-use neighbourhoods with people being asked to stay local to reduce the spread of infection. This prompted the implementation of new temporary pedestrian and cycling infrastructure measures that, if made permanent, is already a good step in the direction of making 15-minute places.

15-minute Dublin
No matter what the future brings, the balanced integration of uses and equitable integration of communities, brought together around a high-quality public realm, will be key ingredients to unlocking sustainable and desirable urbanism for the capital.

Both Dublin Chamber and Dublin City Council have expressed an interest in using the 15-minute city concept as a lever for urban development focused on building sustainable, economically successful, and desirable neighbourhoods.
### PERCEPTIONS OF DIFFERENT NEIGHBOURHOOD FEATURES

"Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and a desirable place to live and work?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood features</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood economically productive?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood a desirable place to live and work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Compactness (high density)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Sprawl (low density)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pedestrian-friendly (walkable)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Easy access for cars</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Good public transport</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Multi-functional land use</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Mono-functional land use</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Shared green space (parks)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>× Private green space (gardens)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 25.**

1 in 5 people (21%) living in Dublin City believe that a higher density of buildings helps to make a neighbourhood more environmentally sustainable.

**SUPPORT FOR 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**

People living in Dublin City are 50% more likely to say that a compact neighbourhood is a desirable place to live and work (21%) than the average Irish person (14%), and 26% more likely to link compactness to productivity.

Public transport is considered to be the most environmentally sustainable (71%), economically productive (67%), and desirable (64%) feature out of all the listed options.

**AGAINST THE 15-MINUTE CITY FEATURES**

People living in Dublin City are slightly less likely to choose walkability as a feature of an environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and desirable neighbourhood than the average Irish person.

Twice as many people (42% versus 21%) have said that low density (sprawl) makes a neighbourhood desirable compared to high density (compactness).
PERCEIVED AND DESIRED PROXIMITY TO SIX TYPES OF AMENITIES

**BEST ACCESS**
In Dublin City, 85% of people experience living within a 15-minute walk of a public transit stop, such as a bus, train, or Luas station, making public transport the most accessible amenity overall. One in four (74%) can also walk to places selling fresh food and groceries. On average, people living in Dublin City have the best access to amenities out of the five cities.

**POOREST ACCESS**
More than half (52%) of the respondents who work currently experience living more than half an hour from their place of employment, while only 14% are within a 15-minute walk. Access to education is also in the lower end of the scale, with only 46% saying that they can walk to places like schools, libraries, and universities in 15 minutes or less.

**BIGGEST GAPS**
36% of working people who live in Dublin City would like to be able to walk to their main place of employment with 15 minutes, requiring more than a doubling of the current access levels (+157%). Education is the second-biggest gap with an ideal access increase of +22%. For all other amenities, the difference between the current and ideal situation is relatively small.
## WHAT PEOPLE SAY: SOUTH DUBLIN, FINGAL, AND DÚN LAOGHAIRE–RATHDOWN

### Perceptions of Different Neighbourhood Features

> "Which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and a desirable place to live and work?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighbourhood features:</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood economically productive?</th>
<th>What makes a neighbourhood a desirable place to live and work?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Compactness (high density)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Sprawl (low density)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Pedestrian-friendly (walkable)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Easy access for cars</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Good public transport</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Multi-functional land use</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Mono-functional land use</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Shared green space (parks)</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✗ Private green space (gardens)</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Only 13% of people living in South Dublin, Fingal, and Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown find compactness to be a desirable neighbourhood feature.

### Support for 15-Minute City Features

People living in South Dublin, Fingal, and Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown are 12% more likely to say that good public transport makes a neighbourhood more desirable as a place to live and work (71%) than the average Irish person (63%).

Both private and shared green space are more likely to be chosen as drivers of sustainability, productivity, and desirability than for the average Irish person.

### Against the 15-Minute City Features

People living in the Dublin counties are less likely to say that a place that has multiple functions is economically productive (50%) than people who live in Dublin City (63%).

They are also considerably more likely than Dublin City residents to pick "easy access for cars" as a neighbourhood feature that makes a place more environmentally sustainable (18% for Dublin City versus 29%).
The number of people who currently live more than half an hour’s walk away from their workplace is significantly lower than the ideal. The current number of people with 15-minute access to work is only 14%, while 46% of people would like to be able to make the journey in a quarter of an hour or less, and another 21% would prefer to take 15–30 minutes.

Only 39% of people can walk to places of education in 15-minutes or less. In contrast, 84% of people living in the Dublin Counties can walk to a transit stop within 15 minutes. The second-highest access level is for grocery stores, with 70% of the Dublin County populations saying they can walk to buy fresh food in 15-minutes or less.

Residents of the three Dublin County Councils have the biggest gap of all between current and desired distances to work, with a gap of 32% points (or an increase of +229%). The gap for education is also much higher (+56%) than for Dublin City residents (+22%).

69% of people would like to be able to walk to care within 15-minutes, which is significantly higher than the overall average (59%).

Table 28: Perceived and Desired Proximity to Six Types of Amenities
Every new and planned development is an opportunity to showcase the best of Irish urbanism, bringing together high-quality housing, amenities, and open space.
The following seven points summarise the shared challenges and opportunities that the Irish cities face.

1. Strategically located by key amenities
The cities were all established in strategic locations, with easy access to the important amenities of the time, i.e. with fresh water and arable land nearby, key routes over land, rivers for transportation inland, and rivers for connections to the ocean.

As the cities move towards more sustainable development models, they will need to once again find ways to reduce the distance between people and resources. It's time to locate around key amenities again.

2. Pre-industrial walkable city centres
The cities experienced substantial population growth up until the mid-19th century, and even today all the densest (and often most characterful) neighbourhoods stem from this period before the Great Famine.

This has created quite walkable (though sometimes small) city centres, popular with visitors and tourists.

Density at these scales has not since been realised, resulting in a lack of recently built places to showcase what compact urban living might look like in Ireland in the 21st century.

3. A century of suburbanisation
With Ireland's overall weak urban growth for most of the 20th century, the cities were allowed to sprawl substantially, creating vast hinterlands of single-family houses served by cars, at the expense of the desirability and walkability of the city centres. The public transport provision and quality of the public realm has also suffered from this development, creating a lag that will have to be addressed before the 15-minute cities can be realised.

4. Urban regeneration potential
The growth and then decline of the city centres has created substantial regeneration opportunities for all the cities (with Dublin slightly ahead in terms of completing large-scale regeneration projects).

These opportunities tend to be found at former industrial sites, around major infrastructure nodes, and within the fabric itself in the form of gaps and vacant heritage buildings. The sheer scale of these projects is both their opportunity and the challenge.

5. Connections with water and nature
All the cities were established by water, and though the prominence of this connection varies, it is an incredible natural amenity to hold. Many opportunities exist for facilitating a return to water-based activities.

Additionally, all the cities benefit from being in relatively close proximity to the countryside and areas of natural beauty, though for some people, these places are only accessible by journeying across the suburban hinterland.

6. At risk of climate change
With climate change accelerating rising sea levels and causing more extreme weather events, being located near bodies of water also comes with substantial flood risks. As the cities become denser, they must also increasingly consider how to mitigate extreme heat events.

Still, sustainable compact urban development is by far the better option in terms of minimising further adverse environmental impact from human activities.

7. Viability and desirability challenges
The cities are all set to grow their populations by 2040 (25% for Dublin and 50% for the other cities). As identified, all the cities could feasibly increase the density of the population within existing built-up areas, raising the number of people alongside the provision of amenities.

However, this requires substantial investments from both the public and private sector, and a market ready to take up the supply. In all cities, people are more likely to desire living and working in lower density neighbourhoods, and though support for active travel and public transport is high, so are the demands for vehicular access.

In theory, investments in high quality infrastructure and amenities should help increase the attractiveness of urban living, but the question is, who will front the cost and risk of these ambitious long-term plans?
“Planning policy has to be evidence-based and value-based. It is up to us to decide what kind of city we want to build.”

Stakeholder interview
“You need the public and private sector working together to meet the objectives of the compact growth agenda.”

Stakeholder interview
The idea of building 15-minute cities in Ireland could help meet many social, economic, and environmental needs – now it's about finding the time, resources, and courage to pick a place to start.

In previous chapters, we have shown what makes a 15-minute city, how 15-minute neighbourhoods can bring benefits to people and society, what aspects of the 15-minute city concept could serve the five Irish cities, and in what ways the public might like to see the concept realised.

In this final chapter, we touch on some of the more overarching challenges and opportunities that the key stakeholders are likely to face if they proceed further towards implementation of the concept.

Informed by stakeholder interviews with more than twenty representatives from the Irish public and private sector, we have identified five key issues that will have to be addressed, and five budding opportunities that may help smooth the process.

All for one and one for all

It has become clear that both the public and the private sector share the view that cities are for people, and that successful places are the ones that best serve their local communities.

Still, when it comes to making pragmatic choices, the decision-making tends to become a little less collaborative.

People and communities want to live sustainably and with access to lots of amenities, but still desire to own cars and have private gardens.

The public sector wants private developers and international investors to help deliver much needed projects to future-proof the cities, yet still struggles to provide long-term certainty and real financial incentives.

The private sector (and especially institutional investors) wants to develop places that are loved by communities, well-integrated with the city, and sustainable in the long-term, but still cannot justify taking financial risks with unproven building models.

#NotAllDevelopers

What is perhaps lagging, is a more honest and transparent conversation between these stakeholders, to find out exactly where and how motivations differ.

It may well be that there are insurmountable differences in some regards, but these are just as likely to occur within stakeholder groups as between them. Just as people are different, so do cities and developers vary, and it is always worthwhile to look for the right match.

In recent years, in Ireland and worldwide, there has been a growing amount of institutional capital shaping the built environment. Many of these investors represent pension funds, driven by a desire to secure their customers (i.e. people who have a private pension) stable, long-term returns at a rate that is above the inflation average (typically by around 5%). It is worth considering how the long-term objectives of a pensions fund, namely to secure the quality of later life, might also align with the cities’ future-proofing needs. For example by unlocking funding for more expensive compact urban development that can reap greater long-term rewards.

As one stakeholder put it:

"The institutional investors have to take a role to help the public sector deliver the scale of urban development that the future requires."

READING ON

In order to inspire action and provide all stakeholders with ideas for what might practically be done, the second section of the chapter presents a catalogue of interventions across three categories:

- Interventions to increase the residential population.
- Interventions to increase the quantity and quality of amenities.
- Interventions to promote more active travel and public transport use.

While by no means a comprehensive list, it is our hope that by presenting inspiration from around the world, the leaders of Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin will find new inspiration to take action.
KEY BARRIERS TO BUILDING 15-MINUTE CITIES IN IRELAND

The key barriers have been identified through interviews with Irish public and private sector stakeholders, discussing the implementation of 15-minute cities in Ireland.

1. GETTING THE PUBLIC ON BOARD

The benefits of urban living are not currently clear to many of the Irish citizens, who are understandably hesitant to let go of known lifestyles for an unfamiliar alternative. Still, getting the public on board with urban living will be key to raising the population density and amenity provision of the cities to more sustainable levels. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns, better knowledge-sharing, and best-practice developments.

WHAT WE HEARD

“A challenge standing in the way of creating compact 15-minute cities is people’s perception. I think there is a fear around high rise and changing the skyline of our cities.”

“People like their comfort zone. If you are talking about significant change in urban areas, then we need to have early conversations with people about the potential benefits and trade-offs as well as the challenges.”

“In Ireland, we’re used to having space: a front garden and a back garden, two storeys, two cars. With compact growth, we’re not just talking about behavioural change, but also a change in expectations.”

2. COVERING THE UPFRONT COSTS

There are a lot of upfront costs associated with building more compact environments, even if these places are more cost-effective for developers and society in the long run. In the short-term, this adds considerable risks, especially if long-term returns cannot be guaranteed. With new financial models, the risks associated with delivering compact, amenity-rich neighbourhoods could be shared between all the stakeholder who will eventually also be benefiting from the outcomes.

WHAT WE HEARD

“The actual delivery is the difficult part, particularly in terms of infrastructure development. Some things have to be front-loaded and that is a problem that we haven’t tackled yet.”

“There are real issues with how we pay for infrastructure and it’s important that the value which is generated by unlocking growth goes into the public domain and placemaking in the public interest.”

“The cost of delivering dense developments in Ireland is exceptionally high, creating serious viability challenges.”
3. BUILDING ON A WEAK PLATFORM

Ireland has not yet had an opportunity to explore how to build compact cities at scale. Though the national strategy is pushing for more compact urbanism and sustainable growth, the general lack of practical and lived experience may create issues delivering on the country’s ambitious plans.

These knowledge gaps must be addressed through training and experiments that involve everyone, from planners and developers to citizens.

WHAT WE HEARD

“Our urban planning process has not kept pace with the population growth. There has been an absence of an overarching vision of what the city should look like.”

“We have no history of developing high quality apartments in Ireland, whereas in Europe they have been doing it for centuries.”

“Local authorities are not well-resourced. We don't have the skills in some local authorities to properly articulate a three-dimensional people-based vision.”

4. TRANSCENDING POLITICAL CYCLES

The planning system is widely influenced by short-term decision-making. In the past, this has created issues with putting forward ambitious long-term plans, especially if these need to be delivered at the expense of short-term convenience - which is often the case.

Sustainable, compact urbanism requires a more considerate approach, capable of transcending political cycles and steering through shorter periods of opposition and doubt.

WHAT WE HEARD

“The challenge is that a lot of our decisions about infrastructure and development are tied to the political cycle, which is a game of unlocking short-term wins instead of thinking about real, long-term change.”

“We need to stop politicising housing, planning, and the design of our cities. We need a brave government. Sometimes that means taking personal gains out of the equation.”

“Too many local authorities with too little power leads to a lack of investment and coordination. Joined up thinking is lacking.”

5. ESTABLISHING MUTUAL TRUST

Since the financial crash in 2008, the relationship between citizens, and the public and private sectors on urban development matters has been marred by a lack of transparency and high levels of uncertainty on all sides.

It will take widespread collaboration to deliver on the strategies set out in the National Planning Framework. In order to move forward, the trust between all stakeholders first has to be formed.

WHAT WE HEARD

“We are asking people to live differently and to embrace a new lifestyle. Of course there is fear of change, but it is our job to build that trust with societies.”

“At the moment, the institutional investors are quite anonymous and there’s a lot of mystery and mystique around them. That needs to be overcome, to communicate if and how they have the interest of the city at heart.”

“Every time there is a mooted political change, all the developers stop and wait to see where they are. They don't like uncertainty, and they worry about knee-jerk reactions jeopardising their investments.”
KEY ENABLERS FOR BUILDING 15-MINUTE CITIES IN IRELAND

The key enablers have been identified through interviews with Irish public and private sector stakeholders, discussing the implementation of 15-minute cities in Ireland.

1. CHANGING VALUES

Younger generations have been growing up with a greater awareness of climate change and social justice issues than previous generations. Their choices are creating ripple effects and changing the values underpinning everything from business to politics. The coronavirus pandemic has also been instrumental in changing people’s perceptions, especially in terms of how we value the local environment.

Now is the time to capitalise on these societal trends, to ensure that people who are currently seeking to make more sustainable and community-oriented choices can (and will) continue to do so.

WHAT WE HEARD

“In Ireland, it used to be when you came of age, all you wanted to do was get a car. But the new graduates want to live in the city centre and they want to get the bus to work.”

“Nowadays, perhaps more than ever before, people want to live close to where they work, and they want choice and vibrancy.”

“By bringing a focus to what is in our vicinity, Covid has made us appreciate things like the public realm, and accessibility to green space and local amenities much more.”

2. A MOST COMPELLING NARRATIVE

The 15-minute city concept is a fresh, compelling narrative for sustainable urbanism, built around people’s experiences and lifestyle. Where terms like “compactness” and “high density” tend to be perceived negatively, the idea of living close to a range of amenities resonates with everyone.

By talking to people about what they would like to be able to access within a short walk from home, the strategies set out in the National Planning framework can be translated to a more relatable language.

WHAT WE HEARD

“I think people have connected with the idea of 15-minute cities because they can imagine what it is like to have a better work-life balance.”

“The 15-minute city idea is about inclusivity. If we planned everything around that concept, it doesn't matter what you earn or whether you are healthy or not. Everyone would benefit.”

“The need to give stronger support for creating 10-minute towns came to us from communities. The concept aligns with climate change actions and with a desire from people to live more sustainably.”
"The 15-minute city idea is about inclusivity. If we planned everything around that concept, it doesn't matter what you earn or whether you are healthy or not. Everyone would benefit."

Stakeholder interview

3. PEOPLE-FIRST FOCUS

From citizens, to local authorities, to institutional investors, the focus on community, user experience, and quality of life is high for everyone. This naturally leads to more people-centric design solutions, which in turn helps to make places and cities that are desirable destinations for residents and visitors.

The people-first focus should remain front and centre of the 15-minute city too, ensuring that there are strong connections between people, place, and services.

WHAT WE HEARD

"Private developers need to take the issue of quality seriously. And quality should be measured by how people experience spaces and how they make them feel."

"The city needs to be designed from the user point of view rather than from the bureaucratic point of view."

"We are really keen on creating family-friendly places. If a city is good for families, and inclusive of everyone's needs from children to their grand-parents, it usually means that it is very liveable and inclusive for other people too."

4. TIME TO STEP UP

Public and private developers are moving towards a much more active land management approach than Ireland has seen in the past. This shift has been catalysed by a desire to ensure the longevity of real-estate investments (and the long-term success of the city), which can only be guaranteed by building places from the inside-out.

By creating new funding structures that match the ambitions of a more engaged ecosystem of developers, land-owners, and users, the feasibility of delivering high quality places can also be improved.

WHAT WE HEARD

"Investors need to engage early and come in with an open mind. As a Council, we would like to see a move by private developers to more active land management."

"We are encouraging local authorities to embark on a much more active land management and interventionist approach, where they use a range of levers to achieve the compact growth paradigm."

"Stewardship is key to ensuring that a place is properly managed so it can remain attractive."

5. PUBLIC LEADING THE PRIVATE

The public and private sectors are closely interdependent. This relationship largely relies on the public sector setting a clear vision and direction, together with fair and stable regulation. Where local authorities take charge and provide certainty about what they want, private developers are more willing to pitch in, and better able to meet expectations.

The public sector should take this opportunity to establish strong delivery vehicles, inviting developers on board within terms that are designed to benefit everyone.

WHAT WE HEARD

"Local authorities need to do the master-planning in terms of what can be built in what locations. Where there is certainty about what you can build where, it significantly reduces the base cost."

"We need to see development and development needs to be enabled. Some of this will come from government, some from local investment, and some from external, international investment."

"Why do we even have developers in the first place? It is because society has a need for them. The role of the State is to channel the private sector to deliver the needs that society has."
Images:
1. Modular street furniture developed by Vinnova in Sweden as part of their one-minute city idea.
2. Community-led activation as part of the Archikidz Festival, facilitated by Hassell.
3. Example of an alternative upwards building extension from Copenhagen, Denmark.
5. Urban greening by the “Vertical Forest” skyscraper in Milan, Italy.
The following section presents examples of strategic and tactical interventions to help realise the 15-minute city, aiming to bring enough people together, to enjoy and share better amenities closer to home, connected by a first-class active travel and public transport network.

CATALOGUE OVERVIEW

**COMMUNITY DENSITY & DIVERSITY**

1. Accessory Dwelling Units
2. Heritage Adaptation
3. The Missing Middle
4. Modular Construction
5. Timber Towers/Plyscrapers
6. Community-Led Housing
7. Radical Mixed-Use
8. Rebuilding Neighbourhoods
9. Piggy-Back Units
10. Developer Quality Bonuses

**AMENITY RICHNESS**

1. Vertical Mixed-Use Buildings
2. Integrated Climate Adaptation
3. Nolli (Ground Floor) Masterplan
4. Value Capture Schemes
5. Urban Greening
6. Chameleon Public Spaces
7. Hyper Active Buildings
8. Participatory Budgets
9. Urban Farming & Gardening
10. Community-Led Activation

**SUSTAINABLE ACCESS**

1. Edge-Zone Guidelines
2. Re-Establishing Old Connections
3. Autonomous Vessels
4. Smart & Connected Streets
5. Superblocks
6. Mobility Guarantees
7. Next-Level Rest Stops
8. Trees As Infrastructure
9. Modular Street Furniture
10. Digital Mobility Experiences

ENABLING ECOSYSTEM

- Community density & diversity
- The 15-minute city
- Amenity richness
- Sustainable access
10 INTERVENTIONS TO INCREASE THE VOLUME OF PEOPLE

“We need the intensity of more people in our cities to create the vitality and critical mass to deliver amenities and cultural destinations.”

Stakeholder interview

The following ten interventions show how the volume and diversity of the residential population may be increased to help create a more sustainable and compact urban form, as required to unlock 15-minute cities.

Västra Hamnen (Western Harbour), Sweden
Malmo’s Western Harbour development combines different building typologies to deliver a human-scale, sustainable neighbourhood with a population density of around 5700 people per square kilometre.2

“...we need the intensity of more people in our cities to create the vitality and critical mass to deliver amenities and cultural destinations.”

Stakeholder interview

LA Backyard Homes Project, US
The Backyard Homes Project is an affordable housing initiative led by LA Más. Homeowners can rely on support from a collective of established non-profit organisations to design, permit, finance, and build new affordable housing in their backyards. In exchange, they must commit to renting the unit to a low-income tenant for a minimum of 5 years.

This project has been enabled by state measures easing regulations on accessory dwelling units.

See Mas.la > Affordable ADUs

SUBURBAN INFILL
ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

An accessory dwelling unit (ADU) is a self-contained structure, typically on a single-owner private property and around 25-60 m² in size. When designated for living use, these buildings can help create private living spaces for low-income renters, extended family, or elderly parents.

In Ireland, ADUs might help increase the population in the suburbs while providing more mixed housing opportunities within existing communities to suit people at every stage of life.
BUILDING REUSE
HERITAGE ADAPTATION

Vacant heritage buildings in town centres can be redesigned and updated to accommodate the needs of modern society. Often this requires the retrofitting of floor layouts to suit contemporary family constellations and the modernisation of building services, such as water, electricity, and WiFi.

All of Ireland’s cities, but especially Dublin, have substantial amounts of vacant space in heritage buildings, which could be re-purposed for residential use to help increase the city centre populations. The main barrier is the cost of renovation, which is exacerbated by strict building regulations.

Sydney Flour Mill of Summer Hill, Australia

For more than 100 years, the Flour Mill was a closed-off industrial site in Sydney’s inner west neighbourhood.

Owned by EG Funds Management and designed by Hassell, the site was transformed into a thriving mixed-use “15-minute village” with homes, shops, cafés, parks, plazas, laneways, and links to light rail. The masterplan delivered 30% floor space in heritage buildings, while 40% of the site was retained as open space.

See Hassellstudio.com > Projects

BUILDING SCALES
THE MISSING MIDDLE

After a century of seeing global cities grow either up (by constructing towers), or out (by building single-family houses with two-car driveways), a call to address the “missing middle” has been raised.

The missing middle describes housing types consisting of duplexes, row homes, and courtyard apartments, i.e. multi-family homes that are not quite detached houses and not quite a high-density apartment block.

In Ireland, looking at “missing-middle” housing could be a way to start increasing the density in the suburbs without creating stark contrasts with the existing grain.

Malmö Västra Hamnen, Sweden

The planning of Västra Hamnen (Western Harbour) began with the development of Bo01, a 45-acre neighbourhood built for the 2001 World Housing Expo.

In addition to being a showcase for sustainable development and design, the area now comprises a rich mix of housing, from two-storey row-houses to a 190-metre twisted skyscraper (known as the Turning Torso). The plans throughout Västra Hamnen comprise a total of around 11,000 homes and 17,000 jobs.

See Balticurbanlab.eu > Good practices

CONSTRUCTION INNOVATION
MODULAR CONSTRUCTION

Modular construction is the process of pre-fabricating building elements that can be easily assembled on site. The technique can help reduce construction costs by benefiting from economies of scale, and by spending more time preparing the building in cheaper off-site locations. 3D-printing and material innovation is helping to increase the efficiency of this type of construction, which can also benefit from being more easily recyclable.

Modular construction (and other innovative construction methods) will be a key enabler of greater density across the Irish cities, helping to increase the viability and sustainability of projects, while minimising disruption to existing communities.

Leeds Climate Innovation District, UK

The sustainable developer Citu is set to build an on-site manufacturing plant (Citu Works) to fabricate a timber-frame housing system for 516 homes planned for the Leeds Climate Innovation District.

Typically, modular construction takes place off-site, but by integrating the factory with the development, carbon costs for transport are reduced, while future residents are better able to follow the process.

See Citu.co.uk > Citu Places
**MATERIAL INNOVATION**

**TIMBER TOWERS/PLYSCRAPERS**

Engineered wood in the form of cross-laminated timber (CLT) sourced from sustainable forests is increasingly becoming a more environmentally-friendly, cost-effective, safe, and desirable material for tall buildings construction. Timber is a low embodied carbon material that also sequesters carbon and is renewable. In a high-rise setting, timber can perform better in the case of fire than steel. Finally, wooden buildings and rooms have been shown to bring health benefits to their occupants.3

In Ireland, tall buildings made from timber could help increase the population density in low-density neighbourhoods, while maintaining a strong connection with nature, health and wellbeing.

**Brumunddal Mjøstårnet, Norway**

With updated building regulations and plans to domesticate the timber supply chain, Norway is leading the way for timber construction. Built as a point of pride in a town of just 10,000 people, the 18-storey Mjøstårnet (Mjøs Tower) is currently the world’s tallest timber building. Designed by Voll Architects, the tower is also an example of a successful mixed-use development, containing both apartments, office space, and a hotel.

See Vollark.no > Portfolio

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**DEVELOPER INNOVATION**

**COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING**

Community-led housing is a housing delivery model whereby groups of citizens come together to create their own homes, essentially owning, managing, and stewarding the entire development process. This can be facilitated in a few different ways, such as through a land trust, co-op, or co-housing unit. When communities take charge of the housing development, it can cut costs and create much more unique and locally fitting solutions.

With the Irish population both resisting new developments in existing neighbourhoods and crying out for more affordable housing, a community-led process might be a good solution to explore for some locations, alongside more conventional methods.

**Baugruppen, Germany**

Baugruppen (German for “building group”) describes the self-initiated, community-based living model that has become a primary development driver in cities such as Berlin, Hamburg, and Munich.

By working directly with an architect, communities can cut costs and design exactly the types of homes they desire. Baugruppen products tend to be mid-rise apartment schemes.

See Theoneplanetlife.com > Baugruppen

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**URBAN REGENERATION**

**RADICAL MIXED-USE**

Radical mixed-used developments tend to be driven by a desire to create diverse and inclusive communities. Therefore, these places are also usually incredibly amenity-rich, through amenity abundance and diversity.

To enable this kind of development in Ireland, the zoning system might have to become much more flexible than today. The planning process also has to be clearly steered from the top to help developers meet demands, while benefiting from the certainty of knowing exactly what will and won’t be granted permission.

**Aarhus Waterfront Development, Denmark**

The development of the waterfront in Denmark’s second-largest city has become one of Europe’s largest, most ambitious mixed-use regeneration projects. In order to secure a mixed demographic, the site has been developed with a minimum of 25% social housing to be integrated with the area’s other market-led developments.

In planning for this development, Aarhus’ chief architect created a narrative to make it clear to commercial and residential developers that it is a privilege to build in the city.

See Stateofgreen.com > Aarhus Docklands
URBAN INTENSIFICATION
REBUILDING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Urban intensification can be enabled by the complete or part rebuilding of neighbourhoods, such as by demolishing unfit housing stock in order to build anew, and by retrofitting outdated properties.

With this sort of intervention, considerable consideration must be given to avoid displacement of existing communities. When implemented well, urban intensification strategies can help to make better use of existing built areas, while bringing better housing and public space amenities to residents.

London Church Street Regeneration, UK

Church Street is a deprived area in London with a highly diverse population, including large numbers of families and people representing many different cultures.

Westminster Council is developing the site by demolishing some of the existing buildings in order to provide more housing of a higher quality, with 50% affordable. The plans also include substantial improvements to the public realm, with greener spaces and pedestrianised streets.

In order to preserve the neighbourhood’s strong sense of community, the Council is working closely with residents, businesses, and neighbours in the preparations for the regeneration.

See Churchstreet.org

BUILDING EXTENSIONS
PIGGY-BACK UNITS

Buildings can be extended both to the sides, down, and up. This type of intervention can help to increase the density of existing neighbourhoods while preserving heritage buildings, or by simply leaving buildings intact that are still fit for use.

In Ireland, building extensions may be particularly interesting as a regeneration approach in former industrial neighbourhoods, where buildings are more likely to have flat, large roofs to support new structures. By adding to existing building stock, the character of a neighbourhood may be more easily preserved, and potentially enhanced by the juxtaposition of old and new.

Tallinn Fahle House, Estonia

Fahle House in Estonia is a roof extension designed by KOKO Architects.

A five-storey modern residential apartment block has been added to the top of a former paper factory, which now houses a mix of uses including a beauty salon, restaurant, office space and several other service and business functions.

See Archdaily.com > Fahle House

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES
DEVELOPER QUALITY BONUSES

Developer bonuses is an incentive-based tool that local authorities can use to encourage developments, while ensuring the quality of what gets built. Typically, a bonus comes in the form of a higher permitted site density (FAR) or building height, in exchange for either funds or the provision of public amenities.

In an Irish context, developer bonuses may help deliver public amenities alongside higher-density developments in under-served and low-density neighbourhoods. This tool should only be used with strong local authority leadership to ensure the outcome serves the public.

Sydney Design Excellence Bonus, Australia

In Sydney, a bonus of up to 10% increase in either height or Floor Space Ratio (FSR) may be granted by the consent authority, if the developer can demonstrate design excellence.

Design excellence is reached by awarding the construction project to the best possible design team after a competitive process. The competition is aimed at promoting innovative design solutions that deliver the best possible results within the scope of the project.

See Planning.nsw.gov.au > Design Excellence

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SCALE OF INTERVENTION

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SCALE OF INTERVENTION

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10 INTERVENTIONS TO IMPROVE THE AMENITY PROVISION

"Civic pride is important. The idea of having amenity space, public transport, the opportunity to walk and cycle safely, the availability of things that are local, shops and public health."
Stakeholder interview

The following ten interventions show how the volume and diversity of services, facilities, and amenities may be increased to support the residential population, as required to unlock 15-minute cities.

ZONING INNOVATION
VERTICAL MIXED-USE BUILDINGS

Vertical mixed-use developments combine multiple functions within the same building. Typically, the ground floor is used for public-facing activities of commercial or community-oriented character, followed by a layer of private business use. Upper floors tend to be well-suited for residential or hospitality functions. Older examples of vertical mixed-use include terrace houses with shops and workshops on the ground-floor and living quarters above.

The benefits of vertical mixed-use are a greater diversity of uses and users within a smaller area, helping to bring people and amenities closer together. Vertical mixed-use can also help taller buildings and skyscrapers better integrate with a city’s street experience.

Oslo Opera House, Norway
Both a cultural amenity and public space, the Oslo Opera House was one of the first major developments contributing to the regeneration of the Oslo waterfront.

The Amager Sandwich, Denmark
Located in Copenhagen’s Amager district, the building formally known as Sundbyøster Hall II, has lovingly been named “The Amager Sandwich” for its distinct horizontal layering of functions.

Designed by Dorte Mandrup, the building stacks a supermarket, public sports hall, and residential apartments from the ground up, creating a three-in-one mixed-use building at the scale of a single residential apartment block.

See Dortemandrup.dk > Work

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96
HOLISTIC PLANNING

OLLI (GROUND FLOOR) MASTERPLAN

People’s experience of a city is primarily shaped at eye-level. Whether walking, cycling, or riding buses, the feel and function of the street is largely determined by the character and use of its adjoining buildings. Giambattista Nolli was an Italian architect and surveyor in the 18th century who understood the entire ground level as a potentially public domain. He drew maps joining together streets and squares with indoor public spaces, such as churches and civic buildings.

Today, a Nolli ground floor masterplan is a site plan that considers not just where the public spaces are, but also the semi-public spaces created by retail and restaurants, in order to assemble an overall coherent and enjoyable public experience.

Oslo Bispevika Development, Norway

Bispevika is a new large-scale mixed-use development in Oslo’s picturesque waterfront. The Oslo-based developer consortium (OSU) instructed a single design practice (Leonard Design Architects) to develop a street level masterplan across 10 city clusters. Through this strategy, and working in collaboration with the individual building architects, the horizontal plane was designed as a single, coherent public realm.

See Leonard Design > Portfolio

GREEN INNOVATION

INTEGRATED CLIMATE ADAPTATION

With cities facing an increased risk of disruption from extreme weather events, climate adaptation measures are becoming a necessary consideration. Instead of merely dealing with the cause of disruption – such as by building a flood defence wall or a bigger sewer – taking a holistic approach to retrofitting the built environment can bring a wealth of benefits to people and planet.

Implementing more green space in the city is, for example, both a way to help the city absorb heavy rainfalls, increase biodiversity, and provide a shared public amenity with additional health and wellbeing benefits.

Rebuild by Design, US

Rebuild by Design was a $1bn multi-disciplinary design competition launched in 2013, following the devastation of New York by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The competition challenged multi-disciplinary design teams to take a community-led approach to disaster recovery, working with local stakeholders to develop new, contextually appropriate ecological and landscape design solutions.

Rebuild by Design has now become its own organisation, working with five cities across North America.

See Rebuildbydesign.org

FISCAL INNOVATION

VALUE CAPTURE SCHEMES

Value capture schemes is a tool that might help local authorities to recuperate upfront investments into essential public infrastructure.

Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) can, for example, be used by local planning authorities to raise funds from private developers to pay for social, environmental, and physical infrastructure. Other schemes include land value taxes, sale of public land at enhanced prices, and joint venture structures with the private sector.

In the Irish cities, where the need for new public infrastructure and services is high, innovative financing structures are almost certainly required. The use of value capture schemes should be weighed up against existing high developer costs placed on the private sector, which are already causing some hold-ups, especially in the delivery of affordable housing.

Community Wealth Building Lease, UK

Haringey Council in London is testing the use of a Community Wealth Building Lease. The Lease promises a discounted rent to building tenants who can prove that they have delivered social value through their occupancy of a council-owned space. The discount is awarded retrospectively, upon proof of delivery.

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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
URBAN GREENING

Urban greening is the act of transforming existing grey, hard-surfaced spaces into green, natural environments, such as by replacing asphalt with plants, planting trees in parking spaces, and creating community gardens on vacant lots and rooftops.

With Ireland’s strong connection to nature and green space, urban greening should be an ideal intervention for the five cities. Urban greening can also help unlock other, existing natural resources, such as the riverbanks.

Copenhagen Green Courtyards, Denmark

Many of Copenhagen’s neighbourhoods are built by following a block typology, with courtyards traditionally used for out buildings, toilets, and other utilitarian facilities. In 1992, the City of Copenhagen established the Green Courtyards programme, aiming to transform these grey spaces into green lungs for the local residents to enjoy. The initiative has been key to attracting families back into the city.

The courtyards are typically managed by tenant associations (open to all residents, regardless of tenure). Even today, the City of Copenhagen implements and funds around 10 courtyard garden projects in Copenhagen every year.

Read Soft City by David Sim, Island Press 2019, page 31

USE LAYERING
CHAMELEON PUBLIC SPACES

Public space and open space are valuable resources and amenities, especially in cities where these places provide an important respite from the built-up areas.

Chameleon public spaces are able to change use throughout the day and week, in order to optimise their contribution to the city and its citizens. A space might, for example, be an outdoor gym at one time and a venue for a book club at another. By layering uses, the spaces become capable of serving a much broader community, ensuring that everyone can access leisure activities that are right for them.

In the Irish cities, innovation in the dynamic use of the rivers and the riverbanks would benefit all five cities.

Paris Shared School Yards, France

Paris has launched the “OASIS School Yards” project, which aims to transform local urban areas to better serve the citizens and adapt to climate change.

Across the city, grey and hard-surfaced school yards have been re-designed as green spaces that can be accessed by the entire community (and not just during school hours).

See Uia-initiative.eu > Paris

BUILDING LAYERING
HYPER-ACTIVE BUILDINGS

In the 15-minute city, every buildings needs to be able to contribute both to the provision of space and to the supply of activities and amenities. One way to address this need is by making sure that all buildings are hyper-activated, thinking beyond the traditional design brief in order to bring forward new opportunities.

If a building needs to have a blank facade (i.e. a facade without any windows) then this wall should instead become a canvas for art, or a structure for plants, or a screen for showing outdoor movies.

By making every building do more, the city’s fabric can become much richer and multi-layered, improving how people use and experience streets and neighbourhoods.

Copenhagen Copenhill, Denmark

Copenhill is a world-renowned energy plant in Copenhagen, designed by BIG Architects to have a hiking trail, climbing wall, and artificial ski slope on the roof.

By layering multiple uses into the design, a typically very mono-functional type of facility has become a destination for urban leisure activities.

See Copenhill.dk
In making decisions about what amenities to implement where, local authorities and private landlords can turn to residents with a participatory budget model. Essentially, a proportion of the funds for public amenities is designated for a process where the citizens are involved in deciding exactly where and how the money is spent.

Though typically only used by the public sector, this kind of intervention may be an interesting alternative engagement tool for Ireland’s private developers, to begin connecting more meaningfully with communities.

Paris’s participatory budget, France
Paris has been using participatory budgeting as a public decision-making tool since 2014. The budget is allocated through a competitive process, whereby any citizen can propose a project that can then be voted up by the entire community. Paris has seen the delivery of vertical gardens, urban sports facilities, and public space renovations through this programme.

The Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo has set a target to allow 25% of the city’s outlay to be decided together with the citizens from 2026.

See Citymonitor.ai > Civic Engagement

**CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT**

**PARTICIPATORY BUDGETS**

**RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION**

**URBAN FARMING AND GARDENING**

Urban farming, gardening, and agriculture is the growing and production of food within cities, making use of allotments, parks, rooftop gardens, vertical surfaces, and even indoor space.

In addition to increasing a community’s self-sufficiency, urban farming can be a way for people to come together and spend time in nature. Diverse plants and crops also help increase wildlife biodiversity, bringing substantial benefits to the environment and the planet. Rooftop bee-keeping for the production of honey has also become a popular urban past time in many world cities, helping with the pollination of the city’s plants and trees.

Valladolid Orchard Schools, Spain
The Spanish city of Valladolid has developed a pilot urban agriculture scheme in the Cristóbal Colón primary school.

In order to increase biodiversity, air quality, and promote healthy eating, the school is planting fruit and nut trees, and berry trees and shrubs, alongside a large compost area with raised flowerbeds for vegetables. The initiative is accompanied by an educational programme.

See Interregeurope.eu > Good Practices

**TYPE OF INTERVENTION**

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**CO-CREATION STRATEGIES**

**COMMUNITY-LED ACTIVATION**

Community-led activation can be a powerful and efficient tool for improving the provision of public amenities where there is a genuine desire for change amongst the locals. Though less common in Europe, co-creation programmes and co-design events have produced successful real-world results in many parts of the world, with US cities like New York and San Francisco leading the way.

By providing a simple framework that encourages citizens to apply for permits and funding, authorities can empower locals to take ownership of their neighbourhood experience, creating change that is physical, cultural, and social all at once.

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# 10 Interventions to Support Active and Shared Travel

> "People look at sustainable travel like shifting people from cars to public transport. But in the end, the most sustainable solution is simply walking.”
> Stakeholder interview

The following ten interventions show how the active and shared travel provision may be improved to help connect diverse communities to a variety of amenities, as required to unlock 15-minute cities.

## Street Experience

### Edge-Zone Guidelines

Edge-zone guidelines set out to dictate how a building integrates with the street, in order to ensure the greatest possible contribution to the public realm experience. Guidelines can dictate both the amount of edges that have to be active for new developments, the width of the edge zone, and the type of uses that should be encouraged. North-facing residential edges might for example only have a small semi-private zone to activate the space between the building and the street (such as for potted plants), while south-facing commercial edges should have wide zones for seating and outdoor dining. By creating clear guidelines for edge zones, Irish authorities can ensure that new developments contribute to increasing the full neighbourhood experience.

### Copenhagen Edge-Zone Policies, Denmark

The City of Copenhagen requires all development proposals to clearly show how the edges of the new buildings will be treated to help activate the streets. The City has also published guidelines to showcase different types of design solutions that should be encouraged.

See KK.sites.itera.dk

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## Scale of Intervention

| Small | Medium | Large |

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### The New York High Line, US

The High Line has created 1.45 miles of greenway along a former railway line, connecting Manhattan’s West Side and catalysing a district-wide neighbourhood regeneration.
INFRASTRUCTURE ADAPTATION
RE-ESTABLISHING OLD CONNECTIONS

Many cities will have large areas of abandoned infrastructure, left-over from industrial uses or superseded by modern interventions.

Disused railway links, storage facilities, and industrial sites can be adapted to improve the public realm and active travel connectivity, opening up new areas for public use and increasing the city’s provision of green space.

Many of the Irish cities have already designated development zones in former docklands and around stations. By identifying disused connections too, the cities can further work to increase their interior connectivity.

The New York High Line, US
The High Line in New York is a former raised railway link running alongside Manhattan’s west side from Chelsea to Hudson Yards. Instead of tearing down the existing infrastructure, the City of New York re-appropriated the space as a green pedestrian link.

Today, the 1.45-mile-long greenway features more than 500 species of plants and trees. This new amenity has also significantly raised the property values in the surrounding neighbourhood, catalysing a district-wide regeneration.

See TheHighline.org

MOBILITY INNOVATION
AUTONOMOUS VESSELS

The idea that private cars might one day be able to drive themselves has been talked about for years, with more and more questions arising around the feasibility and desirability of this vision.

There are, however, other applications of autonomous technology in mobility, which are proving to be quite useful solutions for delivering better urban connectivity. In several cities across Europe, autonomous shared shuttle buses have been successfully trialled, while autonomous drones can be used to distribute deliveries at times when the streets are empty.

For Ireland’s cities, the presence of rivers and canals in the city centres could be an interesting conveyor of autonomous vessels for people, goods, and resources.

Amsterdam Roboats, Netherlands
Roboat is a 5-year research project with an aim to develop the world’s first fleet of autonomous floating vessels, led by the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

The project is looking at the possibility for the floating drones to help form bridges, collect waste, deliver goods, and transport people.

See Roboat.org

INFRASTRUCTURE INNOVATION
SMART & CONNECTED STREETS

With the advent of digital technology, streets and movement networks can be connected to the internet, to help manage traffic flows and optimise space usage. Smart streets may, for example, incorporate electricity and WiFi, to enable charging of electric mobility modes and bring digital connectivity to all communities. Street lamps can be dimmed at night to save electricity, only to light up when someone walks by.

In the future, digitally enabled infrastructure can also automatically limit vehicle speeds, designate space for different road users, and help manage autonomous vehicles.

Glasgow Intelligent Street Lighting, Scotland
The City of Glasgow has been leading the way in street lighting innovation, with a Future Cities demonstrator project looking at ways to add more control and efficiency to the lighting network. The lamps are being tested on a riverside walkway, commercial street, and in an entertainment district.

In addition to learning from real-time data to provide the perfect luminaire levels, the lamps detect noise and air pollution and pedestrian footfalls to help the city operate more efficiently overall.

See Futurecity.glasgow.gov.uk > Intelligent Street Lighting

### TYPE OF INTERVENTION

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Superblocks are essentially pedestrian-priority districts, i.e. areas of the city where larger parts of the street network have restricted vehicular access in favour of walking, cycling, and public transport. The concept also exists in the form of low-traffic neighbourhoods, also known as active-travel neighbourhoods, as both the pedestrian and cycling traffic typically increases as a product of having fewer cars on the roads.

Barcelona is the first city to implement Superblocks, making it a pioneering example for other cities to follow. The initiative combines nine traditional blocks, restricting vehicular access within the perimeter to reduce the number of cars on the streets, cut pollution, and create more space for public activities.

Initially, the idea of Superblocks faced stark public opposition, but recent studies show the massive social and economic health benefits that the initiative has produced, and public perception has now shifted in favour of the model.

Since 2016, six Superblocks have been implemented. The Barcelona Mayor, Ada Colau, is planning a further expansion of the initiative over the next 10 years.

See Energy-cities.eu > Best Practice
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

TREES AS INFRASTRUCTURE

Trees are an incredible resource to cities and citizens, helping to improve air quality, combat the urban heat island effect, reduce biodiversity loss, and increase mental health and well-being (to name a few). Urban trees have suffered in recent decades from being viewed as an expense item on the land owner's bill (both public and private), but now a change in perceptions and economic modelling is literally re-valuing the role trees play in the city. Projects like "Trees AI" demonstrate how city actors can collectively value and invest in urban nature at scale, building a greener more sustainable future.

In Ireland, the prevalence of urban trees could become a key future identifier of uniquely (green) Irish cities.

Melbourne Urban Forest, Australia

The City of Melbourne has launched an Urban Forest Strategy, to help maintain and grow the city’s population of 70,000 trees.

The City has also created an "Urban Forest Visual", where citizens can learn and get involved. The tool shares information on the age and type of tree, and even provides an option for people to email a specific tree (the email goes to the City). See Melbourneurbanforestvisual.com.au

CONSTRUCTION INNOVATION

MODULAR STREET FURNITURE

Modular street furniture can help reduce the costs of implementing shared infrastructure, while increasing the flexibility for communities to decide what types of facilities they most need. With citizen needs evolving over time, modularity is also a way to make the city more resilient to change.

Each of the five Irish cities could develop a unique kit-of-parts that reflects the character of the city and, in working with communities, start testing different uses for the streets in an agile and cost-effective way.

Sweden One-Minute City Kit-of-Parts

In a bid to improve urban living, Sweden's national agency for innovation, Vinnova, together with ArkDes have launched a national experiment enabling citizens to design new street furniture from a Lego-like “kit-of-parts”. The aim is to ensure that all communities have exactly what they need right outside their front door, claiming street space for new mobility and social hubs.

In Gothenburg, a couple of parking spaces have, for example, been transformed into a rack for cycles and e-powered scooters. This transformation has (allegedly) resulted in a four-time turnover for the adjacent shop owner.

See Dailyscandinavian.com > Swedens One Minute City Design

MOBILITY INNOVATION

DIGITAL MOBILITY EXPERIENCES

Digital technology can help increase the attractiveness and efficiency of the active travel and public transport experience, making sure that sustainable modes are not only the healthiest, but also the most convenient and desirable choices.

Mobility-as-a-Service solutions integrate multiple mobility options on a single planning and payment platform, enabling users to switch between modes in the shared network, such as between buses, trains, and bicycles, with ease.

Augmented Reality solutions can be used to add layers to the travel experience, for either entertainment or educational purposes.

In Ireland, these smart and fun solutions may be key to facilitating a modal shift, alongside increasing the actual quality and distribution of the active and shared travel provision.

Eurostar Odyssey

The Eurostar Odyssey experience uses augmented reality to transform the train's roof into a glass ceiling with an underwater world beyond. It is one of the world's first examples of providing on-board VR experiences.

See Akqa.com > Work
“There is still a magic to the city that people love. It is about living vibrantly, with a sense of community.”

Stakeholder interview
A NEW ERA OF IRISH URBANISM

What makes an ideal 15-minute city? Ireland's cities stand before a unique opportunity to shape the 15-minute city vision alongside the country's compact growth agenda, improving local experiences while charting a new, greener future for Irish urbanism altogether.

The concept of making 10, 15, or 20-minute cities has captured hearts and minds globally, driving a new era of locally-oriented urban development. As Ireland embarks on a period of significant population growth, the Irish Government is seeking to encourage more compact and sustainable development patterns, which brings the 15-minute city concept into close alignment with the National Planning Framework (NPF). Where the "compact growth agenda" primarily speaks to the nation's planners and policymakers, the idea of living within a short walk of most daily amenities speaks to everyone.

The 15-minute city idea clearly serves many of Ireland's needs, and at least some of the population's desires. One in three Irish people effectively say they would like to live in a full 15-minute city with easy access to every type of amenity (as outlined by the YouGov population survey results shared in Chapter One), while around two in three people would like to be able to walk to a grocery store, public transport stop, or recreational destination in 15-minutes or less.

At the moment, people travel the furthest for work (and are willing to travel further for work), underscoring the prevalence of suburban living and car-based commuting across the country. It will take more than mere planning policies to catalyse the nationwide behaviour-change required to rebalance current urban-suburban divides.

Ireland is a country of diverse people and communities. Some have already fallen in love with city living, while others have yet to see the range of benefits that an urban lifestyle can unlock. Some have lived on the green island for generations, some have settled to enjoy new work and life opportunities, and some are merely visiting as tourists or transient workers. What everyone have in common is a great appreciation of the country's rural beauty - the green hillsides, ragged coasts, deep forests, and flowing rivers. Urban living will never be able to replace the experience of being immersed in nature. But then again, neither can living in the suburbs.

By combining density, amenity-richness, and accessibility, the 15-minute city concept is an opportunity to make both the city and the countryside the best versions of themselves, with high levels of connectivity to enable people - residents and visitors alike - to enjoy the distinct benefits of both.

With the public and private sector working together, all of Ireland's five cities (Waterford, Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Dublin) have significant development potential, and the opportunity to realise a more sustainable, desirable urban future - starting by addressing the barriers, such as negative public perceptions, a historic lack of urban investments, and the doubtful financial viability of compact construction.

This report has explored the premises of the 15-minute city idea and its potential implementation in Ireland. What remains to be seen is how the cities will make this vision their own, shaped around community needs and implemented with the support of the private sector.

The next era of great Irish urbanism might only be a 15-minute walk away.
“The 15-minute city should foster a sense of community and encourage spontaneity. You want people to be able to gather, and enjoy their streets.”

Stakeholder interview

“Without buy-in from all stakeholders, compact, sustainable growth is not going to happen.”

Stakeholder interview
HOW WE LEARNED

The study has been informed by a combination of desktop research, secondary data, and original data in the form of qualitative interviews and a large-scale population survey.

INTERVIEWS
To develop a nuanced understanding of the current state of the Irish cities and urban development, we conducted online 45-60 minute interviews with 22 stakeholders from across the Irish public and private sector. The interviews took place in June and July, 2021.
A full list of the interviewees can be found overleaf.

DESKTOP RESEARCH
From May to August, 2021, we have reviewed more than 60 online articles, reports, and papers, setting out the Irish context and urban theory surrounding the 15-minute city idea.
Where direct references are made, these documents have been cited in the literature list and endnotes in the appendix.

POPULATION SURVEY
In June 2021, we conducted an online population survey across four countries, administered by YouGov Plc. The purpose of the survey was to discover original insights about the applicability of the 15-minute city in Ireland.

Fieldwork for Ireland was undertaken between 10th - 23rd June 2021 with a total sample size of 1,004 adults.
Additional surveys were also carried out for the UK, Australia, and the US, in order to be able to benchmark the responses of the Irish population against three other English-speaking countries from around the world.
See further details about the survey methodology on page 120.

Demographic information
The survey was distributed to a broad sample of the Irish population. Any data that is reported on has further been weighted by YouGov to be representative of the entire population.

Region in Republic of Ireland
→ 55% Leinster
→ 27% Munster
→ 10% Ulster
→ 8% Connacht

City and rural area residents
→ 28% Dublin (all four authorities)
→ 7% Cork City and Suburbs
→ 10% Waterford, Limerick, Galway
→ 31% Other town/city/village
→ 20% Rural area
→ 4% Other/Don’t know

Type of job
→ 24% Desk-based job
→ 41% Any other type of job
→ 34% Not working (e.g. retired/student)
→ 1% Don’t know

Gender Distribution

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Age Distribution

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Income Distribution

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We would like to thank everyone who participated in interviews to help inform our study of 15-minute urban living in Ireland.

CONTRIBUTORS

1. Ali Grehan, City Architect, Dublin City Council
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22. Uinsinn Finn, Head of Transport, Galway City Council

In alphabetical order.
## INTRODUCTION

A YouGov Population Survey. Out of the 1,004 survey base, there were 649 responses from people currently working. Questions around current and desired access to work were only asked of this sub-group. The total figure for current and desired access to all amenities averages access to the other five amenities for people who don't work, and to all six amenities for people who do work.

B Ibid. (Same note as above).

C YouGov Population Survey. 1,004 responses. “In general, which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood a desirable place to live and work?” 59% said “A place that is walkable” and 41% said “A place that has easy access for cars”. People could choose as many options as they liked.

D YouGov Population Survey. 1,004 responses. “In general, which, if any, of the following features do you think are more likely to make a neighbourhood environmentally sustainable?” 37% said “A place that is spread out (i.e. lower density of buildings on more space)” and 15% said “A place that is compact (i.e. higher density of buildings on less space)”.

1 Government of Ireland; Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework; February 2018.


3 CSO Ireland; Censuses of Population 2016 - Profile 4 Households and Families - Private Households; 2016.


6 On connections between inclusivity and density, see for example, Tracy Hadden Loh and Hanna Love; Why activity centers are the building blocks of inclusive regional economies; Brookings Institute, 8 March 2021. Retrieved from https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-future-of-the-inclusive-economy-is-in-activity-centers/, last accessed 26.08.2021.


8 Several studies have been examined to determine the ideal and minimum densities of a walkable, compact environment. The most important sources are referenced on page 118–119.

9 Several studies have been examined to determine the core amenity categories in a 15-minute city. The most important sources are referenced on page 118–119.

10 See for example, The University of Bergen; Humans evolved by sharing technology and culture: Our early ancestors, Homo sapiens, managed to evolve and journey across the earth by exchanging and improving their technology; Science Daily, 2 February 2016.

11 See for example, E.F. Schumacher; Small is Beautiful: A study of Economics as if People Mattered; Vintage, 2011.

12 The idea of “work” covers a broad range of activities, some paid and others unpaid. In the YouGov Population Survey, people were able to define for themselves whether they are currently working or not working. 1% selected “don’t know” in response to the question about how far from work they currently live, while 34% selected the option “Not applicable – I am not currently working (i.e. retired, unemployed, a full-time student, etc.).
13 YouGov Population Survey. In addition to surveying the Irish population about their access to the six core amenity categories, the YouGov Population Survey also asked people in the UK, US, and Australia to pick all the destinations currently within a 15-minute walk from home from a list of 10 types of destinations. From this survey, we find that work is one of the rarest amenities for people to access within a 15-minute walk. The survey results for Ireland are presented in the main content of the report.

14 See studies by Jan Gehl (such as Cities for People) and Colin Ellard, who works at the intersection of neuroscience and architectural and environmental design.


16 Ibid.

17 See for example the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s online guidance on poor nutrition at https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/nutrition.htm, last accessed 23.08.2021.


23 See studies by Michelle C. Kondo, Frances E. Kuo, and Rachel Kaplan. For example, Michelle C. Kondo, et.al.; Urban Green Space and Its Impact on Human Health; International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 03 March 2018.


25 Alexandra Lange; Teen Girls Need Better Public Spaces to Hang Out; Bloomberg CityLab, 28 May 2021.

26 See for example, Clare Cooper Marcus; House as a Mirror of Self: Exploring the Deeper Meaning of Home; Nicolas-Hays Inc. 2007.

27 See for example, Leila Scannel and Robert Gifford; The Psychology of Place Attachment; Environmental Psychology: Principles and Practice; January 2014.

28 YouGov Population Survey. Out of the 1,004 survey base, there were 649 responses from people currently in a job. Questions around current and desired access to work were only asked of this sub-group. The total figure for current and desired access to all amenities averages access to the other five amenities for people who don’t work, and to all six amenities for people who do work.

29 YouGov Population Survey. Out of the 1,004 survey base, there were 649 responses from people currently in a job. Questions around current and desired access to work were only asked of this sub-group.

30 Ibid.

31 YouGov Population Survey. All percentages refer to the ratio of people who have access within a 15-minute walk or under.

32 YouGov Population Survey. The question investigating people’s desired access to ten types of destinations was asked of the entire population, including asking people who work and don’t work about their desired access to work.

33 Several studies have been examined to determine the ideal and minimum densities of a walkable, compact environment. See separate list of sources.


35 Copenhagen Municipality; Mobilitet i København; retrieved from https://byudvikling.kk.dk/artikel/mobilitet-i-koebenhavn-0, last accessed 25.08.2021.
CHAPTER 1 (CONTINUED)


38 Several studies show that people tend to walk more and use local amenities more if they are closer to home.

See for example, the HeartFoundation’s studies of how much more people walk when they have more green space within 1.6 km of their home at HealthyActiveByDesign.com.au, last accessed 13.07.2018;


and Aarhus Kommune (Aarhus Municipality); Transport, Forbrug og Adfærd; 2013.

In terms of walking promoting a sense of community, see Kevin M. Leyden; Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighbourhoods; American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 93, 2003.


and Steffen Lehmann; Sustainable Urbanism: Towards a framework for quality and optimal density?; Future Cities and Environment, 5 August 2016.

41 See for example, Kevin M. Leyden; Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighbourhoods; American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 93, 2003.


49 See for example, thejournal.ie; Should Dublin get a high-rise skyline? Maybe, but not to solve the housing crisis; 3 July 2019;

and Eoin Burke-Kennedy; Why can’t we build apartments like the rest of Europe?; The Irish Times, 6 March 2020.

50 YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to consider to what extent they would support or oppose the building of tall buildings in different types of neighbourhoods, thinking about meeting the current demands for housing, workplaces, and leisure destinations, and thinking about meeting social, environmental, and economic objectives.


52 Deloitte City Mobility Index. Retrieved from https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4331_Deloitte-City-Mobility-Index-Barcelona_GlobalCityMobility_WEB.pdf, last accessed 17.08.2021.


54 Same as endnote 28.

55 Ibid. (Same note as above.)

56 Same as endnote 50.
CHAPTER 2

1 Central Statistics Office (Ireland); Urban and Rural Life in Ireland; 2019. The CSO reports that 33.4% live in cities; 16.1% are in rural areas with high urban influence; 12.5% are in rural areas with moderate urban influence; 8.8% are in highly rural areas. Retrieved from https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-urli/urbanandrurallifeinireland2019/introduction/#/en.211130 & calculations from the city data, last accessed 25.08.2021.


7 Eoin O’Malley; The Decline of Irish Industry in the Nine-teenth Century; The Economic and Social Review, Vol. 13, October 1981; and A rural revolution – how Irish agriculture has evolved over a century; Independent.ie, 25 May 2016.


11 Ibid.

12 Stakeholder interviews conducted June-July 2021.


19 Ibid.


21 Limerick City and County Council; Limerick Regeneration: Framework Implementation Plan; September 2013.


25 Limerick City & County Council; Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, Background Paper: People & Places; 2020

26 Research by Niamh Moore-Cherry, Associate Professor of Urban Governance and Development in the School of Geography, University College Dublin.

27 Limerick City and County Council; Limerick Regeneration: Framework Implementation Plan; September 2013.

CHAPTER 2 (CONTINUED)


34 Ibid.


36 Estimated based on historic Ordnance Survey maps.


38 Research by Niamh Moore-Cherry, Associate Professor of Urban Governance and Development in the School of Geography, University College Dublin

39 Ibid.


42 Eoin Burke-Kennedy; Cost to develop Dublin city apartment as much as €619,000; 26 January 2021; and Irish Institutional Property; The Irish Housing Supply and Affordability Challenge Explained; 27 October, 2020.

43 Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

1 Jim Power Economics; The role of Institutional investment in the Irish real estate market; Irish Institutional Property, September 2020.

2 Nicole Foletta and Simon Field; Europe’s Vibrant New Low Car(bon) Communities; ITDP, 2011.

3 See research summarised in the publication 10 reasons why wooden buildings are good for you by Stora Enso.


ADDITIONAL CSO SOURCES FOR CHAPTER 2 (CITY DATA)

Data on the City and Suburbs:
Population (number), area size (km²), and population density (people/km²) for the settlement areas: Census 2016, Table E2014. See https://data.cso.ie/table/E2014.

Urban areas are defined by the CSO. These boundaries do not relate to any electoral boundaries.

Data on the Electoral Areas:

Area size (km²) for the local authority areas: Census 2016, Table E2013. See https://data.cso.ie/table/E2013. The area has been calculated by the author as the total area of the combined electoral districts.

In June 2019, Cork City Council’s boundary was expanded, growing the population by ~85,000 people, while the City Council’s area increased by a factor of 5. Source for the population and area growth: Cork City Council.

Data on motor vehicle ownership:
Households relying on walking, cycling, and public transport to get around: Census 2016, Table E6032. See https://data.cso.ie/table/E6032.

The data specifically reports how many households do not own a motor car within each of the local authority areas.

Density maps:

### Table Notes

**Table 1-7 (shared note)**
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to consider how far they currently live from each of the six identified amenity types, and how close they would like to be if they could choose. Intervals were given at “Less than a 5-minute walk”, “Between a 5 and a 15-minute walk”, “Between a 16 and 30-minute walk”, “Between a 31 and 45-minute walk”, and “More than a 45-minute walk”.

People were asked to answer the question in relation to their own walking speed.

**Table 1: Access to Education in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Education was phrased as “Education – places to study and learn (e.g. school, library, university, study group, etc.)”
Total survey base: 1,004 people. 9% answered “Don’t know”. 8% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 2: Access to Work in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Work was phrased as “Work – specifically your main place of work other than your home”. This question was only asked of people who had previously said that they are currently working.
Total survey base: 649 people. 8% answered “Don’t know”. 6% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 3: Access to Transport in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Transport was phrased as “Transport – places to access the public transport network (e.g. bus station, train station, etc.”)
Total survey base: 1,004 people. 2% answered “Don’t know”. 8% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 4: Access to Groceries in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Groceries was phrased as “Groceries – places selling fresh food and groceries (e.g. grocery shop, market, etc.”)
Total survey base: 1,004 people. 2% answered “Don’t know”. 8% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 5: Access to Care in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Care was phrased as “Care – places offering healthcare, social care, and community care (e.g. dentist, pharmacy, nursery, community hub, etc.”)
Total survey base: 1,004 people. 3% answered “Don’t know”. 8% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 6: Access to Recreation in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. Leisure was phrased as “Leisure - places to socialise, exercise, and relax (e.g. park, cafe, theatre, gym, etc.”)
Total survey base: 1,004 people. 3% answered “Don’t know”. 8% answered “Not applicable – I never/cannot walk anywhere”.

**Table 7: Access to All Six Amenity Types in Ireland**
YouGov Population Survey. The table presents data on how many people have said they can currently walk to all six amenities within the designated time frame, and how many people wish they could. Access to “Work” was only asked of the sub-group who are currently working (see note for Table 2).

The total figure averages access to all six amenities for people who work, and access to the other five amenities for people who do not work.

**Table 8. Current and Ideal Walking Times for All Amenity Types**
YouGov Population Survey. The table combines the data presented by Table 1-6 into one illustration with all twelve graphs (six amenities, current and ideal situation) in one.

**Table 9. The Most Important 15-Minute City Destinations by Age**
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to consider which five, if any, of ten listed types of destinations they would like to be able to access within a 15-minute walk from home. People were asked to answer the question in relation to their own walking speed.
Total survey base: 1,004 people. The full list of destinations and the wording of the survey can be found on page 34 in the main report.

**Table 10. The Most Important 15-Minute City Destinations by Country**
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to consider which five, if any, of ten listed types of destinations they would like to be able to access within a 15-minute walk from home. People were asked to answer the question in relation to their own walking speed.

The full list of destinations and the wording of the survey can be found on page 34 in the main report.

**Table 11. Driving Economic Growth**
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to select the statement if they agreed with it. The statement was phrased as: “The public sector (e.g. the State, Local Authority, etc.) should encourage more private sector-led development to help drive economic growth and productivity”.
Total survey base: 1,004 people. An average of 37% of people picked the statement, 41% of male and 34% of female respondents.

**Table 12. Supporting Local Diversity**
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to select the statement if they agreed with it. The statement was phrased as: “Neighbourhoods should comprise a mix of housing types, employment opportunities, and social and cultural amenities to support a diverse local population”.
Total survey base: 1,004 people. An average of 64% of people picked the statement, 67% of female and 60% of male respondents.
# TABLE NOTES

## Table 13. Environmental, Economic, and Societal Benefits of 15-Minute Cities

The table has been informed by a range of sources, literature, and academic articles. The specific references (numbered) and general references (lettered) are listed below.

**Specific references:**


2. The original study was undertaken by Halifax Regional Municipality in April 2005; Settlement Pattern and Form with Service Cost Analysis. The organisation Sustainable Prosperity summarised these and other findings in October 2013 in the report Suburban Sprawl: Exposing Hidden Costs, Identifying Innovations. Both studies are referenced and illustrated in Streetsblog USA; Angie Smith; Sprawl Costs the Public More Than Twice as Much as Compact Development; 5 March 2015. Retrieved from https://usa.streetsblog.org/2015/03/05/sprawl-costs-the-public-more-than-twice-as-much-as-compact-development/, last accessed 25.08.2021.


4. Ellis Lawlor and Moira Tasker; The Pedestrian Pound: The business case for better streets and places; Living Streets & Just Economics, 2014.

5. As reported by Dan Buckley; House-buyers pay extra €129k to live near Luas or Dart stop; Irish Examiner, 29 April 2019.


**General literature that summarises the benefits (and deficits) of compact, walkable urbanism:**

A. Simon Elias Bibri, John Krogstie, and Mattias Kärrholm; Compact city planning and development: Emerging practices and strategies for achieving the goals of sustainability; Developments in the Built Environment, Vol. 4, 2020.

B. Greg Clark and Emily Moir; Density: drivers, dividends and debates; Urban Land Institute, June 2015.


G. Tracy Hadden Loh, Christopher B. Leinberger and Jordan Chafetz; Foot Traffic Ahead: Ranking Walkable Urbanism in America’s Largest Metros; Center for Real Estate and Urban Analysis, The George Washington University, 2019.

## Table 14. Comparing Different Neighbourhood Features

YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to pick different features of a neighbourhood from a list of 19 different features. The table lists the results for six of these features. Total survey base: 1,004 people.

People could choose as many or as few features as they liked from the list, in response to the prompts.

First, we asked people to pick all the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “environmentally sustainable”. 4% answered “Don’t know”.

Second, we asked people to pick all the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “economically productive”. 9% answered “Don’t know”.

Third, we asked people to pick the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “desirable as a place to live and work”. 9% answered “Don’t know”.

## Table 15. Attitudes to Sharing Facilities, Spaces, and Vehicles

YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with statements around the sharing of facilities, space, and vehicles.

First, we asked people to what extent they agree with the statement: “People should be encouraged to share space (e.g. green space, work space, commercial space)”.

Second, we asked people to what extent they agree with the statement: “People should be encouraged to share vehicles (e.g. cars, bikes, buses, trains)”.

Third, we asked people to what extent they agree with the statement: “People should be encouraged to share facilities (e.g. gyms, allotments, print stations, recycling stations)”. 

### Table 16. Living in Walkable VS. Car-Centric Places
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement: “I would prefer to live in a place that prioritises walking and cycling, over living in a place that prioritises car ownership and driving”.


### Table 17. Renting in Amenity-Rich Places VS. Owning in Amenity-Poor Places
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement: “I would prefer to rent a home in a neighbourhood that meets most of my daily needs, over owning a home in a neighbourhood that meets few of my daily needs.”


### Table 18. Amenity-Rich Apartments VS. Amenity-Poor Houses
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement: “I would prefer to live in an apartment with easy access to social, cultural, and commercial destinations, over living in a house with limited access to social, cultural, and commercial destinations.”


### Table 19. Population Growth of Six European Countries

### Table 20. European City Benchmarks


### Tables 21–28

Table 21 and Table 22. Survey Results for Waterford, Galway, and Limerick combined
YouGov Population Survey. Responses from people who have said they currently live in “Galway City and Suburbs”, “Waterford City and Suburbs”, or “Limerick City and suburbs”. Survey base: 98 people. Also see the combined note for Table 21-27, and Table 22-28.

Table 23 and Table 24. Survey Results for Cork City and Suburbs
YouGov Population Survey. Responses from people who have said they currently live in “Cork City and Suburbs”. Survey base: 72 people. Also see the combined note for Table 21-27, and Table 22-28.

Table 25 and Table 26. Survey Results for Dublin City
YouGov Population Survey. Responses from people who have said they currently live in “Dublin City”. Survey base: 118 people. Also see the combined note for Table 21-27, and Table 22-28.

Table 27 and Table 28. Survey Results for South Dublin, Fingal, and Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown
YouGov Population Survey. Responses from people who have said they currently live in “South Dublin”, “Fingal”, or “Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown”. Survey base: 157 people. Also see the combined note for Table 21-27, and Table 22-28.

Table 21, Table 23, Table 25, and Table 27: Perceptions of Different Neighbourhood Features
People were asked to pick different features of a neighbourhood from a list of a total of nine different features. People could choose as many or as few features as they liked from the list, in response to the prompts.

First, we asked people to pick all the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “environmentally sustainable”.

Second, we asked people to pick all the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “economically productive”.

Third, we asked people to pick the features that they thought were more likely to make a neighbourhood “desirable as a place to live and work”.

Table 22, Table 24, Table 26, and Table 28: Perceived and Desired Proximity to Six Types of Amenities
YouGov Population Survey. People were asked to consider how far they currently live from each of the six identified amenity types, and how close they would like to be if they could choose. People were asked to answer the question in relation to their own walking speed.
LITERATURE LIST

The following is a list of key articles, documents, and papers that have helped to inform the overall content of the report.

DEFINING THE 15-MINUTE CITY AMENITIES


Patrick Sisson; What is a 15-minute city?; CityMonitor, 21 September 2020.

Tim Emery and Julia Thrift; 20-Minute Neighbourhoods: Creating Healther, Active, Prosperous Communities; Town and Country Planning Association, 2021.


UNDERSTANDING COMPACT URBANISM


Simon Elias Bibri, John Krogstie, and Mattias Kärholm; Compact city planning and development: Emerging practices and strategies for achieving the goals of sustainability; Developments in the Built Environment, Vol. 4, 2020.

Steffen Lehmann; Sustainable Urbanism: Towards a framework for quality and optimal density?; Future Cities and Environment, 5 August 2016.

Greg Clark and Emily Moir; Density: drivers, dividends and debates; Urban Land Institute, June 2015.


Ade Toker, Joseph W. Kane, and Lara Fishbane; Connecting people by proximity: A better way to plan metro areas; The Avenue, Brookings, 21 June 2021.

Alex Baca, Patrick McAnaney, and Jenny Schuetz; “Gentle” density can save our neighbourhoods; Brookings, 4 December 2019.

Julie Futcher, Gerald Mills, Rohinton Emmanuel, and Ivan Korolija; Creating sustainable cities one building at a time: Towards an integrated urban design framework; Cities Journal, 25 March 2017.


ASSESSING DENSITY & ACCESSIBILITY LEVELS


URBED; *Better Neighbourhoods: Making higher densities work*; CABE, 2005.


Niamh Moore-Cherry and John Tomaney; *Spatial planning, metropolitan governance and territorial politics in Europe: Dublin as a case of metrophobia?*; European Urban and Regional Studies, Vol. 26, 2019.

IRELAND CONTEXT


Dublin City Council; *Dublin City Development Plan, 2016-2022, Written Statement*; 2016.


Northern and Western Regional Assembly; *Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020-2032*; Government of Ireland, 2020.

KPMG and FutureAnalytics; *Towards a sustainable rental sector in Ireland: Understanding the Key Challenges and Opportunities*; Irish Institutional Property and Clúid Housing, 2021.

Irish Institutional Property; *Dublin: The Irish Housing Supply and Affordability Challenge Explained*; 2020.
POPULATION SURVEY METHODOLOGY

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Total sample size was 1,004 Ireland adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th−23rd June 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Ireland adults (aged 18+).

For Australia: Total sample size was 1,084 Australia adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 17th−23rd June 2021.

For the UK: Total sample size was 2,126 UK adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 8th−9th June 2021.

For the US: Total sample size was 1,363 US adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 10th−13th June 2021.

YouGov Survey Methodology

This survey has been conducted using an online interview administered to members of the YouGov Plc UK panel of 800,000+ individuals who have agreed to take part in surveys. Emails are sent to panellists selected at random from the base sample. The e-mail invites them to take part in a survey and provides a generic survey link. Once a panel member clicks on the link they are sent to the survey that they are most required for, according to the sample definition and quotas. (The sample definition could be “GB adult population” or a subset such as “GB adult females”).

Invitations to surveys don’t expire and respondents can be sent to any available survey. The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is normally derived from census data or, if not available from the census, from industry accepted data.

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Camilla leads urban resilience research at Hassell, bringing together strategic intelligence and creative design to unlock social, economic, and ecological outcomes for people and place.

Having studied Architecture at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts in Denmark and at McGill University in Canada, Camilla joined the urban quality consultancy Gehl in Copenhagen and New York where she managed placemaking projects and led the development of the Open Public Life Data Protocol. While in Copenhagen, Camilla also taught Strategies for Urban Liveability at DIS. Camilla moved to London in 2018 to work as a lead designer in Arup Digital Studio, a multi-disciplinary strategic and UX design team, before joining Hassell at the beginning of 2021.

Through these experiences, Camilla has had the opportunity to collaborate with cities and communities across the world, advising and writing on how to create more innovative, sustainable, and human-centred cities and places.

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Niamh Moore-Cherry is Deputy Principal at the UCD College of Social Sciences and Law and an Honorary Professor at the Bartlett School of Planning, University College London. Her research is focused on understanding the governance of urban (re)development, metropolisation and its outcomes. She is the author of Dublin Docklands Reinvented, has co-edited three books and has papers published in leading international journals including: Urban Studies, Land Use Policy, and Planning Practice and Research.

Niamh leads a team examining the relationship between Cities, Governance and Sustainability and has a strong record in policy analysis and community engagement. She has significant experience in working at the policy-practice-research nexus and input into the development of the National Planning Framework in Ireland as well as contributing to discussions for the UK2070 Commission.

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