



# **NORTH MAIN STREET PLANNING STUDY 2016**

**RENEWING CORK'S HISTORIC QUARTER**

UCC CENTRE FOR PLANNING EDUCATION AND RESEARCH & THE NORTH MAIN STREET TRADERS' ASSOCIATION

## FOREWORD

---

THIS PROJECT IS A JOINT INITIATIVE OF UCC'S CENTRE FOR PLANNING EDUCATION & RESEARCH AND THE NORTH MAIN STREET TRADERS' ASSOCIATION.

IT FORMED PART OF THE FORMAL TEACHING PROGRAMME OF UCC'S M.PLAN PROGRAMME (MASTERS IN PLANNING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT) WHICH AIMS TO PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH A REAL-WORLD PLANNING CHALLENGE AS PART OF THEIR TEACHING AND LEARNING. STAFF AND STUDENTS HAVE WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE TRADERS' ASSOCIATION IN THE COMPLETION OF THE STUDY, WHO WERE KEEN TO INSTIGATE A PROCESS OF REVITALISATION IN THE AREA.

THIS WAS AN INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION IN CITY REGENERATION, INVOLVING A COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE HISTORIC QUARTER'S SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AS WELL AS IDENTIFYING A STRATEGIC PLANNING RESPONSE TO SECURE ITS RENEWAL. THE STUDY INCLUDES A NEW STRATEGY DESIGNED TO RENEW AND ENHANCE THE CITY'S HISTORIC QUARTER, AND PROPOSES A RANGE OF INTERVENTIONS/ AND ACTIONS.

THE TRADERS AND THE STUDENTS COMBINED HAVE PREPARED A STRONG PLANNING-BASED APPROACH, REFLECTING THE LONG TERM ASPIRATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE AREA. THE EXERCISE WAS NOT SOLELY ABOUT 'MAKING A PLAN' — IT IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT AS A DEMONSTRATION OF HOW PLACES CAN ADOPT A SPIRIT OF ENGAGEMENT AND ACTION — USING COLLABORATIVE TECHNIQUES IN PLANNING AND PLACE-MAKING.

THIS INITIATIVE WILL BE A CATALYST FOR A RENEWED ATTENTION BEING GIVEN TO NORTH MAIN STREET AND TO PROVIDE A FRESH APPROACH TO THE AREA'S ONGOING REGENERATION.

WILLIAM BRADY, JONATHAN HALL, BRENDAN O'SULLIVAN

UCC CENTRE FOR PLANNING EDUCATION & RESEARCH

NOVEMBER 2016

---

UCC Centre for Planning  
Education & Research



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION** **PAGE 1**

- 1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND
- 1.2 KEY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES
- 1.3 NORTH MAIN STREET TRADERS ASSOCIATION & UCC'S CENTRE FOR PLANNING EDUCATION & RESEARCH: THE PARTNERSHIP
- 1.4 CONSULTATION
- 1.5 THE STUDY AREA

## **2.0 AREA PROFILE** **PAGE 5**

- 2.1 GROWTH & DECLINE IN THE HISTORIC QUARTER
- 2.2 HISTORICAL FABRIC OF THE CITY
- 2.3 BUILDING, HERITAGE & PUBLIC REALM
- 2.4 MOVEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY

## **3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT** **PAGE 13**

- 3.1 HISTORICAL PLANNING INITIATIVES
- 3.2 CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015
- 3.3 CORK CITY CENTRE STRATEGY

## **4.0 SURVEY & ANALYSIS** **PAGE 17**

- 4.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION
- 4.2 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
- 4.3 RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY
- 4.4 PHYSICAL AND BUILT HERITAGE
- 4.5 ACCESSIBILITY, PARKING & MOVEMENT

## **5.0 THE STRATEGY** **PAGE 30**

- 5.1 GENERAL APPROACH
- 5.2 NEED FOR ACTION
- 5.3 IDENTIFYING KEY ATTRIBUTES

## **6.0 PROPOSALS** **PAGE 32**

- 6.1 FORMING A VISION FOR THE AREA
- 6.2 REPRESENTING & CELEBRATING CORK'S HISTORIC QUARTER
- 6.3 CONNECTING THE HISTORIC QUARTER
- 6.4 A PUBLIC OPEN SPACE STRATEGY
- 6.5 A LIVING NEIGHBOURHOOD
- 6.6 KEY OPPORTUNITY SITES

## **7.0 CONCLUSION** **PAGE 58**

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND

This study was prepared by the Centre for Planning Education & Research, University College Cork (CPER) on behalf of the North Main Street Traders' Association (NMSTA) in order to provide an analysis of the existing economic, social and cultural context of the North Main Street and surrounding area. It is also concerned with understanding the future role of the street in the context of Cork City, and outlining potential opportunities to secure its role as an important district within the city centre.

#### KEY AIMS OF THE STUDY

- ANALYSE THE EXISTING BUSINESS AND RESIDENTIAL PROFILE OF THE AREA;
- DEFINE THE HISTORIC, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROFILE OF THE AREA IN TERMS OF ITS SIGNIFICANT PLANNING CONTEXT;
- CONSIDER THE QUALITY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT BOTH IN TERMS OF ITS PHYSICAL HERITAGE AND THE QUALITY AND CONDITION OF ITS PUBLIC REALM;
- COLLABORATE WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO CREATE A DIALOGUE AND CONSENSUS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE AREA;
- DEVELOP A SET OF STRATEGIC GOALS (SHORT AND LONG TERM) THAT WILL GUIDE AND ASSIST THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

The study takes a holistic approach in considering the future role of the area; combining the dynamic processes that sets this area apart, and guiding the focus of the street for policy making and future interventions. As such, the study will reaffirm and support the various efforts of Cork City Council to enhance and regenerate the historic quarter. The study also considers the significance of connectivity and accessibility in creating vitality and promoting regenerative processes. As such, the study seeks

to recognise the importance of North Main Street in terms of its strategic location within the historic core of the city and to reiterate the importance of policy interventions in rejuvenating the area.

## 1.2 KEY CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

North Main Street is a historically-rich area that has contributed extensively to Cork's historic residential and commercial life. It lies at the heart of the medieval city's core and has continued to offer a diverse range of retail and commercial activities for a wide constituency. However, over a period of time, the area has struggled to sustain its economic vitality - due to the strengthening of commercial activity within the eastern city centre and the gradual decrease in the area's importance as a core commercial district. The Historic Centre Action Plan (1994) and the subsequent Urban Pilot Project/Major Initiative measures served to enhance the area and provided some rejuvenation. However, such initiatives require sustained application to ensure long term impact and prevent further decline.

The North Main Street area faces a series of challenges that are currently inhibiting sustained success. Despite its strategic location and proximity to the core city centre area, existing access routes and movement corridors fail to stimulate positive flows of activity into the area, resulting in limited footfall. As such, due to the importance of accessibility and movement, this underlying issue will be further considered in Section 2.4 of this study.

In a similar vein, failure to create long-term effective responses to the extent of dereliction and upper floor vacancies within the area is also a contentious issue. Despite the problems of vacancy, the existence of large-scale strategically-located sites provides an opportunity to improve the area's urban fabric; this strategic objective will be discussed further in Section 6.6. Thus, it will be essential to formulate an integrated, strategic plan for securing economic vitality and social stability within the North Main Street area. This challenge reiterates the importance of having a continuous programme of renewal as opposed to isolated, one-off solutions.

Unlocking the significant historic legacy also presents a significant opportunity for enhancing the distinctive cultural aspect that characterises the area and could potentially provide a basis for rebranding Cork's historic quarter. As a result, the potential of the area's historic legacy must be recognised and enhanced to facilitate its role as a catalyst in the rejuvenation of the area and this will be considered in Section 2.2, 3.1, and 6.2 of this study.



Figure 1: Aerial View – historic centre

### 1.3 NORTH MAIN STREET TRADERS ASSOCIATION & UCC'S CENTRE FOR PLANNING EDUCATION & RESEARCH: THE PARTNERSHIP

The study is based on a holistic, collaborative approach that introduced a partnership between UCC's Centre for Planning Education & Research and the North Main Street Traders' Association. The Traders' Association is a well-established business representative group that has been proactive in supporting the development and enhancement of Cork City's historic core. The Study originated in a conversation between the Traders and UCC's Planning school which developed into a structured project; First Year Planning students from the M.Plan (Planning and Sustainable Development) Programme were tasked with preparing a comprehensive study as part of their postgraduate studies and this first phase concluded in May 2016. This was followed by a review and consultation period, and the Traders then requested a final report for submission to Cork City Council. This was prepared by Mary Molloy, M.Plan Year II and with input from the teaching staff in UCC's Centre for Planning Education and Research.

The students involved in the project were **MARY MOLLOY - MATTHEW COX - NOEL CRONIN - DENISE FENTON - THOMAS HALLIGAN - BRIAN JOYCE - SINEAD KEARNEY - SINEAD KELLY - ANDREA McAULIFFE - SHAUNA McGETTIGAN - EOIN NEWMAN - ELLA O'BRIEN - JAMIE O'DRISCOLL - SAOIRSE O'LEARY - EDWIN O'MEARA - DAVID SHANNON - PAUL SWEENEY.**

This partnership ensured a positive, inclusive process in recognising and addressing the key challenges and opportunities that face the area as it progresses and evolves. It also signifies the importance of collaboration between existing and key stakeholders in the formation of a clear, inclusive vision for the area. The partnership had an overwhelmingly positive response from both sides and as a result created a constructive dialogue in relation to the opportunities and challenges that exist for the area.

### 1.4 CONSULTATION

Due to the existence of an established traders' association and their clear commitment to rejuvenation, consultation and collaboration formed a significant basis for the study. The initial phases of the study commenced in January 2016, and were followed by an early meeting with key members of the traders' association. An interim presentation of key findings was made on the 3rd of March 2016 in the Middle Parish Community Centre, followed by an open discussion.

This meeting initiated an informal, open discussion between key stakeholders (traders, residents and local representatives), decision makers and students. This provided the basis for a clear, grounded strategy for the study. Door to door, semi-structured interviews also took place between January and March of 2016 and were followed by e-mail submissions from individual businesses. This allowed key representatives within the area to decide the extent of their input and also opened opportunities for greater insights beyond the prescribed questionnaire. This also echoed the study's primary objective to collaborate and to identify ideas surrounding the future role of the street as a distinct urban district.

## 1.5 THE STUDY AREA

The Study Area corresponds to the city's historic core, which lies within the old medieval city walls and comprises the city blocks flanking North and South Main Street, extending from Northgate to Southgate bridges. This area is currently bounded by Bachelor's Quay/Kyrls Quay, Grattan Street, Corn Market/Grand Parade and the River Lee South Channel.

Whilst the study focuses on the medieval centre, its edge conditions and relationship to surrounding areas is considered. Linkages to other areas outside the Study Area, which might have an impact on the Historic Centre, have also been considered to reiterate the importance of this distinct area in terms of its relationship with the greater city centre area.

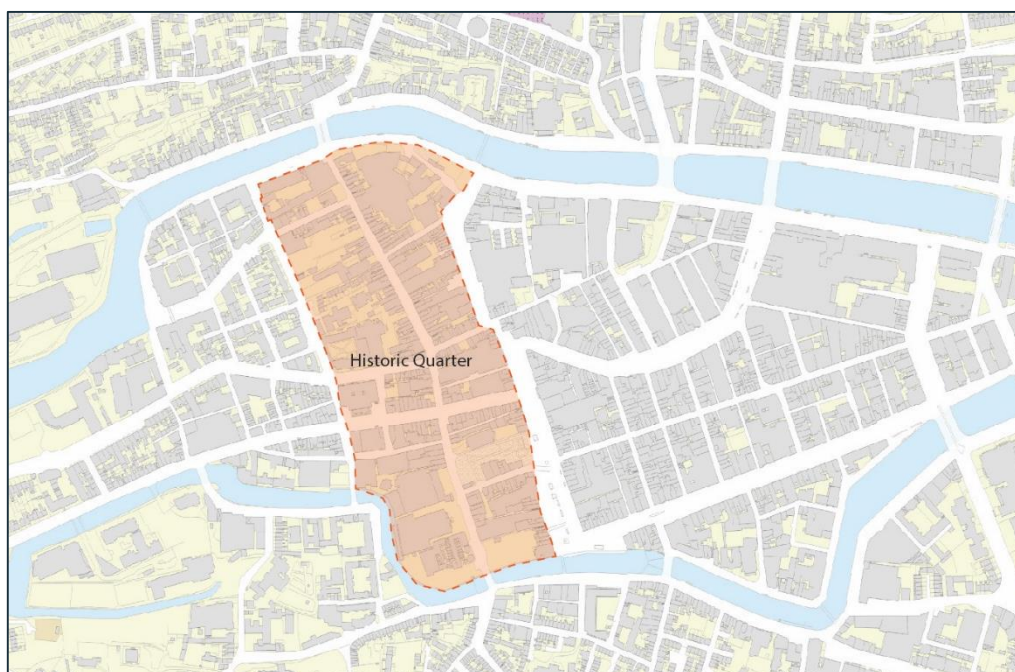


Figure 2: The Study Area and the City Centre

## 2.0 AREA PROFILE

## 2.0 AREA PROFILE

### 2.1 GROWTH & DECLINE IN THE HISTORIC QUARTER

North Main Street is an established part of Cork City's traditional economic and cultural fabric. In the last 50 years, it has undergone periods of growth and decline. The Cork City Development Plan 2004 acknowledged the decline of the economic and social profile of the historic core, which had been somewhat boosted by the Historic Centre Action Plan (1994) and the Urban Pilot Project and Major Initiative programme which followed. Recent trends suggest that it has again begun to suffer from economic decline, most visibly following the closure of the prominent anchor tenant of the North Main Street Shopping Centre, Dunnes Stores in May 2016. This has become a major concern for existing traders and further emphasises the need to approach the area with a refreshed, innovative as well as urgent, perspective.

However, at the same time, this part of the city has also experienced a considerable increase in its population. According to the preliminary 2016 Census results, the Electoral District, 'Centre B' (which includes the North Main Street Area) grew in population by 10.9% (211) since the 2011 Census, and has managed to double its population in the last 20 years (CSO, 2016). This shows a significant increase in numbers living within city centre locations and perhaps suggests a shift towards an urban-based residential model. This affirms the importance of city centre residential plans such as the Living City Initiative in enticing repopulation of historic settlements within urban centres.

	1986	1996	2006	2016	Absolute Change 1986-2016	% Change 1986-2016
<b>Centre B*</b>	927	1,062	1,558	2,146	1,219	131.5
<b>City Centre</b>	11,154	12,362	13,523	16,953	5,799	52.0
<b>Cork City</b>	133,271	127,187	119,418	125,622	-7,649	-5.7

**Table 1: Population Change, Centre B, City Centre and Cork City 1986-2016 (CSO, 1986-2016)**

By contrast, the 2011 Employment & Land-Use Survey highlighted an overall decline of employment by 13% between 2006 and 2011. This decrease has been attributed to the relocation of major employers to locations outside of the city centre. However, in order to achieve the objectives articulated within the most recent development plan, Cork City Council must recognise and create opportunities to incentivise and entice commercial activity back into brownfield city centre sites.



## 2.2 HISTORICAL FABRIC OF THE CITY



**Figure 3: South Main Street: Cork's medieval core 1994 & 2016**

The North Main Street area lies at the heart of the medieval city on the north western section of the city centre island. It is bound by Kyril's Quay, Bachelor's Quay, Grattan Street, Cornmarket Street, Kyril's Street, Liberty Street and Castle Street. However, the extent of the study area has remained relatively fluid to allow for the existing shared historic identity to retain its significance and to encourage the underlying synergy between the diverse areas within the historic core.

North Main Street came to fruition as a suburb named 'Dungarvan' of the early medieval Cork, South Main Street (Johnson, 2002). As both streets grew and prospered during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they became distinguished from each other

(see Figure 4: Beauford's map of 1801). This coincides with the establishment of Cork's historic spine which comprised of the unification of both streets and the extensive number of adjoining laneways that made up a distinct herringbone formation.



**Figure 4: Beauford's map of Cork City (1801)**

This historic legacy continues to shape the physical, urban fabric of the street and contributes to the retention of Cork's medieval past through its distinctive architectural and structural composition. The significance of North Main Street as an Architectural Conservation Area /Area of Special Character within the City Development Plan 2015 acknowledges this and reiterates both the distinctive built environment of North Main Street and the cultural identity that is reflected in the traditional, local selection of retail units within the area.





Figure 5 St. Peter's Church and Castle Street – 1994-2016

## 2.3 BUILDING, HERITAGE & PUBLIC REALM

The built heritage of North Main Street consists of a dynamic urban form that provides an interesting alternative to the dominant contemporary pattern of the city centre. Building and plot sizes are predominantly characterised by narrow frontages and adjoining medieval laneways whilst building height is primarily limited to three and four storeys (see Figure 9 below). This form suited the historic retail profile of the area whereby individual traders occupied upper floors and carried out trading on the ground floor.

This medieval footprint pattern is often considered a deterrent for contemporary retail trade due to the associated floor space limitations, however the success of smaller areas with significant historic character often create vibrant, attractive spaces for retail trade to occur. Take for instance the success of The Shambles, York and The Lanes, Brighton, as well as the Huguenot Quarter in Cork. These examples exhibit sympathetic design to the historic formation whilst providing a niche trade that attracts economic prosperity whilst enhancing its built heritage.

### Building Height by Storey

■ 5 storey ■ 4 storey ■ 3 storey ■ 2 storey

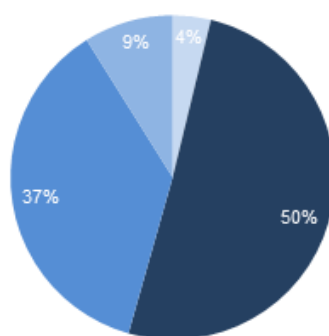
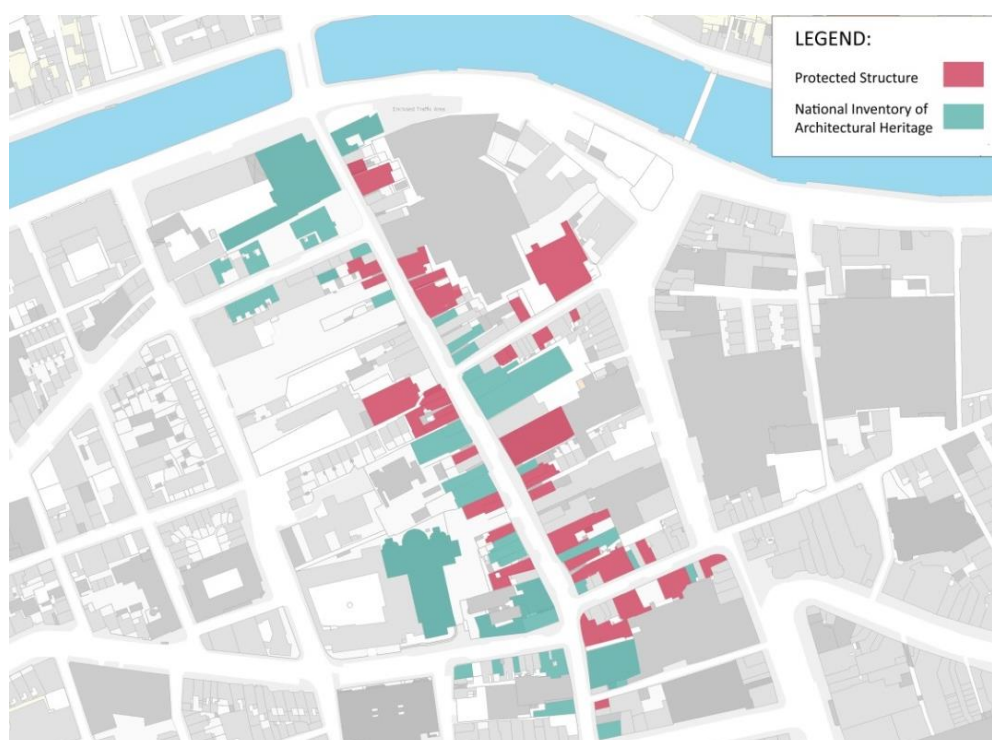


Figure 6: Building heights by storey, North Main Street

The North Main Street area also contains a large number of protected structures. The area surrounding and including North Main Street (to include Cornmarket Street, Castle Street, Kyle Street, Kyril's Street, Liberty Street and South Main Street) possesses 20.3% (98/483) of the city centre's protected structures whilst 8.9% (43/483) of these are located on North Main Street itself. The North Main Street area therefore contains the highest concentration of protected structures within the city centre, demonstrating the significant architectural importance of North Main Street and its adjoining areas in the context of Cork City's historic footprint (See Figure 7). For comparative purposes, these figures are analysed against other major areas within the city centre below:

	Number of protected structures	Percentage of overall city centre
North Main Street	43	8.9%
St Patrick's Street	11	2.3%
Oliver Plunkett Street	13	2.7%
Grand Parade	14	2.9%
Castle Street, Kyle Street & Liberty Street	23	4.8%

**Table 2: Number and Percentage of Protected Structures**



**Figure 7: Protected structures and buildings listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage**

## 2.4 MOVEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY

At present, North Main Street is failing to reach its potential in terms of accommodating sufficient footfall to support a vibrant and prosperous street. Much of this is due to low levels of pedestrian activity and in particular, the area's physical and functional isolation from the city centre.

This can be explained in a number of ways:

### MOVEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY CONSTRAINTS

- THE COMPLETION OF THE FOOTBRIDGE BETWEEN POPE'S QUAY AND CORNMARKE STREET SERVES TO ENTICE STRATEGIC NORTH SOUTH PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT AWAY FROM THE AREA;
- UNATTRACTIVE ACCESS ROUTES WHICH ACT AS A DETERRENT FOR CAPTURING PEDESTRIAN INTEREST IN A PREDOMINANTLY EAST-WEST DIRECTION;
- SOME POOR QUALITY ENVIRONMENTS AT KEY ENTRY POINTS INTO THE AREA;
- A POOR GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE AREA.

The contemporary urban form demands greater consideration for access and permeability within city centres. As such, creating and maintaining strong links through well connected, easily accessible and attractive routes is essential in providing opportunities for strengthened economic activity and enhanced social opportunities.



Figure 8: Views of key pedestrian entry points at Kyle Street





**Figure 9: Views of key pedestrian entry points: Castle Street and South Main Street**



**Figure 10: View of study area from footbridge at Pope's Quay/Cornmarket Street**

Catalyst projects such as the 'Colour Corridor' initiative put forward by the Cork City Centre Strategy (Colliers International, 2014) have highlighted the importance of creating vibrant, attractive transport corridors within the medieval core – from South Parish to Shandon via North Main Street - to enhance the existing historic legacy and to create a destination that celebrates the city's cultural offering. Such projects can offer useful small-scale and complementary strategies for creating attractive, vibrant streets which generate and sustain a wide range of economic, social and environmental consequences (Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets, 2013).

Due to the significant level of active retail frontages within the area, and its relative proximity to more commercially vibrant areas like St. Patrick's Street and the Huguenot Quarter, North Main Street should be attracting greater levels of footfall. It is interesting to note that the area's relative decline over the last 30 years has occurred alongside a gradual reduction in its levels of accessibility and permeability. City districts that are successful and vibrant usually have strong pedestrian connectivity to surrounding areas. Local accessibility in pedestrian terms is a clear priority.

North Main Street is approximately 325 metres in length (North Gate Bridge junction to the Castle Street / Liberty Street junction) and currently has 6 local access routes (Figure 11). For comparative purposes, St Patrick's Street was identified to have a total of 16 access routes across approximately 472 metres which equates to an average of one access route every 30 metres.

In contrast, North Main Street's connections are inadequately distributed with an access route located on average every 54 metres. This is exacerbated by the uneven distribution of local access routes in which the distance between Kyle Street and Castle Street, two major movement corridors, is 155 metres. This creates a poorly connected urban centre that arises from limited opportunities for pedestrian permeability, despite its historic footprint as a well-connected, medieval settlement. As such, this conflict is highlighted in greater detail in Sections 4.5 and 6.3 of this study to draw attention to the importance of increased permeability and enhanced access routes.



**Figure 11: Primary access routes into North Main Street**

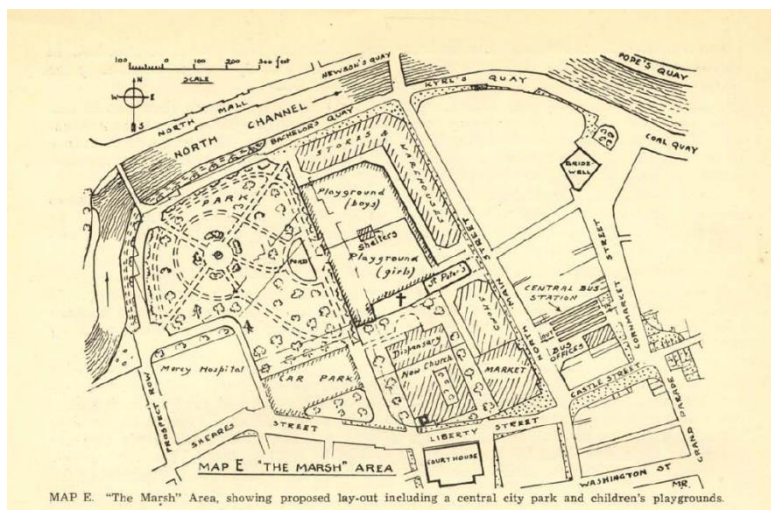
## **3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT**

### 3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

### 3.1 HISTORICAL PLANNING INITIATIVES

The North Main Street area has been subject to an array of planning initiatives that have considered its future role and that have presented strategies aimed at delivering economic success and social improvements. For instance, the Cork Town Planning Report (1941) by Manning Robertson mapped the significant objectives indicated for the area at that time (see map below). Whilst the report failed to predict the complications associated with a suburban housing model, it did make a strong case for the compulsory acquisition of lands as a means to rejuvenate and improve an area. This is demonstrated within the excerpt below taken from the Town Planning Report (1941):

'Assuming the whole area were acquired outright and became the property of the Corporation, would it be possible to lay it out in such a way, and put it to such use, that it would be a good business deal as well as a regeneration of one of the most unsatisfactory districts in Cork? I have indicated on the map how I believe this could best be done' (22).



**Figure 12: Cork Town Planning Report (1941)**

The Historic Centre Action Plan 1994 (HCAP) recognised the importance of North Main Street as both an area of important built heritage and also as the principal commercial street of Cork's Historic Quarter, quoting an approximate 85% of commercial uses in ground floors (see table below). The HCAP (1994) also referred to the need to address the issue of upper floor vacancies. However, the plan suggested that this could be ameliorated by the fact that many owners expressed an interest in reusing upper floors for residential purposes - provided an incentivised economic model was established. The HCAP (1994) also addressed the importance of pedestrian lanes in providing essential cross linkages that allow for positive functions through improved public safety, continuous maintenance and regular treatment. The HCAP also highlighted the importance of St. Peter's Avenue, Portney's Lane and Coleman's Lane as sites for targeted improvements, positive infill development and strengthened cross route linkages. This reaffirms the study's contention on the significant role of accessibility and the important legacy of the lanes in creating an attractive, viable street.



Street	Retail	Office	Manufacturing	Residential	Other	Vacant
North Main St	80	5	0	0	0	15
South Main St	61	10	3	0	0	26
Castle St	74	4	0	0	4	18
Grattan St	11	0	7	73	9	0

**Table 3: Ground floor uses in the historic quarter in 1994 (Historic Centre Action Plan, 1994)**

Street	Business premises	Percentage of upper floor vacancy	Completely vacant premises (%)
North Main St	65	37	11
South Main St	30	20	27
Castle St	23	17	13

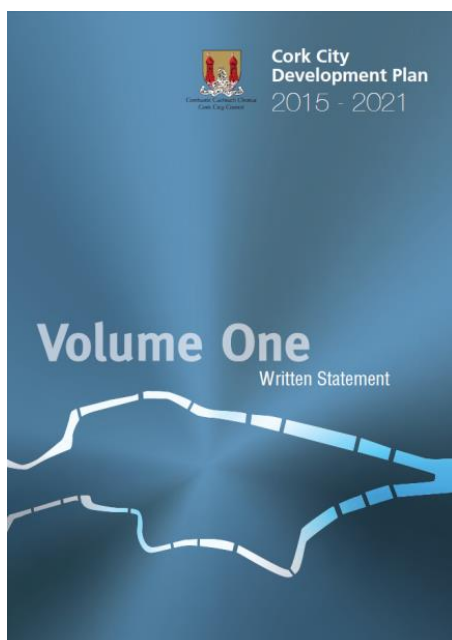
**Table 4: Vacancy rates in the historic quarter in 1994 (Historic Centre Action Plan, 1994)**

The Cork Urban Pilot Project, funded mainly by the European Regional Development Fund, was delivered as Phase 1 of the Historic Centre Action Plan. The overall aim of the project was to reintegrate the historic core into the city and to improve the quality of its local environment. This comprised of a series of sub-projects including: the creation of a 'Vision Centre', traffic management, conservation, living over the shop initiative, environmental improvements and managed work space. The project was commended by the European Commission for its commitment to restoration, integration and improved confidence in the locality and its significance remains evident today, particularly in regards to the formation of a Vision Centre within St. Peter's Church.

The Marsh Report (1990) had previously contended that environmental and aesthetic improvements would increase the attractiveness of the North Main Street. This emphasised the importance of creating visually attractive and enticing areas through tactical, fine-grain interventions into the built environment. The Marsh Report also highlighted the North Main Street Traders' Association's perspective that North Main Street was [and continues to be] more traditional than St. Patrick's Street in atmosphere and in type of shop which it contains (North Main Street Traders' Association, 1989), and this perception underpins the existing economic and social profile of the area today.

Finally, the Marsh Local Plan (1979) detailed that the former site of Skiddy's Castle off North Main Street could form a centre-piece for a public square where evidence of the former castle could be viewed by the public. Introducing small-scale interventions into the built environment can accentuate and form a sense of attachment to a place. However, such public realm projects require continuous management and this subject will be discussed in further detail in Section 6.4 of this study.

### 3.2 CORK CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2015



The Cork City Development Plan (2015-2021) contains a number of key objectives that relate to the North Main Street area. One such goal relates to the importance of increasing the city's population to create a compact, viable city centre. The Development Plan estimates an additional 20,032 housing units will be required up to 2022 to accommodate the city's growing population and this is reaffirmed within the Cork City Strategy (2014) which details the importance of facilitating this demand through the regeneration of brownfield, underused sites within urban areas.

The Development Plan supports the reuse of upper floors in instances where the commercial viability of the city is not threatened and the architectural heritage of the building is adequately preserved (Objective 13.33) and this is reaffirmed

within the details outlined in the 'Keeping Cork's Historic Characteristic Buildings in Use Study' (December 2012). Furthermore, productive use and maintenance of buildings is considered an essential component in ensuring the productive use and economic vitality of an area is preserved (Objective 9.63) and this strategic objective strengthens the strategy outlined in Section 6 of this study.

### 3.3 CORK CITY CENTRE STRATEGY

The Cork City Centre Strategy identifies the retail order within the city centre (see Figure 13) that adopts an effective approach in allocating appropriate marketing strategies for the diverse commercial needs of the city. Such an approach ensures a positive retail order that prevents neighbouring areas from competing with each other and allows character areas to maintain their individual legacies. It suggests that the retail character and profile of the North Main Street area is currently in the 'Low Price' and 'Independent' categories; a key

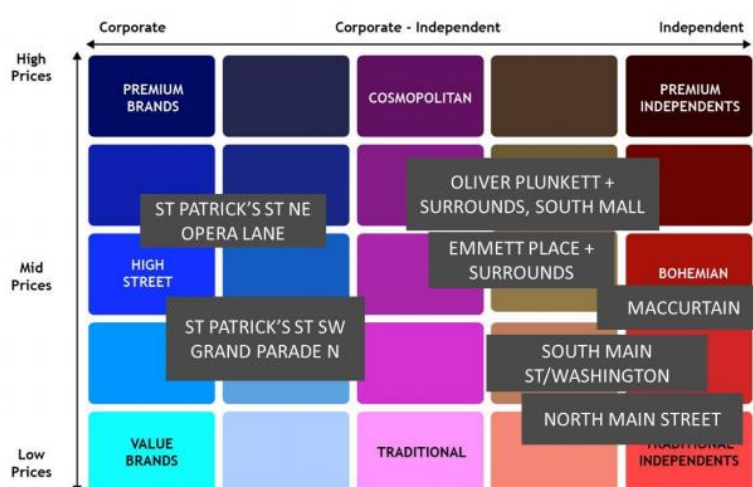


Figure 13: Retail order in Cork City centre  
(City Centre Strategy, 2014)

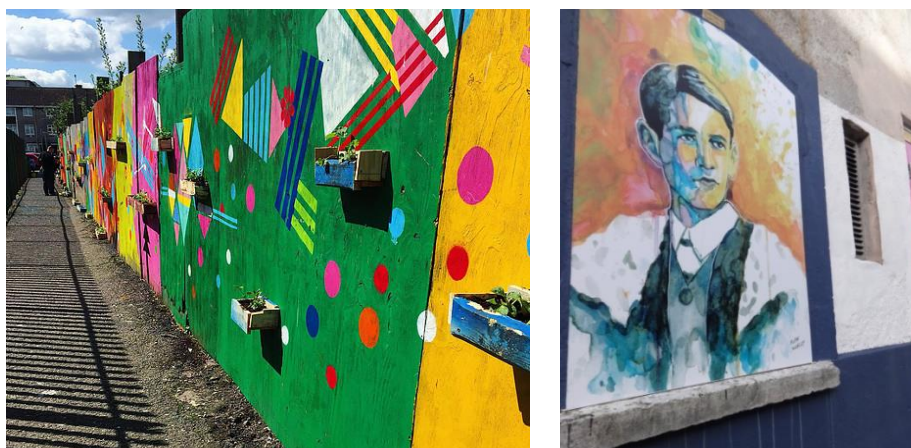
challenge for the area in commercial terms will be to improve its value proposition whilst maintaining its distinctiveness, identity and independent nature. This strategy should be sustained by the City Council in order to ensure preservation of existing character and security of commercial viability.



**Figure 14: Examples of street art additions to the area (Reimagine Cork)**

The City Centre Strategy refers to the 'Colour Corridor' initiative within the city's historic spine. The programme refers to the installation of street art within the medieval core to promote and to capitalise on the Vision Centre (St. Peter's Church) and Triskel Christchurch. This initiative has been initiated successfully by a number of independent, voluntary organisations such as Reimagine Cork. The founding principle underpinning the community-driven projects is to transform run-down areas within the city centre, to 'reimagine' and enhance their prominence and to encourage revitalisation in otherwise neglected areas. These actions are encouraging in the promotion of community activism within the historic core.

The final relevant detail outlined within the City Centre Strategy identifies three key development sites within the North Main Street area (Kyril's Quay, Munster Furniture Site and Portney's Lane site). The Strategy recognises the importance of these strategic sites for commercial and residential development and this is commended in the context of this study and will be promoted in Section 6 of this study.



**Figure 15: Recent visual enhancements to Coleman's Lane & Kyle St (Reimagine Cork)**

## **4.0 SURVEY & ANALYSIS**

## 4.0 SURVEY & ANALYSIS

### 4.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A series of surveys were carried out over a number of months in order to generate a comprehensive profile of the North Main Street area. These were followed by an analysis and consultation process where the findings were discussed.

#### THE SURVEYING PROCESS INCLUDED:

- A SURVEY OF EXISTING ECONOMIC AND RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY;
- A SURVEY OF THE AREA'S PUBLIC REALM AND STREETScape;
- A SURVEY OF THE AREA'S PHYSICAL AND BUILT HERITAGE;
- A SURVEY OF ACCESSIBILITY, PARKING AND MOVEMENT WITHIN THE AREA.

This approach facilitated a range of inputs including qualitative responses from existing stakeholders, quantitative data on employment figures and residential activity, a detailed assessment of physical condition based on a number of site visits and a comprehensive profile of the existing access routes and parking distribution within the area. The survey work provides a reliable and comprehensive evidence base, and allows for the creation of a well-informed, comprehensive strategy and this will subsequently provide a rationale for the proposed measures outlined in Section 6 of this study.

A standardised survey sheet was generated for each building that provided a series of questions relating to the economic, residential and physical profile of the existing business / businesses. The survey also enquired about the opportunities for upper floor conversions, the future role of the street and the level of involvement within the existing traders' association. A separate building survey was generated to create a profile of the physical condition of the built environment in terms of architectural merits. A rating system was compiled to determine the attractiveness of individual building facades and of the street as a whole. This approach was conducted to decipher the management and conservation of the medieval core and to deduce opportunities for increased maintenance and potential for regeneration.



## 4.2 ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The economic profile analysis suggested a diverse mix of retail uses and business types within the area with a number of uses dominating over others. For instance, a total of 9 businesses surveyed fulfilled voluntary / charity retail functions, totalling 11.6% of the overall business trade for the area. This figure was reflected in a number of survey respondents' concerns about a potential overconcentration of a particular form of retailing. However, it should also be noted here that a range of other uses suggest that the area fulfils an important role within the city centre, shaping its unique, traditional character. A ground floor vacancy rate of approximately 18% (as of August 2016) was also discovered, with a particular concern voiced by survey respondents for the large scale vacancy within the North Main Street Shopping Centre and the existence of large derelict / vacant sites. This further emphasises the need to address the growing challenges facing the area's prospective future.

A total of 286 people (161 full-time and 125 part-time) were estimated to be employed on North Main Street alone, indicating a significant employment presence that has declined significantly since 2011 (388 employees). Despite the closure of an important anchor tenant, North Main Street still remains an important location for business and continues to attract a valuable form of retail trade that is predominantly comprised of small-scale businesses that conform to the traditional attraction and character of the area.



Figure 16: ground floor uses for North Main Street

### 4.3 RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITY

An analysis of the existing residential population revealed an estimated 32 of the buildings surveyed had existing residential activity in the upper floors with approximately 338 residents living within the area. This coincides with the increase in residential activity within the City Centre B Ward which has increased significantly from a total of 1,558 residents in 2006 to 2,146 residents in 2016, totalling an increase of 588 residents within the area (27% increase over 10 years) (Central Statistics Office, 2016).

Upper floor occupancy is often considered a vital component in consolidating the cultural heritage of a traditional trading area, as well as supporting its vibrancy as an urban location. Therefore, the issue of upper floor spaces was a key component within the analysis period. An approximate 23% (18/77) of survey respondents indicated a potential for re use of their upper floor spaces whilst 16% (12/77) of the buildings surveyed require further investigation to confirm their potential for upper floor conversion. The conversion of upper floor spaces would address the existing upper floor vacancy rates, provide passive surveillance and increase footfall levels on the street and as such, this proposal will form the basis of Section 6.5 of this study.

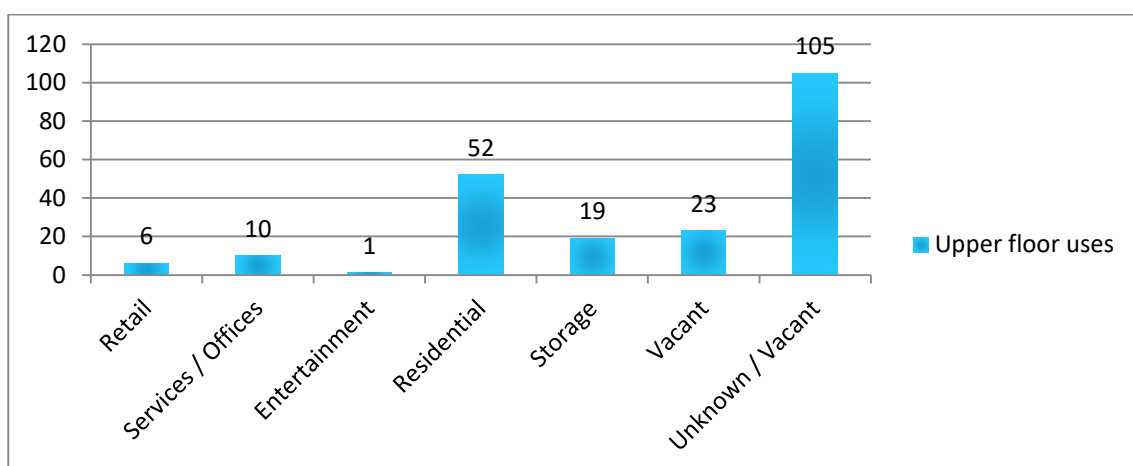


Figure 17: Upper floor uses for 246 upper floors on North Main Street

	Retail	Services / Offices	Vacant	Entertainment	Residential	Storage	Unknown / Vacant
First floor	6	6	6	1	19	5	27
Second floor	0	4	7	0	19	6	34
Third floor	0	0	7	0	12	6	39
Fourth floor	0	0	3	0	2	2	35
Total	6	10	23	1	52	19	135

Table 5: Land use for upper floors on North Main Street

The surveys highlight the area's distinctive land use mix and suggest that the area has an interesting combination of functions as a city centre district (See Figure 18). The area has evolved to



accommodate a vibrant mix of commercial, retail, employment, local services, recreation/culture, and residential activities. This has produced a distinctive blend of day and evening time uses, and a very strong mixed use character – an essential ingredient of well-planned urban districts. However, Figure 24 also illustrates the key pockets of dereliction and vacancy; these tend to be clustered in discrete zones and can often have a ‘spread’ effect. These zones should be subject to specific urgent attention.



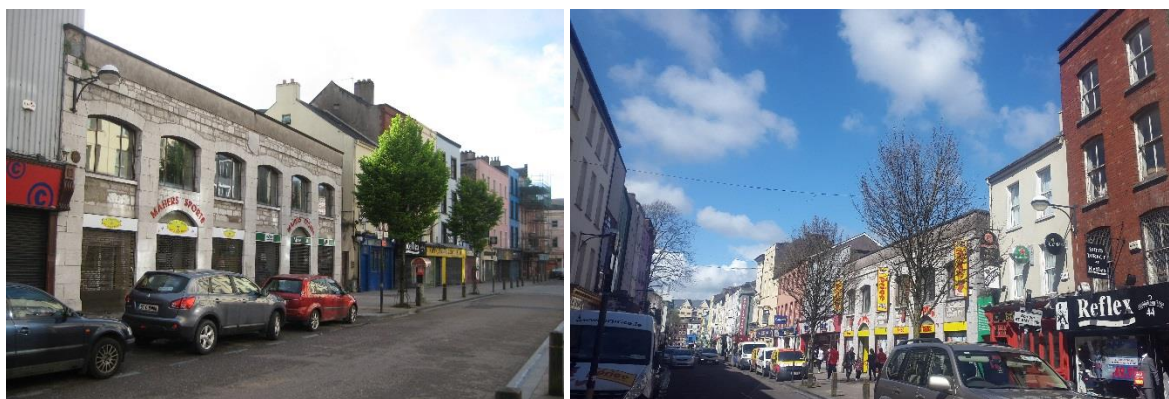
**Figure 18: Land Use profile – ground & upper floors**

#### 4.4 PHYSICAL AND BUILT HERITAGE

Due to the historic significance of the city's medieval core and the extensive collection of protected structures, an analysis of the built environment was an essential component of the survey. Building height within the area is generally limited to three / four storeys with shop frontage on ground floor facades and storage/residential/vacant uses on upper floors. According to the Cork City Development Plan (2015) there are 43 protected structures whilst North Main Street itself is designated an

Architectural Conservation Area. This confirms its status as having one of Ireland's richest concentrations of built heritage (Cork Historic Centre Action Plan, 1994).

A rating system was used to analyse the quality of the built environment. Based on the physical condition of buildings, architectural integrity and building façade quality, an average of 3.4 out of 5 was reached. This suggests that the area has relatively attractive shop frontages and a reasonably strong physical profile, despite the issues of vacant / derelict sites. This study welcomes the introduction of a painting and building maintenance scheme, endorsed by Cork City Council which will serve to improve this further.



**Figure 19: Variety of building form**

The most dominant finish on building facades was plaster/render which accounted for 74% of frontages (49/66 surveyed [Figure 20: Leaders, No. 76 North Main Street]). Brick was the second most prominent façade material which accounted for 17% of building frontages (11/66 [Figure 20: Kellehers, No. 54/55 North Main Street]). Stone, rough dash and a type of cladding are anomalies along the street; however, their presence contributes to the varied streetscape (see Figure 21, 30 & 31 below of The Loft, No. 47 North Main Street [stone], Bradley's, No. 81 North Main Street [rough dash] and No. 79 North Main Street [cladding] for examples).



**Figure 20: 76 North Main Street & 54/55 North Main Street**



Figure 21: Numbers 47, 81 & 79 North Main Street

#### 4.5 ACCESSIBILITY, PARKING & MOVEMENT

Accessibility and movement play an important function in creating viable, attractive places. City centre districts prosper when they create conditions that are attractive to pedestrian activity. Both pedestrian activity and vehicular movements have been analysed extensively in relation to the North Main Street area.

Parking is often perceived as a means of promoting economic activity and encouraging passing trade. However, whilst local accessibility and parking provision is important, its significance in central urban districts is often overemphasised. Excessive levels of parking can often have a negative impact because it encourages long stay commuting which brings little local benefit and which can sterilise the urban environment and discourage investment. The research conducted by O' Connor et. al. (2011) on shoppers' behaviours within Dublin City Centre indicated that pedestrian movement as an economic asset was often highly underrated by local traders. It also suggested that the relative importance of car-based consumers was also generally overvalued.

The study highlighted the importance of an attractive public realm in encouraging pedestrian footfall and emphasised the potential to encourage pedestrian movement through a positive streetscape. The access/movement analysis as part of this study has emphasised strongly the need to accommodate a more pedestrian-oriented environment. This can be facilitated while protecting local access and parking provision.

The access/movement analysis provided a number of key findings relating to transport methods used to travel to and from work by employees within the North Main Street area. 36% (17/47) of employees surveyed walk to work or use public transport to the city centre and walk the final distance to the business. 30% (14/47) of employees surveyed park within the North Main Street area (private car park, on-street and multi-storey car parks) but referenced the associated cost implications of parking

in the city centre. 15% (7/47) of employees surveyed park at the North Cathedral, Blarney Street and Neptune Stadium to avoid the cost of inner city parking and walked the remainder of the journey. The remainder of employees surveyed cited use of public transport with one respondent living within upper floors.

Due to the significant level of active retail frontage on North Main Street, the area should be attracting greater levels of footfall. This is best demonstrated in the diagram below. Data was gathered between 11.00 and 12.00 and between 16.30 and 17.30 on a weekday, counting pedestrian footfall from Daunt Square to Castle Street and Cornmarket Street and subsequently, from Castle Street to North Main Street. The results indicate a significant loss in footfall between the Castle Street / North Main Street and Liberty Street junction (60% and 68% loss of original footfall) and a relatively substantial loss in footfall between Daunt Square and Cornmarket Street (18% and 32% loss). These results raise questions as to how to successfully capture greater pedestrian movements in order to encourage additional commercial activity. One of the primary characteristics of Cork's historic core is the existence of medieval laneways. Many of the laneways have been amalgamated into building design or have been privatised with restricted access. However, the study argues that the laneways offer an interesting, positive alternative to the existing access routes into the area and should be utilised to increase footfall to the street and as such, this will form the basis for Section 6.3 of the study.



Figure 22: Footfall from Daunt Square towards North Main Street (11.00 to 12.00)



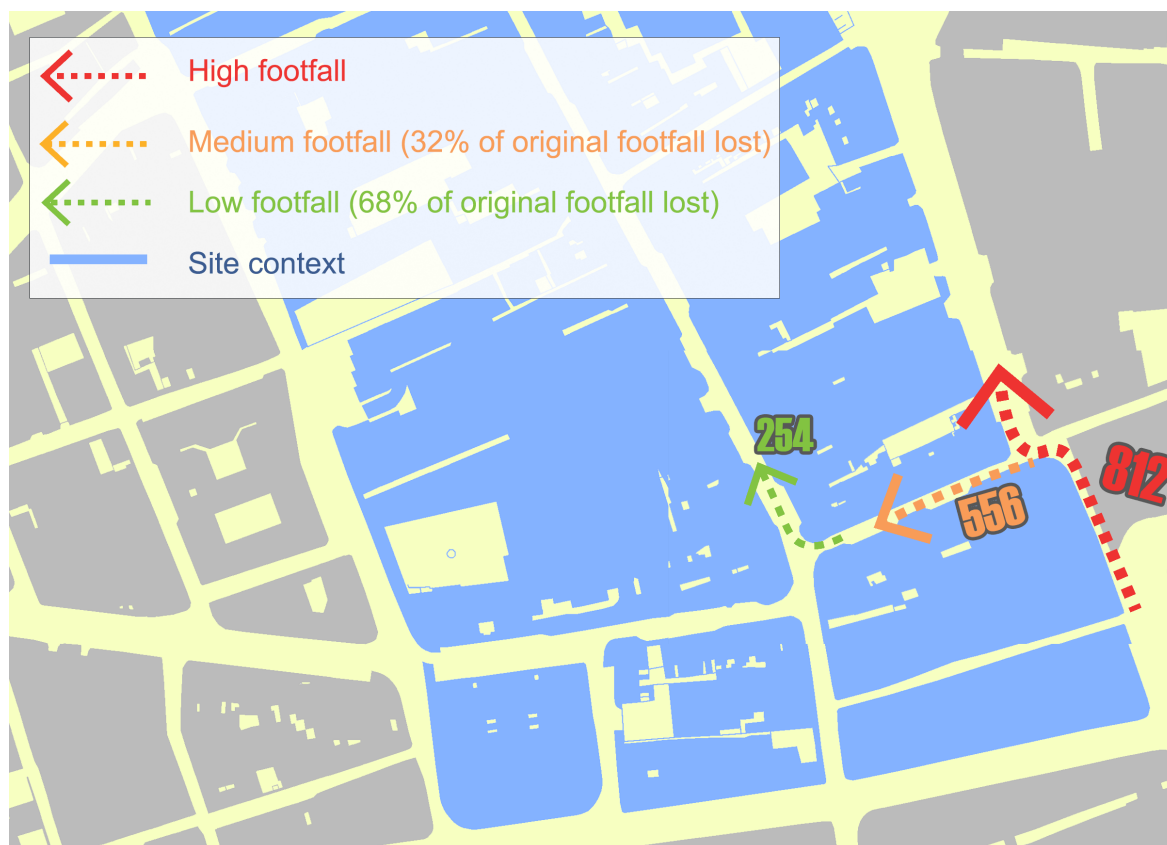


Figure 23: Footfall from Daunt Square towards North Main Street (16.30 to 17.30)

The survey identified the existing allocation of car parking spaces within the North Main Street area (see Figure 25 & 26). A total of 640 off-street car parking spaces are available whilst 109 on-street car parking spaces are available on North Main Street and its adjoining areas. This provides a substantial total of 749 car parking spaces, which is considered to be an ample provision of spaces within the area. However, as the survey results have indicated, parking for employees is limited with many calling for permit allocations for traders.



Figure 24: Unappealing view from Pope's Quay footbridge & key gateway into North Main Street

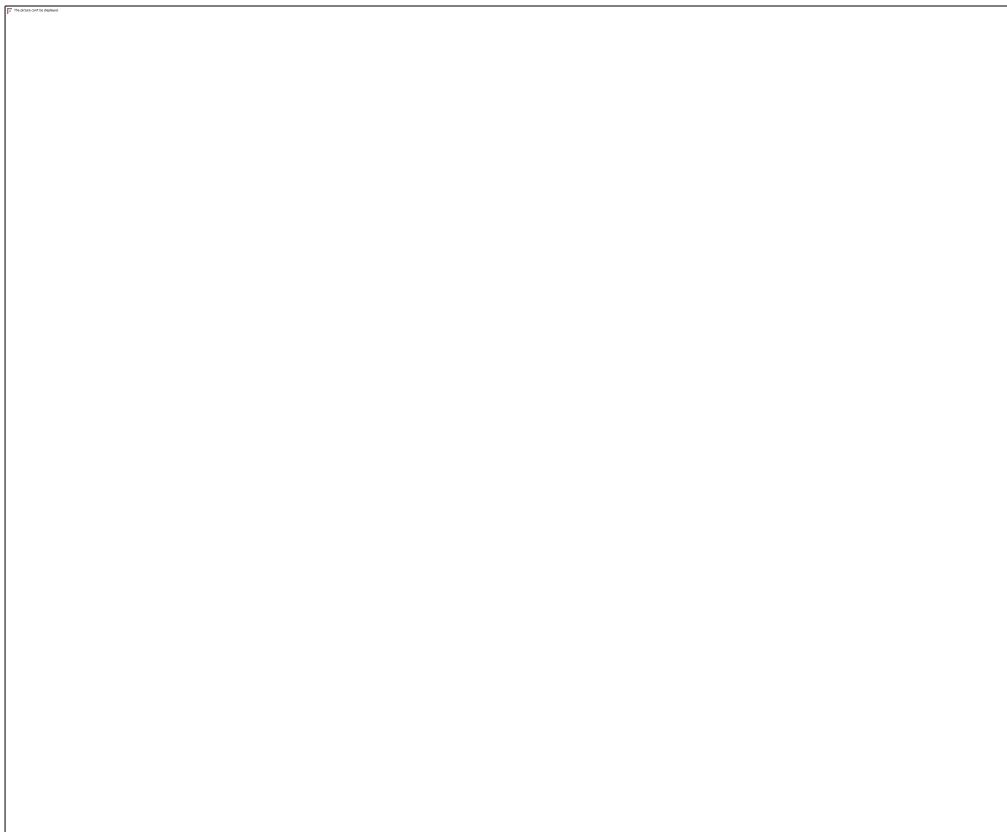


Figure 25: Areas allocated to off-street parking

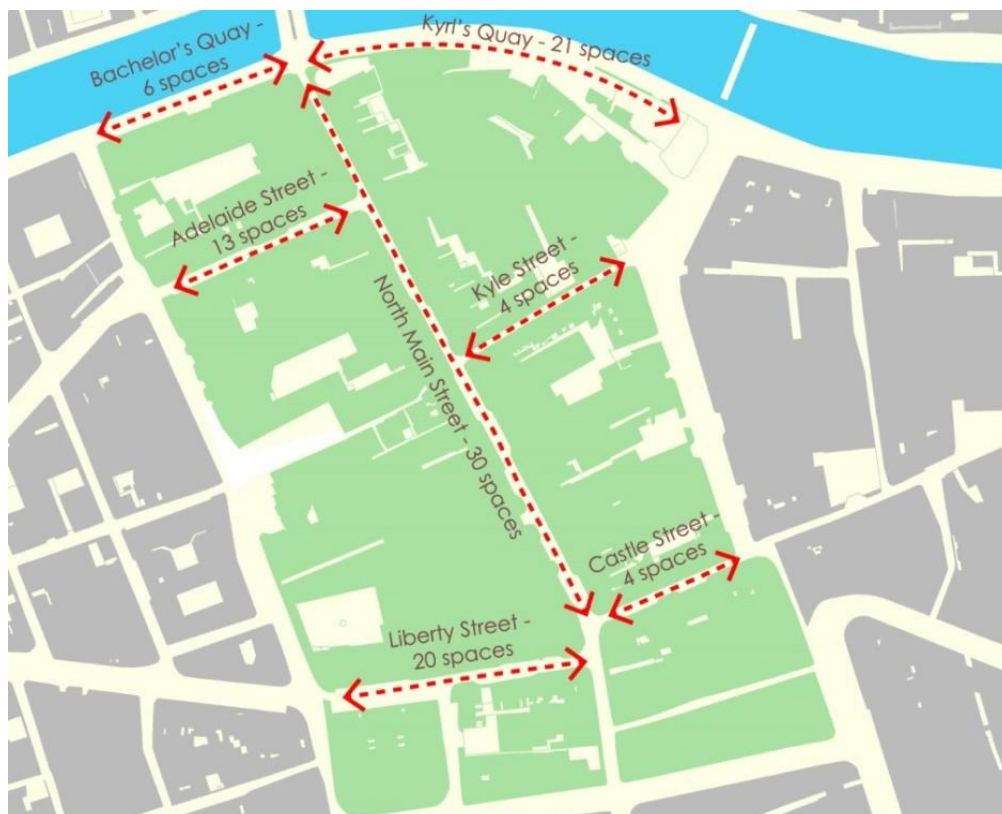


Figure 26: Areas allocated to on-street car parking



**Figure 27: Illustrations of the underuse of North Main Street car park**

Usage of the North Main Street car park was monitored over a period of time to understand its existing occupancy and rates. The analysis unveiled a significant underutilisation of the car park for employment and leisure purposes, suggesting its unappealing use for businesses within the area due to the associated costs, and for shoppers, an overconcentration of alternative options within the area and an unenticing environment to park within. These factors were identified despite that the car park offered the most inexpensive rates (see Table 6 below) for a city centre multi storey car park and this raises questions in relation to the cause for its underutilisation.

Time Period	North Main Street	Paul Street	Merchant's Quay	Grand Parade
0-1 Hour	€1.70	€2.00	€2.20	€0.80/15 minutes for first 3 hours from 8am to 7pm
1-2 Hours	€3.50	€4.00	€4.40	
2-3 Hours	€5.00	€6.00	€6.60	
3-4 Hours	€7.00	€9.00	€8.80	€2.70 per 15 minutes after 3 hours from 8am to 7pm
4-5 Hours	€9.00	€2.20/hr for 5th and subsequent hour	€12.00	
5-6 Hours	€12.00		€16.00	
6-7 Hours	€14.00		€20.00	
7-8 Hours	€16.00		€25.00	
8-9 Hours	€18.00		€30.00	
9-10 Hours	€20.00		€40.00	
10+ Hours	€22.00		€50.00	

**Table 6: North Main Street car park costs compared to its competitors**



The North Main Street car park offers limited opening hours in comparison to the other city centre multi-storey car parks and this creates issues in maximising its usage. Vehicular accessibility within the historic core is reasonably well developed, and the traffic calming and pedestrian-priority measures introduced as part of the implementation of the Historic Centre Action Plan have encouraged a better balance between cars and pedestrians. The local street network however still accommodates a significant amount of through-traffic, with Cornmarket Street, North Main Street, and the quaysides in particular facilitating high levels of vehicular activity which brings little positive benefit to the local area.

This Study advocates maintaining and protecting local accessibility to ensure businesses and residents are adequately served in terms of local vehicular access; all future traffic alterations need to consider those requirements. At the same time, like other parts of the city centre, the reliance on car transportation has declined in the last 30 years, and the area's future success will depend heavily on its ability to facilitate much higher levels of pedestrian footfall. These approaches have been successful in other parts of the city like Cornmarket Street and Oliver Plunkett Street (Figure 28). The study indicates that whilst local traffic and parking concerns should be addressed, the key opportunity relates to improving the pedestrian environment and the public realm more generally. In particular, the area can benefit in terms of commercial and general vibrancy if it can simply connect more effectively with surrounding areas by making it easier to access on foot.



**Figure 28: Pedestrian-oriented streets in Cork city centre; Cornmarket St / Oliver Plunkett St**

## 5.0 THE STRATEGY

## 5.0 THE STRATEGY



### 5.1 GENERAL APPROACH

This section provides an outlook for the future of the North Main Street area and includes a set of strategic goals to promote its revitalisation. It follows careful consideration of the data from the survey/analysis stages, and is based also on close consultation with the traders' association. This study set out to understand the way in which existing trends in the area are likely to shape future change, whilst identifying key opportunities that can perform a pivotal role in reshaping the area's future. The Strategy has been endorsed by the traders' association and acknowledges the commitment of existing stakeholders in promoting a vibrant and successful area.

The Strategy is set out below as a series of broad themes. However, this is not intended to be a comprehensive or prescriptive plan, but a framework for action. This framework establishes an approach to the area's regeneration and specifies a number of possible initiatives. These initiatives should be subject to consideration, and ultimately action, by Cork City Council, the traders' association and any other parties interested in the regeneration of the city's historic core.

### 5.2 NEED FOR ACTION

The Study's conclusions are clear; the North Main Street area has experienced a decline in terms of its overall vibrancy and attractiveness as an urban quarter and it needs a concerted effort to address these challenges. Issues such as dereliction, retail contraction, concentrations of low value uses, underinvestment, poor public realm, traffic management, pedestrian environment and building conditions, have been identified as core concerns. There is a sense of urgency relating to issues like the shopping centre's closure and derelict sites – and the study reflects concerns about the cumulative impact of these issues.

At the same time, it is considered that many of the negative perceptions of the area are largely misplaced and its particular problems can be subject to over-emphasis. Public perception of an area is an important consideration and it will be essential to encourage a true reflection of, and a more positive outlook for, the area. The work conducted as part of this study, and the experiences of those

who have contributed to it, suggests that although the area needs urgent support and investment, it has some important underlying strengths.

### 5.3 IDENTIFYING KEY ATTRIBUTES

The area has a number of key attributes which distinguish it from other parts of the city;

#### KEY ATTRIBUTES OF THE HISTORIC QUARTER

- A DISTINCTIVE AND AUTHENTIC URBAN CHARACTER AND IDENTITY;
- A STRONG MIX OF LAND USES;
- A GROWING RESIDENTIAL POPULATION;
- AN IMPORTANT COLLECTION OF BUILT HERITAGE;
- PROXIMITY TO CITY CENTRE;
- A COLOURFUL AND VARIED STREETScape;
- A DIVERSE BUSINESS AND RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY;
- A LONG ESTABLISHED BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES GROUP;
- ACTIVE LOCAL RESIDENTS/COMMUNITY/ARTS ORGANISATIONS;
- A STRONG MIX OF DAY AND NIGHT TIME USES
- A GROWING FOOD/HOSPITALITY/ENTERTAINMENT SECTOR;
- A PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ENVIRONMENT.

There are also a number of signals to suggest some uplift in the area and which might indicate a more positive general outlook. The introduction of a number of new businesses, the renewed activity in St. Peter's / the Vision Centre, combined with the visual enhancements and community spirit developed as part of Reimagine Cork's work all suggest that there is an appetite for improvement and positivity in the area. This momentum needs to be supported and underpinned by strategic action and focused effort.



Figure 29: St. Peter's Church / The Vision Centre: an important anchor for the historic quarter

## 6.0 PROPOSALS



## 6.0 PROPOSALS

### 6.1 FORMING A VISION FOR THE AREA

The North Main Street area requires a vision to guide its future development and to secure its regeneration. This is not about administering a prescribed solution to the range of challenges facing the area, but a way to ground future objectives and identify opportunities to encourage progress towards greater economic prosperity and social integrity.

It is important that a broad vision for the area is considered, that is continuously refreshed to account for changes of circumstances and to allow a strategic approach to be guided by the dynamic processes that exist and transform over time. As such, this study does not include a prescribed 'vision'; instead it provides below a number of suggestions about the area's future and some basic ingredients to guide its future development. The 7 core elements of this vision are;

#### 1. SHOPPING + LIVING + RECREATION

*THE AREA IS CLEARLY IN TRANSITION. IT IS LIKELY TO MOVE AWAY FROM A HEAVY RELIANCE ON TRADITIONAL RETAILING, AND WILL EVOLVE BY COMBINING THREE BROAD OVERLAPPING AND COMPLEMENTARY FUNCTIONS AS AN URBAN DISTRICT.*

- AS A DISTINCTIVE COMMERCIAL/RETAIL QUARTER WITHIN CORK CITY CENTRE – WITH A MIX OF INDEPENDENTLY OWNED SHOPS, WITH NICHE/SPECIALIST OFFERINGS IN A RANGE OF AREAS – SERVING A WIDE CATCHMENT ACROSS THE CITY CENTRE;
- AS A VIBRANT URBAN NEIGHBOURHOOD, WITH A SUBSTANTIAL/GROWING POPULATION, SERVED BY A 'MAIN STREET' WITH MANY OF THE LOCAL SERVICES EXPECTED IN ANY RESIDENTIAL AREA – CONVENIENCE RETAIL, POST OFFICE, BANKING, HARDWARE, COMMUNITY SERVICES ETC.
- AS A UNIQUE URBAN DESTINATION IN RELATION TO A COLLECTION OF FOOD/DRINK, ENTERTAINMENT, ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE & TOURISM – COMBINING DAY AND NIGHT TIME ECONOMIES AND FREQUENTED BY LOCAL RESIDENTS, CITY WORKERS AND VISITORS FROM ACROSS THE REGION AND FURTHER AFIELD.

## 2. STEWARDSHIP

*REGENERATION IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS.*

THE HISTORIC CENTRE IS A CITY DISTRICT THAT NEEDS CONTINUITY OF CARE AND ATTENTION, AS OPPOSED TO OCCASIONAL INTERVENTION. THIS MEANS ACTIVE, ONGOING MANAGEMENT OF THE AREA AS A DISTINCTIVE COMMERCIAL/RETAIL /LIVING/RECREATION QUARTER WITHIN CORK CITY CENTRE — WITH A MIX OF INDEPENDENTLY OWNED SHOPS, WITH NICHE/SPECIALIST OFFERINGS IN A RANGE OF AREAS — SERVING A WIDE CATCHMENT ACROSS THE CITY CENTRE.

## 3. RE-INTEGRATION

*CONNECTIVITY IS KEY TO THE AREA'S FUTURE SUCCESS.*

THE AREA WILL BECOME INTEGRATED BACK INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF URBAN LIFE IN THE CITY THROUGH STRONGER INTERACTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE VARIOUS RETAIL, COMMERCIAL, RESIDENTIAL, EMPLOYMENT ZONES WHICH IT ADJOINS.

#### 4. IDENTITY

*THE AREA NEEDS TO BUILD ON ITS DISTINCTIVENESS.*

IT WILL STRENGTHEN ITS PROFILE AS AN AREA WITH A DISTINCTIVE AND AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AS AN URBAN DISTRICT - WITH ITS OWN UNIQUE PERSONALITY AND ATMOSPHERE, AND WITH A STRONG PROFILE IN TERMS OF ARCHITECTURE, BUILT FORM, AND HERITAGE.

#### 5. FOOTFALL

*ATTRACTIVE, WALKABLE ENVIRONMENTS SUCCEED.*

THE AREA WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY ORIENTED TOWARDS A PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED ENVIRONMENT, WITH INCREASED FOOTFALL, AND AN ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC REALM AND A POSITIVE WELCOMING STREETScape - WHILST MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF LOCAL VEHICULAR ACCESS AND PARKING FOR EXISTING USERS.

#### 6. ADAPT + TRANSFORM

*COMBINE SMALL AND LARGE SCALE THINKING.*

THE AREA'S SUCCESSFUL REGENERATION WILL REQUIRE A MIX OF SMALL SCALE, LOW KEY INCREMENTAL INTERVENTIONS AS WELL A NUMBER OF LARGER TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS.

## 7. SUPPORT

### *INTERVENTION IS ESSENTIAL.*

THIS REQUIRES THE SUPPORT OF BOTH CORK CITY COUNCIL AND THE TRADERS TO GUIDE AND TO ASSIST WHERE NECESSARY WITH APPROPRIATE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND PROMOTION OF A VIBRANT HISTORIC AND LOCAL CORE. THE VISION ALSO EMPHASISES THE NEED TO BRING AWARENESS TO THE NORTH MAIN STREET AREA AND TO UNLOCK ITS INDEPENDENT IDENTITY.

AS SUCH, PROMOTION OF THE HISTORIC CORE CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY ENHANCED THROUGH AN APPRECIATION OF THIS DISTINCT AREA'S CURRENT TRANSITION FROM AN AREA OF PREDOMINANTLY LOCAL RETAIL TO A MODEL THAT ENTAILS A VIBRANT, RESIDENTIAL SECTOR AND A STRONG, INDEPENDENT RETAIL TRADE.

This vision refers to the opportunities for a model that recognises the value of the area as a residential hub, as a retail location and as a visitor destination. This recognises the distinct identity of the North Main Street area, and also promotes one of its historic functions as a core residential hub.

This approach reflects observed existing trends within the area and is also supported by the provisions of the Cork City Centre Strategy (2014) which noted the traditional, independent retail function of North Main Street. Encouraging these complementary uses will allow North Main Street to regain its integrity as an urban district and will complement existing uses in the surrounding environs (evening / night time economy on Washington Street / South Main Street, high street retail on St Patrick's Street / Opera Lane, residential and health care services surrounding the Grattan Street area). Furthermore, this approach promotes a necessity to provide increased accessibility across the area and this suggestion will be discussed in greater detail in Section 6.3.

## 6.2 REPRESENTING & CELEBRATING CORK'S HISTORIC QUARTER

### 6.2.1 REPRESENTING CORK'S HISTORIC QUARTER

Representing and celebrating Cork's historic quarter requires a unified, collaborative approach that witnesses an input from all invested parties to ensure its success and vitality. The North Main Street Traders' Association recognises the importance of engagement within the regeneration process and are committed to supporting the revitalisation of North Main Street and its surrounding areas. This calls for a new commitment, and support of Cork City Council to promote this strong, unified collaboration between the local community and the local authority.

Places that are prosperous and vibrant are often underpinned by a strong collaborative tradition - that recognises how the important social, economic and physical dimensions shape a successful area. The study recommends that the North Main Street Traders' Association commits to the reconstitution of the existing traders' association to include all interested stakeholders within the wider area. This should involve including the surrounding streets that connect with North Main Street (Castle Street, South Main Street (part), Liberty Street, Kyle Street, Adelaide Street) and should involve renaming the group. The new name should reflect the broader membership and should reflect its historical profile as a distinctive urban area. The new grouping may take the form of a traditional traders' or business association; alternatively, it could function as a more area-based and diverse entity with commercial, non-commercial, residential and community/voluntary membership.

#### A RECONFIGURED TRADERS' GROUP: NAMING OPTIONS

- HISTORIC CENTRE TRADERS' ASSOCIATION
- HISTORIC QUARTER TRADERS' ASSOCIATION
- NORTH MAIN STREET & DISTRICT TRADERS' ASSOCIATION
- HISTORIC CENTRE AREA ASSOCIATION

During the surveys, business representatives were asked about their opinions on the amalgamation of the greater North and South Main Street areas as a single distinct quarter and out of the 46 businesses surveyed, 29 agreed with the proposal (63%) whilst 5 of the 46 (11%) were unsure or indifferent to this idea. This indicates significant interest amongst the existing business community to engage with the Traders' Association in their bid to promote the vitality of the greater North Main Street area. As such, this enthusiasm should be celebrated and enhanced where possible to ensure longevity



of interest in securing a revitalised district by all interested stakeholders and in turn, should be prioritised by Cork City Council to complement the existing enthusiasm within the area.

### 6.2.2 CELEBRATING CORK'S HISTORIC QUARTER

Celebrating the historic quarter offers an opportunity to encourage its revitalisation and to complement the economic and social strategic aims for the area. This requires collaboration between invested bodies (Fáilte Ireland, Cork City Tourism, Cork City Council, local traders and residents) to promote the area in an authentic way, which avoids fabricated, preconditioned approaches often employed in cities.

Enhancing the existing local appeal of the area, as opposed to inventing a tourist product, should be prioritised. Such an approach would not significantly deviate from existing efforts and could build upon recent efforts to promote vibrancy and local enthusiasm within the area (see Quarter Block Party, Cork Vision Centre's promotion of the arts, heritage & local uses, Cork Heritage Open Day, Dragon of Shandon and Reimagine Cork's visual enhancements of the historic core). Fáilte Ireland's interpretative framework for Cork City & Harbour has suggested the utilisation of cultural engagement through festivals and events that coincides with the promotion of a 'creative caucus'. Such an approach introduces a celebratory dynamic that could encourage and promote the quarter's unique identity. The City & Harbour Framework also highlighted the significance of the Vision Centre at St Peter's Church, which lies at the heart of the area, as one of the nine key ingredients to unlocking Cork's cultural identity.

The study puts forward a set of broad concepts to help guide and assist with the celebration of the Historic Quarter as follows:

- To form a positive collaboration between Cork City Council and the revitalised Traders' Association;
- To support and encourage existing initiatives such as the Quarter Block Party and the Dragon of Shandon;
- To collaborate as a whole with the celebration of significant holidays such as Christmas to entice footfall and to gain momentum within the greater North Main Street Area; and
- To encourage and support the use of public spaces where possible.



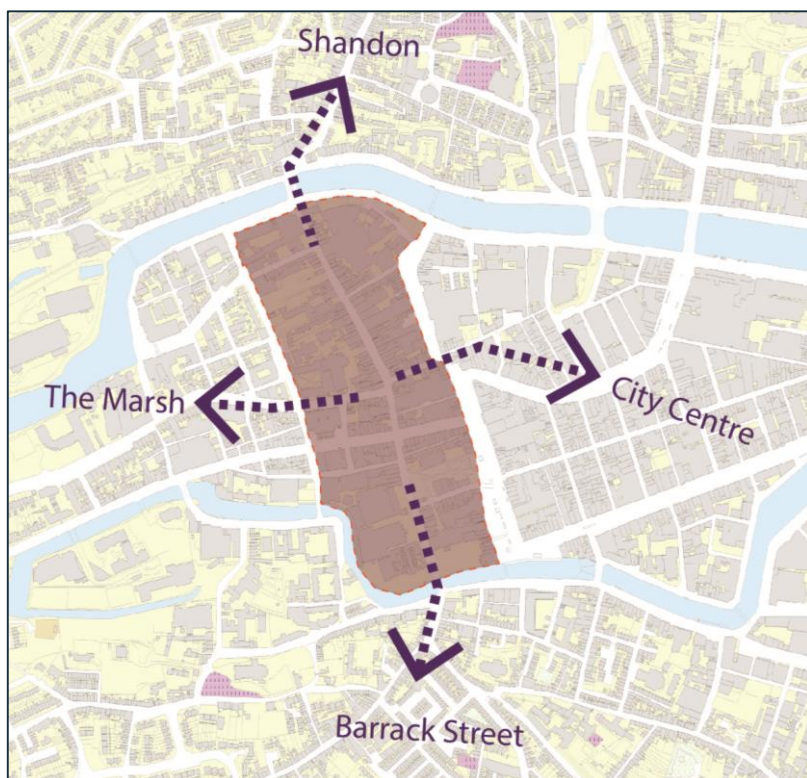
Drawing on existing synergies promotes a viable cultural strategy and prevents an overemphasis on the area's merits as an economic asset. Celebrating this important historical district requires continuous engagement to ensure its vitality and also necessitates guidance and support from Cork City Council to secure and to guide the process. Therefore, it is paramount that plans to celebrate the historic quarter are assisted by the local authority to ensure a strengthened, informed process. Ultimately, this strategic aim contends that promotion of the embedded historic profile of North Main Street is pivotal to recognising the cultural success of the area as a vital component of Cork's historic core.

### 6.3 CONNECTING THE HISTORIC QUARTER

The North Main Street area has become increasingly isolated from its surrounding urban context – socially, economically, functionally and physically. In the last number of years, its importance as part of the commercial heart of the city has declined. While other parts of the city centre have experienced improved levels of commercial vitality, the city's historic quarter has failed to benefit from this uplift and its importance as a key urban destination has declined.

The area needs to take advantage of its proximity to the busy city centre environment and attract higher levels of footfall. In simple terms, this means making it more attractive as a destination and easier to get to. A key challenge will be to address the issue of local connectivity, improve its overall environment and entice more people into, and through, the area.

The strategic objective will be to improve connections and encourage interaction between the historic core and the city centre to the east, the Marsh to the west, Shandon to the north and Barrack Street to the south (Figure 30).



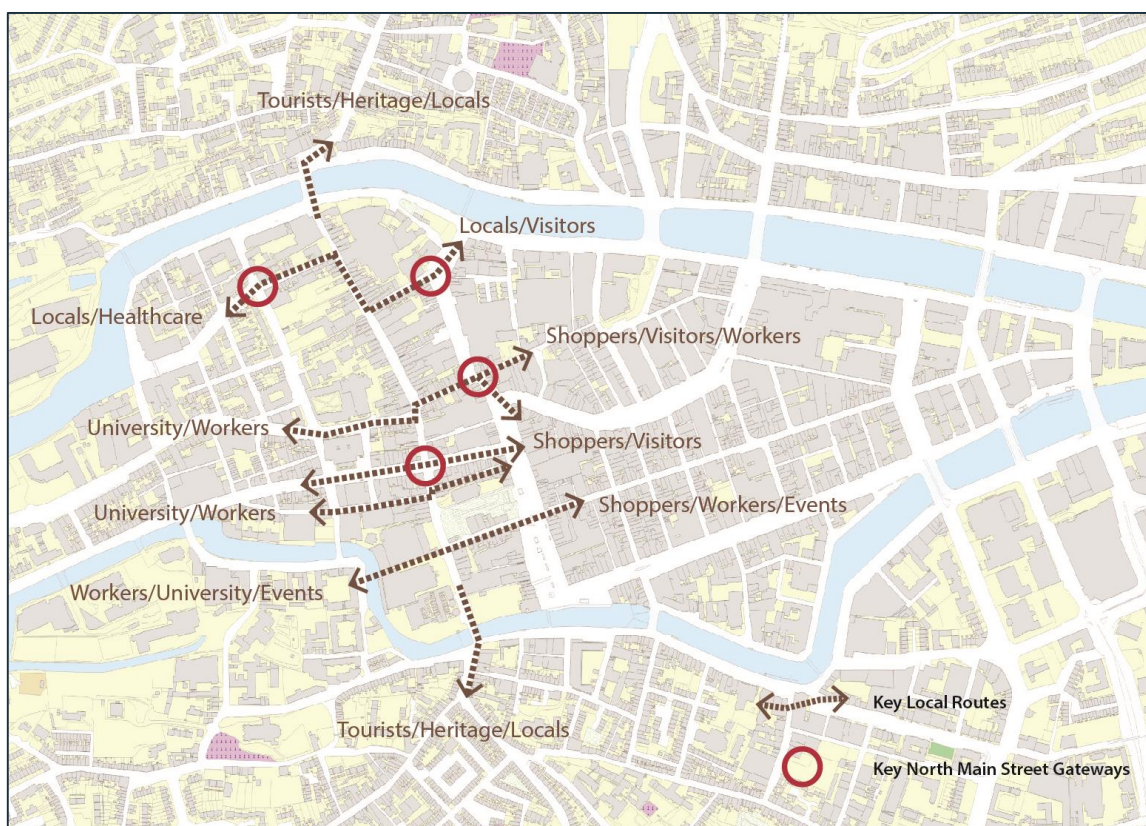
**Figure 30: Strategic Connectivity**

A concerted effort needs to be made to re-ignite one of the core elements of the Historic Centre Action Plan 1994 (HCAP), which aimed to “Reintegrate the historic core into the social, economic and commercial life of the city and region.” The HCAP proposed the development of an east-west spine

linking the retail core/Huguenot Quarter/Emmett Place westwards through the historic core towards the Mardyke; this would be accompanied by a north-south spine connecting Shandon with Barrack Street. These two 'activity' spines intersected at Paradise Place, and represented a core concept for organising actions under that plan.

As such, the study recommends focussing on enhancing local connectivity between the historic core and its surrounding neighbourhoods. It encourages Cork City Council and its partners to continue to promote the concept of a north-south 'tourism/heritage' corridor linking the Shandon and Barrack Street districts via North Main Street. However, tourism, as a long-term commercial strategy, is unlikely to fulfil the needs of the North Main Street area. It is our view that tourism and heritage should form part of the overall approach to the historic core and should be seen as being a complementary theme rather than the sole ingredient.

North-south connections are already quite strong, following various public realm enhancements and traffic calming works along North Main Street, and in the Shandon and Barrack Street areas. The key challenge will be to re-integrate the area into the everyday life of the city, and in particular, in a westwards and eastwards direction. The broad approach is illustrated in Figure 31, and is based on improving the quality, number and configuration of the key east-west pedestrian routes, and with particular emphasis on improving the key pedestrian entry points.



**Figure 31: Enhancing Local Connectivity**



The key short term priorities refer specifically to improving the quality and appearance of the area's key pedestrian entry points and to provide for additional east-west linkages. At present, the key 'gateways' present a negative first impression of the area and serve to discourage pedestrian movements into the area. The levels of vacancy/dereliction on these streets is higher than on North Main Street. These streets provide the key linkages to surrounding districts and their enhancement will be crucial to the success of the historic core. The strategy also includes two potential new pedestrian connections, at the Munster Furniture site and within the 'Loft' site. In these specific locations, the study has identified redevelopment potential which could include accommodating new pedestrian linkages within those sites.



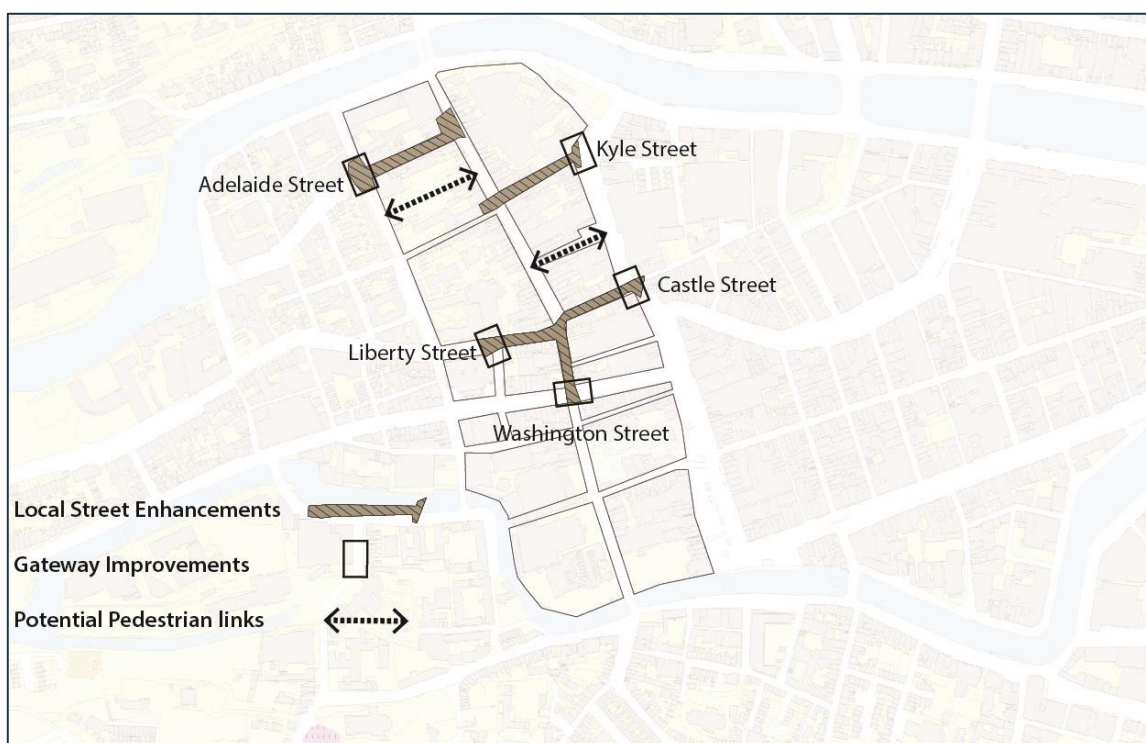
**Figure 32: Key gateways into the area**



The general approach for the enhanced local streets identified on Figure 33 should be to promote these as 'pedestrian priority' areas, and to encourage incremental improvement in terms of the public realm, general appearance and overall activity levels.

### **Key public realm measures**

- Selective widening of footpaths to encourage footfall;
- Improving quality and condition of surface treatments;
- Greater maintenance of public infrastructure to ensure its longevity;
- Additional traffic calming measures to reduce speeds;
- Improved/additional pedestrian crossovers to facilitate pedestrian movement;
- Reduction of street clutter by removal of all unnecessary signs and posts;
- Lighting improvement and replacement to encourage safe pedestrian movements;
- Limited use of street furniture to promote occasional seating and civic use of space;



**Figure 33: Priority Street Enhancements**

In addition, the role of these streets as ways of attracting footfall can be enhanced by improving their image and presentation at the key entry points or gateways, as follows

### **Key gateway actions**

- Introducing special pedestrian priority signage;
- Improving building facades around key gateway points;
- Improving key views into historic centre from key gateway points;
- Provide high profile 'gateway' treatments – eg decorative over-street installations, special surface treatments, emblematic/themed signage.

Figure 34 below provides an example of an approach that may be taken for one of the key local links – the Castle Street/Liberty Street/South Main Street link. This is a broad diagrammatic representation of an approach and it illustrates some of the measures that can be undertaken to improve these areas and the historic centre overall.



**Figure 34: Sample approach to Priority Street Enhancements**

## 6.4 A PUBLIC OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Open spaces are vital to meeting a range of social and environmental needs and should be created and enhanced where possible. Integrated, high quality public space is an essential part of making places more attractive and as such, Cork City Council should commit to ensuring a high quality public realm within the North Main Street area is achieved and sustained. The quality and appearance of the streetscape has declined considerably in recent years, and the area's public realm is now in need of both investment and maintenance.

The North Main Street area is limited in terms of access to quality open spaces. This is considered extensively within the Marsh Report (1990) as well as the Historic Centre Action Plan (1994). The Marsh Report contended that there were no existing suitable public spaces for people within the area to enjoy at that time, with Bishop Lucey Park for example considered to be an unsuitable local amenity. Similarly, the pocket park at the rear of St. Peter's Church does not offer an attractive environment for recreational or leisure activities and as result, remains largely unused.

However, it should not be taken for granted that there are opportunities to create attractive public spaces; this should coincide with the production of a number of Development Briefs for key sites within the North Main Street area with separate public realm strategies to complement their potential future uses (see Section 6.6 for additional information). This objective should actively seek to secure the future's public space requirements through sympathetic design and consideration for public amenity uses.

Creating a consistent, unifying and appealing civic space is also an integral component within an area's public realm agenda. This study suggests that North Main Street's most prominent civic space at the northern end of the street offers an unexplored opportunity and will play a pivotal role in the quality and integrity of the area's public realm regardless of future enhancements.



**Figure 35: Adelaide Plaza**

'Adelaide Plaza' (as referred to by the Quarter Bock Party Festival), requires significant attention to reinstate its positive contribution to the overall appeal of the area. The square is underused, and this

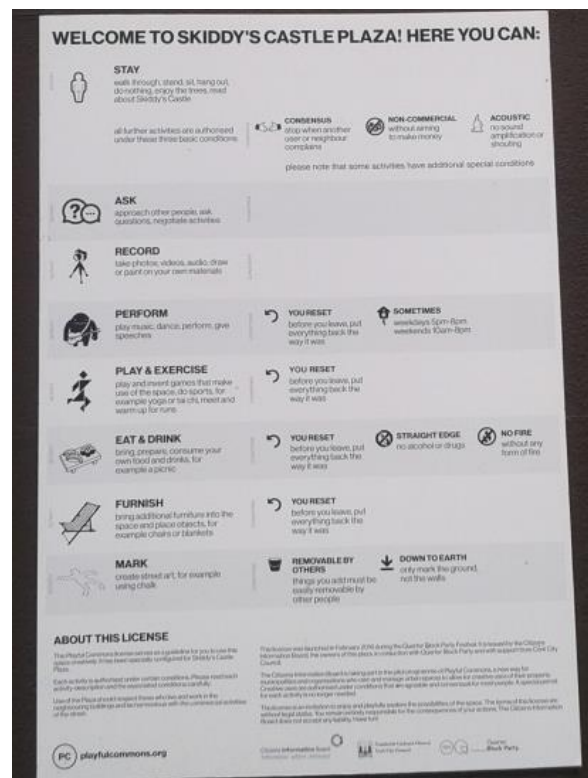
been exacerbated following the closure of adjoining businesses. The square presents a civic amenity opportunity as it is a well-defined public urban space that offers potential for active uses within the adjoining buildings (see Figure 36 for a proposed public realm intervention strategy). This space has the potential to function both as a 'Go To' and a 'Go Through' public space. However, this requires engagement with existing occupants and owners/and to encourage the redefinition of this important amenity. This may require intervention or incentivisation by the local authority, and an integrated open space and building renewal strategy should be created.

## ADELAIDE PLAZA AS A PLACE...

- ... TO STAY (ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC SEATING SURROUNDED BY ATTRACTIVE, ENTICING FACADES)
- ... TO ENJOY (POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AND A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR USAGE)
- ...TO DISCOVER (PROMOTING THE HISTORIC FABRIC OF THE AREA THROUGH SYMPATHETIC DESIGN AND CELEBRATION OF THE AREA'S LEGACY)

Strengthening the identity and integrity of this civic amenity requires a strong collaboration that promotes established bottom up initiatives such as the 'Playful Commons' workshop that was generated as part of the Quarter Block Party Festival, and encourages a reimagined, redesigned public amenity for the people within the area.

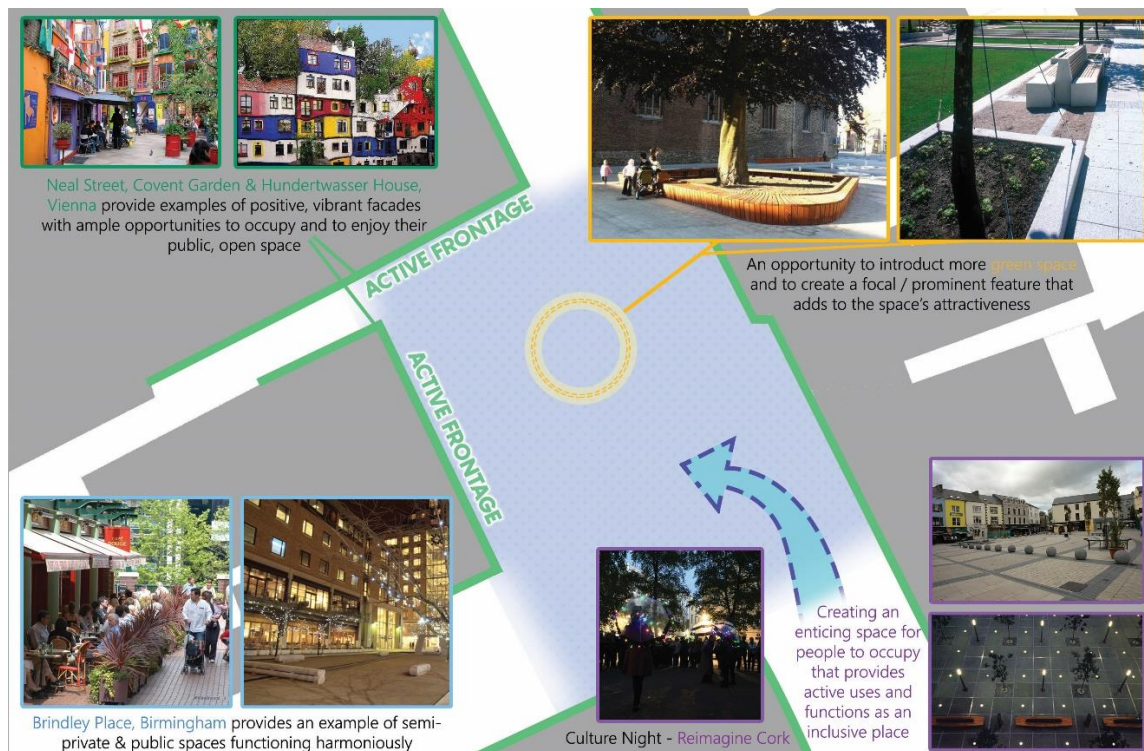
The analysis conducted as part of this study suggested negative perceptions of the Adelaide Plaza due to a lack of surveillance and active footfall. This issue could be tackled through an array of interventions that promote increased movement, positive / active uses surrounding the civic space and an overall improvement of the existing public realm.





The study also identified the opportunity sites surrounding the square (101-104 North Main Street) and suggests their positive contribution to the active use of the space could be strengthened through allocation of semi-private outdoor seating for the future occupants of the adjoining retail units. This suggestion recognises the benefits in enhancing the square through private investment but also emphasises the importance of retaining public uses to ensure an inclusive, community-driven civic space is secured for the area.

Therefore, it is suggested that this valuable asset is reimagined to establish a viable, attractive square, reaffirming its importance to the area. Reconstituting the space for public and business uses could ensure its vitality and encourage its occupancy as well as strengthening the overall character of the area. Figure 36 suggests a number of proposals that could enhance the civic amenity. These suggestions merely indicate the potential opportunities that could be invigorated through small-scale interventions.



**Figure 36: A broad approach to reintegrating positive uses into Adelaide Plaza**



## 6.5 A LIVING NEIGHBOURHOOD

The surveys have demonstrated clearly that vacancy and underutilisation of upper floor spaces poses an immediate challenge to the North Main Street area, and requires significant consideration to assist with the restoration of economic prosperity and social integrity to the area. As such, this section draws attention to the potential for converting upper floor spaces and incentivising residential uses to reinstate a vibrant, living neighbourhood.

**THIS UNEXPLORED POTENTIAL FOR CONVERSION OF UPPER FLOORS WILL BE CONSIDERED IN DETAIL WITHIN THIS SECTION UNDER THE AIMS TO:**

- **HIGHLIGHT THE SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL ROLE OF THE AREA AS A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOURHOOD**
- **IDENTIFY KEY LOCATIONS FOR UPPER FLOOR CONVERSIONS**
- **CONSIDER WHETHER EXISTING TENANTS ARE INTERESTED IN TRANSFORMING UPPER FLOORS**
- **SUGGEST MEANS OF ACHIEVING THESE AIMS IN THE LONGER TERM**

Reintroducing upper floor residential uses would contribute positively to ensuring higher levels of footfall, increased passive surveillance and a greater sense of community within the North Main Street area. The existing commercial offering of the North Main Street area operates extensively within a local framework and as such, the encouragement of a living neighbourhood complements the underlying commercial patterns.

Historically, North Main Street has possessed high levels of upper floor occupancy, demonstrating a strong trading community with many business owners living within upper floors. However, as the Cork Town Planning Report (1941) noted, issues of overcrowding emerged, resulting in problems of dereliction and poor living conditions. As a result, the number of residents dropped significantly in the following 30 years as many tenants were relocated to other parts of the city, mirroring both national and international trends of urban decline. As depicted below, the traditional historic spine suffered disproportionately from higher levels of under use and/or vacancy than other areas of the city.



**Figure 37: Vacant/underused Land in 1972, North & South Main Street highlighted in red**

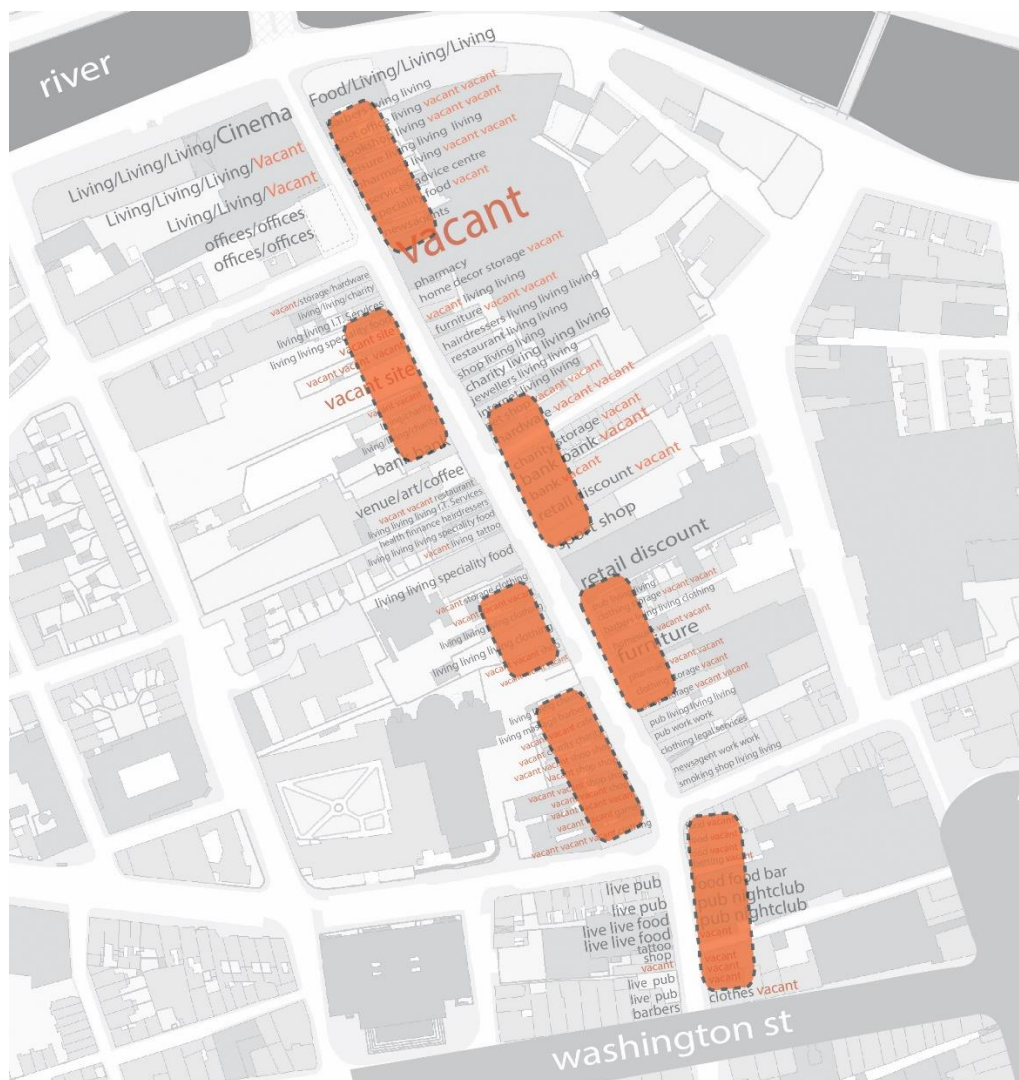
This decrease in the urban population of North Main Street was exacerbated up to the publication of the Historic Centre Action Plan (1994) which promoted a strategic framework for mixed use, high density development that supported a thriving population and a revitalised historic core to tackle this underlying issue.

According to the 2015-2021 Development Plan:

‘The City Council will ***promote the use of vacant upper floor spaces*** in existing buildings in the City Centre for residential purposes, particularly where it preserves the architectural heritage of protected buildings’ (Objective 13.33) and this is reaffirmed in Objective 13.11 that states that it is the objective of Cork City Council to: ‘***support the refurbishment*** of existing residential development in the City Centre, particularly in the ICRN and ***seek to identify measures to incentivise this;*** [and to] ***encourage the development of residential units on upper floors of existing*** and new buildings in the CCA and CCRA subject to other City Centre policies and objectives’.

A targeted incentivised housing strategy for the historic core should be prepared to facilitate and to encourage action. This type of project requires a proactive response from the local authority that strengthens local interest in the potential of upper floor conversions and that also addresses existing concerns in relation to the associated costs of reinstating residential units in historic buildings. Such an initiative could provide a precedent that encourages revitalisation of upper floors and this would alleviate some of the concerns recognised in the analysis stages surrounding the cost of conversion. To further incentivise the reuse of upper floor spaces, pre-existing initiatives should be encouraged such as Revenue’s Living City Initiative that provides tax incentives for the regeneration of historic buildings within special regeneration areas. Such an initiative also requires the introduction of new initiatives that decrease the financial burden associated with such development.

Figure 38 below identifies the key locations that have been identified as part of the analysis of this study that offer opportunities for conversion. This number includes a significant proportion of the entire street and as such, a collective response to the issue of upper floor vacancy could encourage a strong, vibrant living neighbourhood to evolve within the North Main Street area, further promoting its underlying commercial profile. This may involve a bespoke incentivisation and regulatory strategy to help overcome the financial, technical and procedural obstacles to their redevelopment.



**Figure 38: Key upper floor conversion opportunity zones**

Figure 39 illustrates the potential additional population that could be accommodated on North Main Street using two broad redevelopment strategies. The first involves conversion of upper floor uses in selected buildings, and our analysis suggests that this could yield approximately 207 persons. This would depend on a series of individual conversion and refurbishment projects. Considering the technical and financial considerations that arise in these types of projects, assistance from the local authority would be essential. It is recommended that the City Council consider a dedicated upper floor conversion programme for the street to examine how best to advance these residential opportunities. This could take the form of a bespoke, area-based project which combines financial, technical and

political assets to bring forward developments. A pilot project, based on a public-private partnership, could be used to investigate and demonstrate in a real world setting how an individual or grouping of buildings could be successfully transformed for residential purposes. If successful, this could then evolve as a Revolving Fund mechanism with potential spin off as a regeneration tool in the area.

Combined this upper floor conversion project with the redevelopment of the opportunity sites outlined in Figure 40, the street has the capacity to accommodate a total of at least 945 persons; this would treble the area's population, enhance its social capital, increase spending power and support the provision of local services.



Figure 39: Existing and potential population - North Main Street



## 6.6 KEY OPPORTUNITY SITES

One of the area's key problems is the number of empty, large and derelict sites. Collectively, these have a deleterious effect on the quality, appearance and vitality of the area. Moreover, large scale and visible dereliction can encourage further dereliction through a process of urban blight, as an area's profile gradually deteriorates on the basis of cumulative decline of local environmental quality. These locations, however, also offer opportunities for regenerative efforts.

Creating opportunities to entice development and regeneration into the North Main Street area requires significant consideration and input from the City Council. This could include preparation of targeted Development Briefs for the key strategic sites as outlined in Figure 40 below. These have been used very effectively by Cork City Council as a way of encouraging and managing redevelopments in other parts of the city centre. A Development Brief acts as a non-statutory document that informs interested parties of the opportunities presented by a site and the type of development that is endorsed by the local authority. These briefs can also be used to leverage regeneration funding at national/European level. Any financial incentives must be directed to facilitating the development of the major opportunity sites; if suitably developed, these can act as catalysts to stimulate further regeneration.

Generally, these documents are created for sites of significant size or sensitivity and as such, due to complexity of the North Main Street area in terms of historic legacy and urgency to address large, underutilised sites; this study encourages the formation of a series of Development Briefs for the key areas highlighted below. The selection of these sites is about encouraging change, but is not intended to compel owners/occupiers to change/relocate existing business operations; this process is about identifying key opportunities.

Justification for the creation of a series of development briefs stems from the Cork City Centre Strategy, which initiated a call to respond to three strategic sites within the North Main Street area (Kyril's Quay, Munster Furniture Store site and Portney's Lane site). The City Centre Strategy (2014) stated that, 'Cork City Council should actively work to encourage development of those sites, probably featuring residential with commercial activity at ground floors. The Kyril's Quay site warrants development, ideally including a use, such as a hotel, that has a destination dimension'.



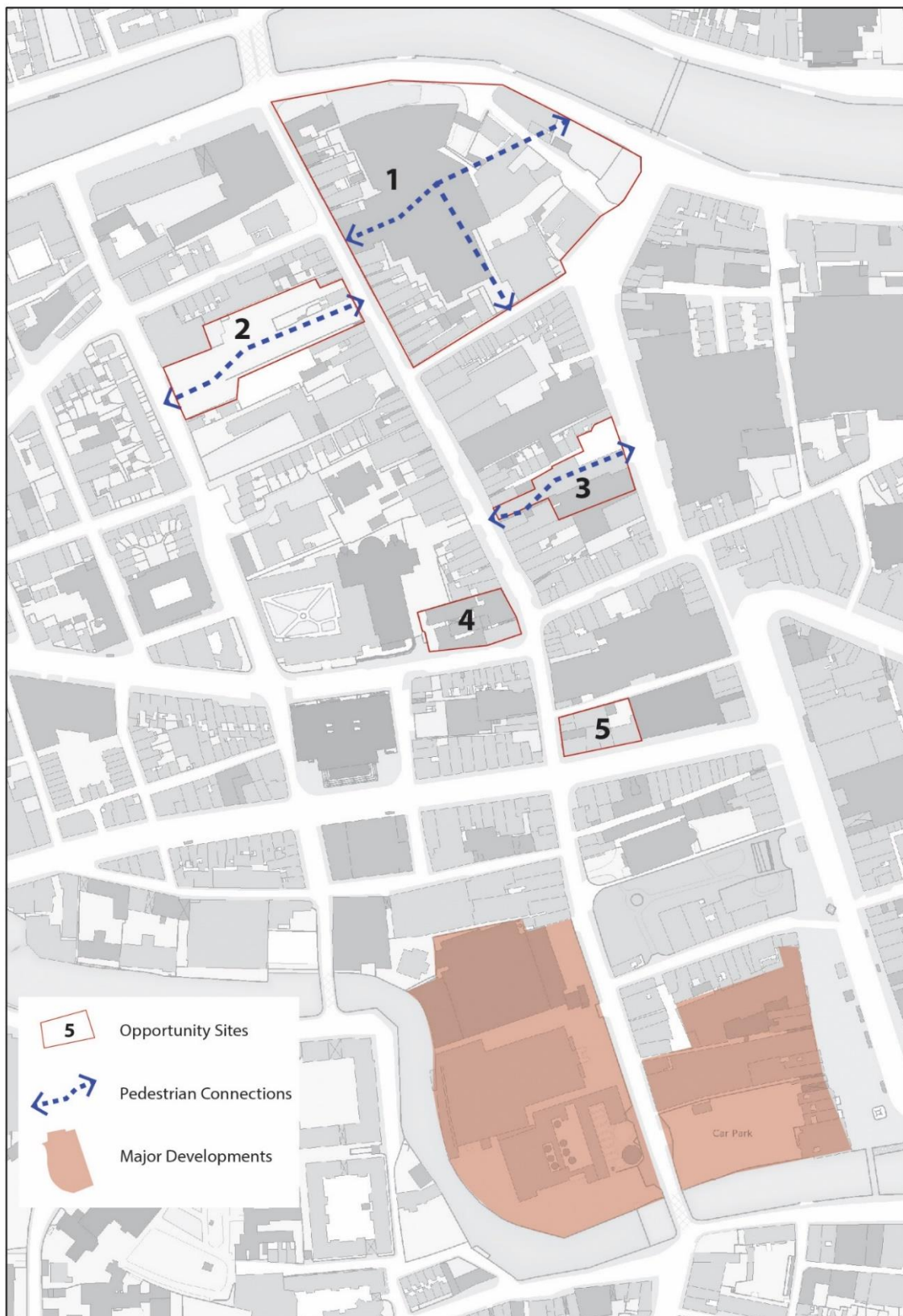


Figure 40: Strategic Development Sites, North Main Street

## ***Northern Gateway Block/Dunnes Stores***

### **Area**

15,519 m sq

### **Location**

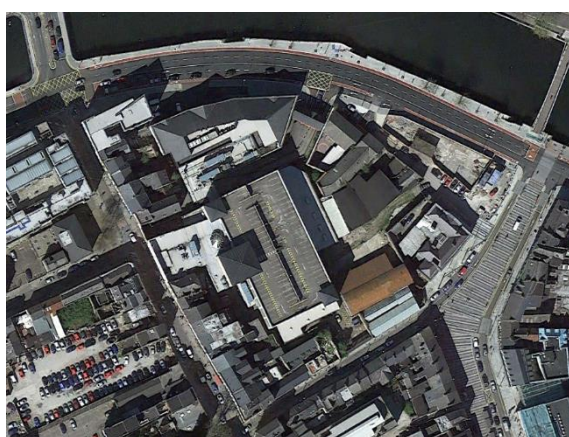
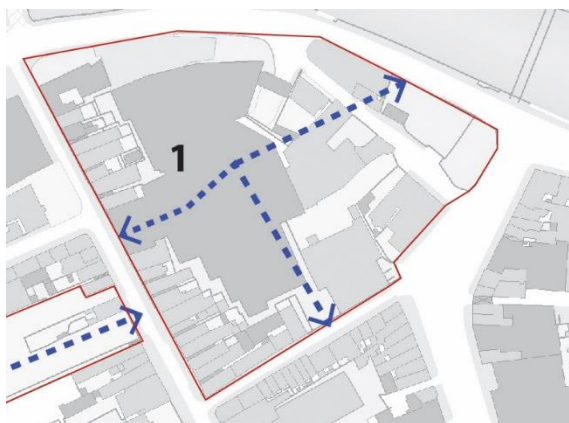
Situated on the north eastern section of the street that encompasses Kyril's Quay, the North Main Street Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park, northern section of Kyle Street, Bridewell Garda Station and eastern buildings along upper North Main Street [beyond Kyle Street junction]) with retention of existing protected and architecturally significant structures.

### **Preferred Uses**

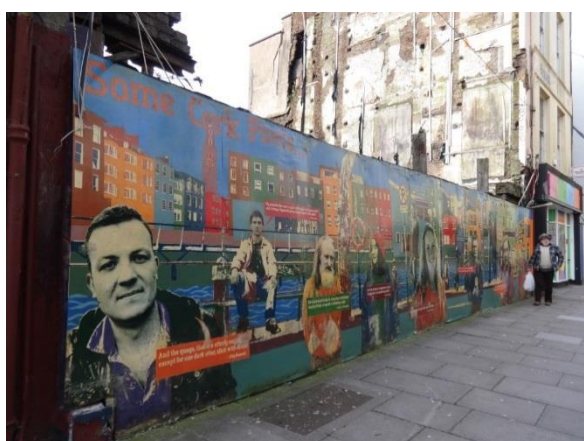
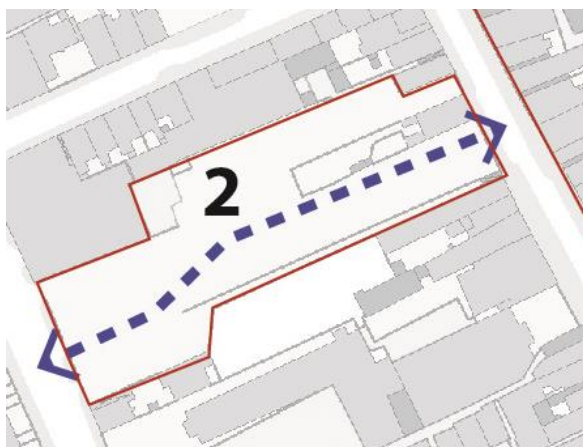
Potential for comprehensive redevelopment to include a wide mix of uses. Key function will be to act as a magnet for footfall to this part of the street. Key anchor retail, /commercial, recreational, hotel uses should be considered, with potential for significant residential element.

### **Key Planning Issues & Opportunities**

This large site is the key opportunity for the historic core and should be seen as a key transformative planning opportunity. It can act as a means to increase footfall within and through the area. The redevelopment should consider the potential to accommodate pedestrian movement through the site, promoting interaction between North Main Street and Cornmarket street, as well as opening up the Kyril's Quay zone for redevelopment. This can be achieved whilst protecting the established built form and historic building patterns.







### **Former Munster Furniture site**

#### **Area**

3,669 m sq

#### **Location**

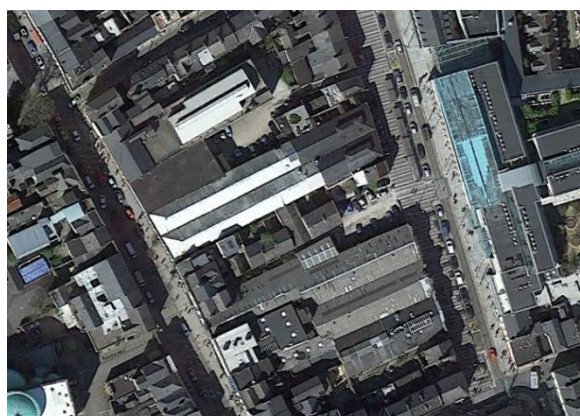
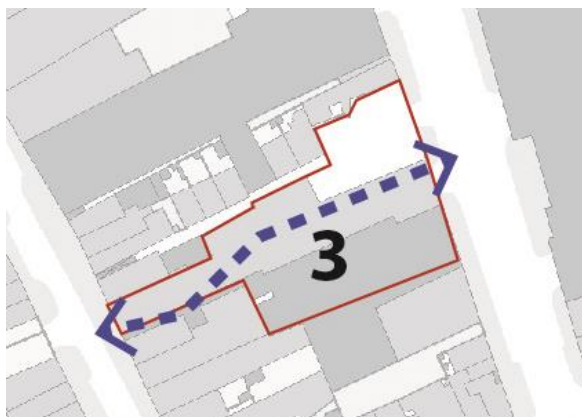
Site extending from North Main Street westwards to Grattan Street, including surface car park and existing structures.

#### **Preferred Uses**

Potential for a mix of housing, local retail, community and open space/recreation uses.

#### **Key Planning Issues & Opportunities**

This site has been derelict for a number of years and is a large and visually prominent vacant lot. Its redevelopment should include a significant open space element, through the provision of a mix of green/hard spaces, to be combined with an east west pedestrian connection, linking North Main Street with Grattan Street. The two street frontages should be re-instated with new building forms with active ground floor uses, with housing and open spaces to be accommodated internally.



### ***The Loft Furniture Store, North Main Street***

#### **Area**

1,283 m sq

#### **Location**

Site extending from North Main Street eastwards through to Cornmarket Street, comprising all of existing Loft Furniture Store.

#### **Preferred Uses**

This site currently accommodates a successful home furniture and furnishing business. It has longer term potential to become an exciting new food-related destination for the historic core. This may take the form of an internal street arcade, which accommodates a variety of gastronomic-themed retail/commercial-educational-cultural activities – perhaps to include market functions, restaurants/cafes/street food, specialist ingredients and cookware, bookshop, food court/dining spaces.

#### **Key Planning Issues & Opportunities**

This site has a long-established and successful existing retail trade that is entirely consistent with the character and profile of the street; this study is not encouraging its immediate relocation. However, it has significant medium/longer term regeneration potential. As an important protected structure, any redevelopment will need to protect the building's architectural and historic qualities. The building is also significant as it provides an important opportunity to facilitate another strong east-west pedestrian connection for the area.





## ***Paradise Place/Liberty Street***

### **Area**

1,258 m sq

### **Location**

Prominent corner site at 61-64/65 North Main Street, 17 & 18 Liberty Street and relevant buildings within this perimeter.

### **Preferred Uses**

This site currently accommodates an established retail/menswear outlet and games store to North Main Street, local healthcare/social services functions and a disused nightclub/bar complex to Liberty Street. It has been identified as it is a highly prominent and underused location. The general objective is to maximise the ground floor commercial functions to energise further this part of Paradise Place and North Main street, whilst using the substantial accommodation at upper floors for residential purposes.

### **Key Planning Issues & Opportunities**

This is a key local gateway site which is highly visible from Daunt Square/Castle Street, Washington Street. It has the potential to act as a key node within the historic quarter, forming an important function as a local destination/public space. Any redevelopment would require a sensitive approach to maximise both the residential and commercial opportunities, whilst maintaining a balance between day and night-time activities.





## ***Mannix's Corner, Washington Street***

### **Area**

950 m sq

### **Location**

Strategic corner site on the junction of Washington Street and South Main Street to include 40-42 North Main Street, 7-8 South Main Street, St Augustine Street ESB Substation and any relevant buildings or sites within this perimeter).

### **Preferred Uses**

This site currently accommodates an established retail/menswear business and a collection of derelict buildings, forming a highly visible and prominent location. Its upper floors were removed over 10 years ago and it is an inappropriate entrance to the historic core. The site's redevelopment should be prioritised considering its wider impact and visibility along both Washington Street and South Main Street. Potential uses include retail, commercial, food/bar/café at ground floors while upper floors could accommodate a mix of offices and residential.

### **Key Planning Issues & Opportunities**

Any redevelopment should reflect its gateway status, and should deliver significant physical enhancements. Its redevelopment should consider the opportunity to announce or mark it as a gateway to the historic core whilst maintaining building forms and the urban grain.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the North Main Street area faces a series of core challenges, and that there are a number of obstacles limiting its economic, social and environmental sustainability. It has also found that it has many core strengths as an important historic district; it is a diverse area, full of character, charm and opportunity. It has significant potential.

Delivering on the broad objectives of this study will require improved collaboration between all stakeholders (local authority, traders, residents and other interested parties). As such, the North Main Street Traders' Association seeks the support of all stakeholders, in particular Cork City Council, in promoting the area as a competitive, attractive destination.

In developing a strategy for the area's distinct profile, the study aimed to translate growing concerns amongst local stakeholders and to unveil significant development opportunities within the study area. Such an approach sought to position the North Main Street area on the city's agenda, both in terms of opportunities for revitalisation and requirements to address emerging deterioration.



**THE STUDY PROVIDES A STRATEGY THAT IS FOCUSED ON SIX THEMATIC AREAS:**

- **OUTLINING A VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE NORTH MAIN STREET AREA;**
- **REPRESENTING & CELEBRATING THE HISTORIC QUARTER;**
- **CONNECTING AND ENHANCING THE EXISTING MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK;**
- **CREATING AN OPEN SPACE STRATEGY;**
- **RECOGNISING THE POTENTIAL TO ENCOURAGE A LIVING, VIBRANT NEIGHBOURHOOD; AND**
- **IDENTIFYING FIVE KEY DEVELOPMENT SITES TO BE SUBJECT TO DETAILED DEVELOPMENT BRIEFS AND PLANNED TO SECURE THEIR FUTURE USES.**

Implementation of this strategy will include short and long term strategic actions; it is envisaged that a number of these will require immediate attention, and can become a formal part of the City Council's agenda as well as part of a broad regeneration aspiration.

The Study's analysis has also highlighted the significant changes emerging within the area, particularly in terms of increased residential demand and increased vacancy levels. This has evoked concern amongst existing stakeholders regarding the future of the area. This study has contended the future role of the area should be seen as a distinctive commercial/ retail district, with a strong residential neighbourhood and visitor destination function – this could provide an incentive for the revitalisation of the wider area and city centre as a whole.

Finally, this study recommends that Cork City Council considers these findings and outline recommendations, and promote the strategic framework of this study.