Artists' Impression of Castle Street, Roscrea, Urban Movement

IRSH TOWN ENHANCEMENTS - CASE STUDIES

Roscrea Town Centre First

09 JUNE 2023

mahony pike

INTRODUCTION

This document reviews built examples of Town Centre interventions throughout Ireland. All examples have been chosen based on their relevance to Roscrea with a comparable population, and size. The case studies are organised into the categories of;

1. TOWN PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS
2. ACTIVATING AND ENHANCING DERELICT TOWN CENTRE BUILDINGS
3. POCKET PARKS & GREENING

A number of case studies include a brief description, note on funding streams and post-occupancy quotes from occupiers or residents. This document focuses on Irish examples as they best illustrate the impacts in this climate and culture.

Viking Triangle, Waterford

01 | TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

CLONAKILTY, CORK

Population (2016): 4,592

Description of works: The Urban design plan was drafted into different construction phases pending to funding availability as following: Phase I: Asna and Emmet Square (completed in May 2013); Phase II: Michael Collins House Museum (opened in April 2016), the main streetscape (reopened in June 2016) at the back of the funding of a drainage scheme, and phase III: the Flood Relief Scheme (completed in 2021) with the funding of the national Office of Public Works.

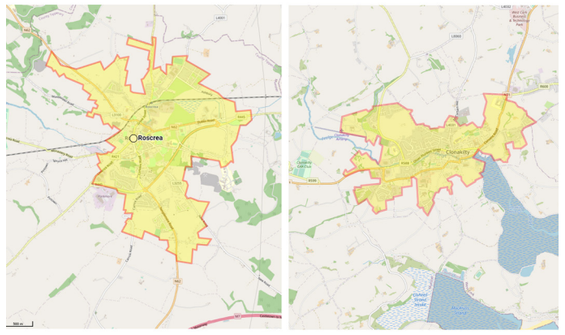
Results of Placemaking improvements:
Increased Population, Increased Investment, New Specialised Retail Shops, New Community Groups, New Festivals and Events, Less Vacancy, Higher Property Value

"Clonakilty is an incredibly progressive and forward-looking community which champions inclusivity and diversity, a trailblazing town which may be seen as a blueprint for other towns globally to follow. Living there is a dream; with access to stunning sandy beaches, a great farmers' market, a plethora of artisanal food companies and speciality coffee roasters"

Resident testimonial for entry to the Irish Times Best Place to Live 2021 (Shortlisted in Top 5)

Press Coverage:
'Cork County on the Rise: People the priority in redesign of urban spaces' https://www.irishexaminer.com'

Clonakilty has been named as the best town in the UK and Ireland www.thejournal.ie/



From Top; Residents on Clonakilty Main Street, Emmet Square and Asna Square

Scale comparison to Roscrea.

KILDARE TOWN, KILDARE

Population (2016): 8,634

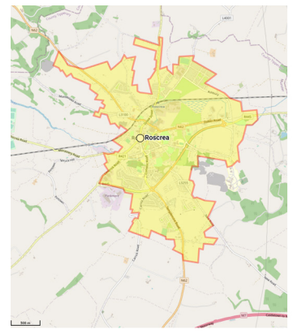
Funding: €48k 'Tactical Urbanism' as a response to Covid-19. Part 8 going ahead soon.

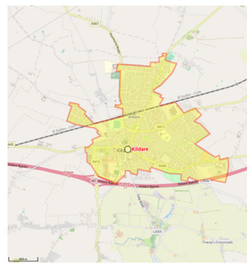
Description of works:
The Strategic Projects and Public Realm (SPPR) Team in Kildare Co Co - a multi-disciplinary team with engineering, planning, architecture and urban design skills - successfully secured funding from the Dept Rural and Community Development to trial "tactical urbanism" measures, to facilitate use of the Market Square by businesses and the wider community during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

This pilot project was low in cost and quick to install - with the space easily able to revert to its previous use if unsuccessful.

Analysis undertaken of Kildare Town centre shows the Market Square and connecting streets (Claregate St. and Nugent St) as the most integrated / accessible public realm spaces within the town. This analysis underpins KCC's approach in prioritising these areas as a matter of urgency, in responding to immediate public health concerns over social distancing and the reopening of businesses. This analysis supports a 'town centre first' approach using evidence and analysis to redress street space in favour of pedestrians & cyclists.

The project has been formalised and integrated into the Draft Kildare Town LAP 2023-2029, including all relevant screening and Transport studies.





From Top; Before and after photos of Market Square.

Scale comparison to Roscrea.

TRAMORE PUBLIC REALM, WATERFORD

Population (2016): 10,381

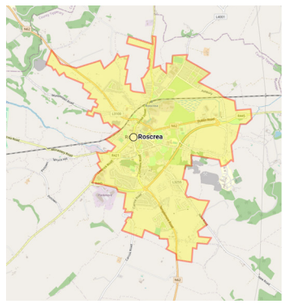
dhb Architects

Description of works: An “integrated traffic, parking and public realm solution for Tramore Town Centre”.

Results of Placemaking improvements: The project has created a new vibrant pedestrian area and focal point for Tramore town centre. Challenging topography is worked into stepped seating; paving cascades like waves down to the street. This is one part of a bigger picture to improve connections between Tramore and its surrounding areas. There has been a positive reaction from the local community and for the first time ever there has been a request from the local business community not to reopen this street to traffic.

“There has been a positive reaction from the local community and for the first time ever there has been a request from the local business community not to reopen this street to traffic.”.

Nominated for RIAI Public Choice Award 2023.



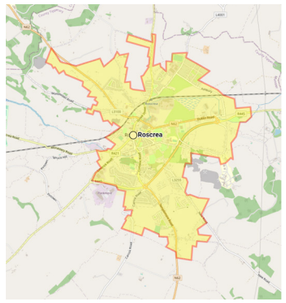
From Top; Residents on Aerial view of Public Realm, Evening Activity, Daytime Activity. Scale comparison to Roscrea.

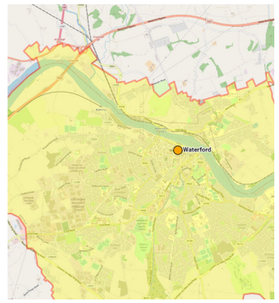
VIKING TRIANGLE PUBLIC REALM, WATERFORD CITY

Population (2016): 53,504

GKMP Architects with Waterford City Architects

Architects’ Description: The project seeks to understand the underused public spaces of the Triangle, unify them and to consolidate their public function as civic meeting places for the city. The project is a constructed landscape; it makes background rather than building-as-object, a continuous condition in which old and new elements and materials combine to underscore diverse individual and collective inhabitation. Though specific in context, place and materials, the project is characterised by a positive uncertainty with regard to use. Its emptiness assumes change, across a season or a century.





From Top; Enhanced Public Realm, Waterford Triangle, View of Friary and Enhanced Public Realm. Scale comparison to Roscrea.

Abbyleix Library in former Market House, De Blacam and Meagher Architects

02 | ACTIVATING AND ENHANCING DERELICT TOWN CENTRE BUILDINGS

BOYLE, CO. ROSCOMMON

Population (2016): 2,568

Funding: Town Living Pilot Scheme; €100,000. RRDF fund; €1.7mil. Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme; €500,000 for a cycleway linking Boyle and Lough Key Forest & Activity Park. Boyle 2040 has been a key driver in securing funding.

Description of works:

Various funding streams were accessed to support a comprehensive suite of projects including; regeneration of Main Street, the replacement of existing footpaths and kerbing with new natural stone granite kerbing and paving, the installation of public lighting, ducting and foundations. Central to the proposals is the comprehensive redevelopment of the historic Royal Hotel, including an urban promenade, enclosed and defined by active frontages. To the rear of the former Royal Hotel, the promenade will open into an urban plaza with events pavilions. This regeneration project will include the refurbishment and conversion of the building into an Enterprise Centre, exhibition space, information point and coffee dock.

"Today marks the next step in realizing the ambition for Boyle town and it follows on from a number of initiatives which have begun to transform the town and realise its untapped potential" - Eugene Cummins, Chief Executive, Roscommon County Council

Press Coverage:

'Boyle – a struggling rural town with big plans' https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/boyle-a-struggling-rural-town-with-big-plans-1.3746188

From Top; River frontage of the Former Royal Hotel.

Proposed urban plaza, behind the former Royal Hotel, which will link the town centre to key tourism attractions using the river.

Boyle Main Street in C19th

Scale comparison to Roscrea.

BANAGHER, CO. OFFALY

Population (2016): 1,760

Funding: Residential Occupancy Scheme/ Town Centre Living Initiative, €75,000 - €100,000.

RRDF, €527,000 grant fot former Royal Shannon Hotel.

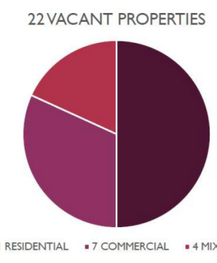
Description of works: Banagher Main Street was chosen as a pilot Town Centre Living Initiative town. A vacancy audit was undertaken, identifying 22 properties including a hotel.

A Streetscape Painting Scheme was undertaken in 2021, to improve the visual appearance of the town on the approach from the Marina, making Banagher a more attractive place to live in and to visit. Grants were available on application, to paint the façades of building, in order to improve and enhance their appearance and contributing to an overall improvement of the streetscape.

Results of Placemaking improvements: Several privately owned properties have been brought back into use. The whole Town has benefitted from a coordinated branding and sctreetscap enhancement, focusing on bringing some of the (approx. 30,000 per annum) tourists from the Marina up to the Town Centret. Offaly County Council have also acquired the Old Royal Shannon Hotel, with intent to redevelop it to compliment the marina Master Plan in early 2023.

Press Coverage:

'Painting Scheme which Improved visual appearance of Offaly town now complete' https://www.ireland-live.ie/news/offaly-live/994410/painting-scheme-which-improved-visual-appearance-of-offaly-town-now-complete.html



Above; The former Royal Shannon Hotel before and after, painted as part of the scheme, acquired by Offaly Co Co and due for redevelopment by 2025.

Left; Vacancy by use.

Below; Repainted Billiard Hall and scale comparison with Roscrea.

66 GEORGE'S ST UPPER, DUN LAOGHAIRE, CO DUBLIN

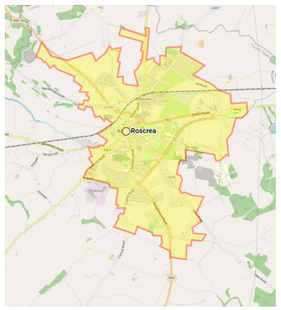
Population (2022): 5-6,000 (Town Centre)

Funding: Housing budget

Description of works: As part of a commitment to provide high quality social housing DLR have refurbished a partially derelict building in their ownership, within the Haigh Terrace to Park Road ACA (Architectural Conservation Area).

The refurbishment includes a ground floor commercial unit, with "shop windows" to both elevations, an access stair to four apartments and bike and bin stores for all units. The two 1-bed and two 2-bed apartments will be provided to tenants from the Housing List.

Results of Placemaking improvements:
Important active frontage to the People's Park and important external refurbishment works to the roof, glazing and rainwater goods. New population living in the Town Centre, with front door access from George's Street.



From Top; Street view of Refurbished building, Ground Level View, Scale Comparison to Roscrea

THE QUAY, RAMELTON CO. DONEGAL

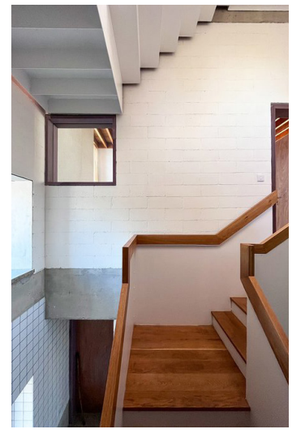
Population (2016): 1,266

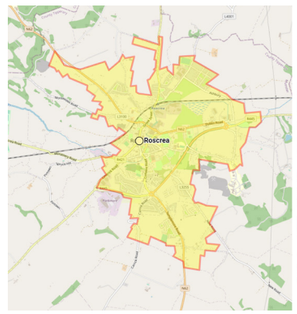
TOB Architect

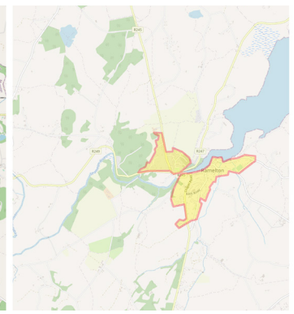
Conversion of a historic warehouse building to include two new townhouses.

Architects' description: The town of Ramelton in Donegal, Ireland was once a busy colonial shipping port in the 18th & 19th centuries, and the dilapidated stone warehouses on the River Lennon quays, remain to tell of that unsettled history.

The client's brief was to insert two housing units into one of these warehouses. Its historical status meant that minimum alterations were allowed to its external envelope. This constraint compounded with the very low existing floor to ceiling heights (2m) and the flooding risk of high spring tides, suggesting a split level arrangement of rooms around two steel stairs that wind up through each house, drawing light all the way down to the ground floor entrances.







From Top; Quay Exterior, Quay building interior, Scale Comparison to Roscrea

03 | POCKET PARKS & GREENING

ST. ANNE'S ROAD POCKET PARK, DRUMCONDRA

Population (2016): 4,465

Funding: Volunteers from Iona Residents' Association Group, a grant from The Croke Park Community Fund, €375 DCC Community Grant Scheme and €500 from KBC's Bright Ideas Fund.

A small site (0.03 acres), 40m long, and between one and six metres wide along its length.
The space was 'leftover' green space beside the railway viaduct. The works were led by enthusiastic locals who wanted to turn it into something with a bit of "local identity". The were supported by the DCC Public Participation Network (PPN). Maintenance of the park is managed by Dublin City Council (DCC) as well as local residents.

Results of Placemaking improvements:
The space allows residents a place to meet neighbours outdoors, and a focal point for new arrivals to settle into the area. Local residents have commended the park, for its open space, biodiversity and for allowing an area for people to enjoy nature in a city centre environment. At Christmas time, the park has been decorated with lights. A great diversity of flora and fauna areevident in the pocket park, including pollinators and ladybirds.

"While there used to be issues with antisocial behaviour in the space, it's been transformed into a very cared for, positive space in the area".
"We'd very much like to improve the playfulness of the park, because really this is a park for older people to come and sit and take a rest, and for kids to come and play, and everyone in between".

Above; before and after images of the pocket park.

Below; Play-on-the-way through the pocket park

WEAVER PARK, DUBLIN

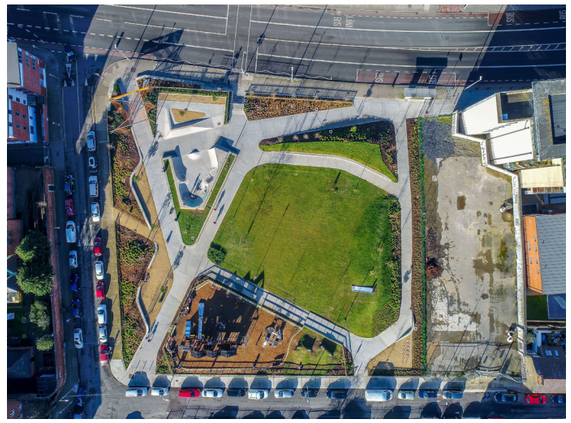
Áit Landscape and Urbanism
Area: 5,000m2
Approx Budget: €1 million

There are a multitude of uses provided for within the park design, including grassed lawns, a terrace onto Cork street, an enclosed play area, a picnic space, a skate park, extensive seating along internal walls and perimeter zones with tree planting, mounding and play features. The central lawn accommodates small scale active and passive uses on a day to day basis but can also provide the space for larger events such as markets, parties, exhibitions and performances.

RENSTRÖMSPARKEN,
GOTHENBURG, SWEDEN

02landskap
Area: c2700m2 (part of a larger park)
Budget: undisclosed

The commission was to create a new playground based on the theme 'Rain' next to a pond.
The playground was designed to have playful functions even when it rains. Roofs in the form of large lilypads offer protection on rainy days, and shade when there is sun. The roofs collect rainwater that is led to smaller funnels, where the water flows out.



From Top; Aerial View of Weaver Park, Birds-Eye View of Weaver Park, Aerial View of Renstromsparken, ground-level view of Renstromsparken

PORTER BROOK RIVER RESTORATION, SHEFFIELD

A small, landscaped amphitheatre, in a pocket park on a former industrial culverted site. Has resulted in a broader masterplan in Sheffield for a series of urban parks and 'daylighting' of undergound rivers. Most ambitiously, they intend to open up part of the river Sheaf near the site of Sheffield's former medieval castle to create a waterway in the centre surrounded by parkland, flowers, trees and seating for the public. Described as one of Britain's most ambitious regeneration projects.

RIVER ROOMS AT BARTRAMS GARDENS, PHILADELPHIA

Designed by environmental artist Stacey Levy, six wooden boat-shaped platforms placed throughout the grounds of Philadelphia's Bartram's Garden create a four-season invitation to reflect on the River's surface and its surroundings. Sandblasted bluestone panels give each room its own character, and introduce some aspect of the river's life or natural processes: one mat shows the names of each month's full moon, while others show the river's fish and diatoms.

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o'mahony pike

RIAI

architecture | urban design

www.omahonypike.com
info@omp.ie

Tel: +353 1 202 7400

Dublin
The Chapel
Mount Saint Anne's
Milltown, Dublin 6
D06 XN52 Ireland
Tel: +353 1 202 7400

Cork
One South Mall
Cork City
Co. Cork
T12 CCN3 Ireland
Tel: +353 21 427 2775

Directors: Vincent Hanratty Dip.Arch.Tech., RIAI (Arch.Tech) | Michael Hussey Dip.Arch., B.Arch.Sc., MRIAI | Conor Kinsella B.Sc. Arch., B.Arch., MRIAI | Derbhile McDonagh Dip.Arch., B.Arch.Sc., M.Sc. Real Estate MRIAI | Derek Murphy B.A.(Hons), Dip.Arch., BEAM Pro, HKIA(Assoc), MRIAI, RIBA | Orlaith O'Callaghan Dip.Arch., B.Arch.Sc. | Alex Schoenmakers Dip.Arch.Tech., RIAI (Arch.Tech)

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