

To whom it may concern;

I am the Arts Officer in Limerick and a number of years ago Limerick Arts Office developed a sustainable housing mode for artists to live in the City Centre. I am attaching an outline of the model and would like that Ireland 2040 embeds the idea of the creative living in the city into the plan

Limerick City and County Council has published a Cultural Strategy Framework 2016-2030 that sets out a clear vision and ambition that allows us to strategically plan effectively and look to the future. Our first ambition is to grow Limerick's cultural capacity by retaining and attracting creative practitioners to live and work in Limerick. This will ensure culture continues to contribute to a vibrant Limerick in developing the city and region.

I would welcome the Ireland 2040 plan to include creativity in its thinking in line with the Creative Ireland policy published by the Department of Arts Heritage, Rural and Regional Affairs and suggest this model of capital development with artists at the heart of it to be included in Ireland 2040.

Here is the link to the full Limerick Cultural Strategy Framework
https://www.limerick.ie/sites/default/files/limerick_culture_strategy.pdf

Please feel free to contact me further in relation to this submission

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Insight into a model of affordable housing for Artists

Specific challenge/problem

Limerick has a comprehensive arts infrastructure that includes theatres, exhibition spaces, studios and performance spaces, but did not have viable places for artists to live. The presence of companies of national importance, whose dedicated role is to initiate and produce work, is a significant factor in Limerick. To facilitate the continued presence of artists in Limerick City, the Artists' Apartments, John's Square, were developed.

One issue that affects the ability of artists to settle in the city is the cost of accommodation. Artists and many individuals working in the arts are at the lower end of income levels. The scarcity of affordable housing has an immediate impact on the ability of artists and those who work in the arts to locate in Limerick City and its environs.

Artists contribute to the life of a city. If this vital layer is removed access to locally created artwork and arts activities decreases and more work is imported into the city. This means that over time indigenous creative activity may reduce to levels inappropriate to the size and prosperity of the city.

Strategy adopted

8 city centre apartments, in the historic John's Square (c.1750) were refurbished for the exclusive use of artists as a model of sustainable housing.

The main purpose is to:

- Create conditions for affordable living spaces for individual artists.
- Attract and keep artists living and working in Limerick City.

In parallel with the Artists Apartments, The John's Square Public Realm Enhancement Scheme was undertaken by Limerick City Council. This was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Southern and Eastern Regional Program, administered in Ireland by the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly.

Attained achievements

John's Square, A Living Cultural Quarter is now a reinvigorated area that is home to a cluster of cultural facilities, the Artists' Apartments, Dance Limerick Studios and performance space,

Limerick Printmakers and the nearby Limerick Artists' Studios. The Living Cultural Quarter is an example of the vibrancy of culture and a sustainable approach to supporting individuals, organisations and development.

Now in their second year of operation the Artists' Apartments are a successful support scheme. Six medium term apartments are licensed to cultural practitioners, through open call and are fully occupied. Two further apartments are for short term use to support visiting practitioners to arts organizations in the city and defray accommodation costs to arts organizations. This has been a key support for Limerick National City of Culture projects. Both schemes have a high level of demand.

- Keep Limerick City Centre and John's Square as a culturally active part of the city
- Preserve built heritage and restore the historic square
- Example of best practice by Limerick City and County Council in providing sustainable housing
- Better physical infrastructure for the arts
- More economically viable for artists to live and work in Limerick City
- More artwork and practice is evident
- Complement the existing arts organisations in Limerick City who work on an annual basis with professional artists

In summary, inflating property prices and the scarcity of affordable rental accommodation is an issue in many countries. This refurbishment houses eight apartments for artists, the provision of these affordable living spaces is part of Limerick City and County Council's cultural strategy to create conditions that support the creative process and outputs. This innovative and sustainable model of arts infrastructure recognises that land is expensive and scarce and that artists do not always have the resources to compete in the housing market. This affects the ability of artists to settle in the city. This cultural investment has already proved successful and has the potential to be transferred to different geographic areas in Ireland.



The Artists' Apartments, 1-2 John's Square



**An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht**



John's Square Public Realm Enhancement Scheme



**Ireland's EU Structural Funds
Programmes 2007 - 2013
Co-funded by the Irish Government
and the European Union**



**EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND**



"The art of city making is a challenge. Our goal should be the city as artefact, where designed and accidental environments of streets, buildings, landmarks and open spaces are brought to life with human activity. Cities are communities of people, living organisms, community networks and social dynamics."

Charles Landry

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Make a Move Festival

Photo: Damien Wilson/widumedia.com

Dance

Dance Limerick is based at 1 & 2 John's Square. The premises houses a fully equipped dance studio with mirrors, a sound system and offices. Across the square is a beautiful performance space in the St. John of the Cross Church.

Dance Limerick's purpose is to act as a resource hub for professional dance artists providing a platform for artistic dialogue, research, creation, presentation, promotion and practical support for contemporary dance and its production. Alongside this, the programme will feature a range of performances, talks and projects for the wider public. Dance Limerick is currently funded by the Arts Council and Limerick Local Authorities.



JOHN'S SQUARE
Limerick's Living Cultural Quarter

Subsidised living space scheme for artists
1-2 John's Square, Artists' Apartments



Dance Limerick Studio

Photo: Conor Buckley Photography



This refurbishment houses eight apartments for artists, the provision of these affordable living spaces is part of Limerick Council's cultural strategy to create conditions that support the creative process and outputs. The scheme will encourage living and working within the urban environment and attract artists to live in the heart of Limerick City.

Living Spaces for Artists

John's Square: A Living Cultural Quarter

Artists, arts organisations and cultural practitioners have a significant place in the history and future of Limerick, in the role they play in positioning the city as Ireland's Cultural Capital, vibrant and sustainable. The Living Cultural Quarter is an example of this vibrancy and a sustainable approach to supporting individuals, organisations and development.



The subsidised living space scheme for artists was formulated in response to recognition that artists living in the city required a range of supports, including better living facilities. In 2010 The Arts Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland commissioned an all Ireland research report, which found that total average personal income for an artist in Ireland in 2008 was considerably lower than average workers¹.



¹ Hibernian Consulting, Insight Statistical Consulting with Dr. Clare McAndrew and Cathie McKimm (2010), *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*, Dublin: The Arts Council and Arts Council of Northern Ireland commissioned report (pp. 11-12).

John's Square - A History

Limerick's earliest modern public space.

In 1751, John Purdon put forward a proposal to build houses in the form of a square, all to be built at the same cost and to be based upon the same plan. When the houses were built in the 1750s, they were done so at a cost of £630 per house. The houses were large and commodious and for many years continued to be inhabited by wealthy county families.

As a demonstration of how a Palladian country house could be adapted to an urban situation, John's Square is a notable success. Eight houses identical on the outside were set on three sides of the square.

The design stressed form, and individual identity was subsumed into the architectural design scheme. Two larger end houses were later added and fitted exactly into the original pattern. By the late 19th century decline had set in, and the houses were used for various functions.

St John's 3RD/14th Scout Group (The Bishop's Own)

St John's 3rd/14th scout group has been based in John's Square since 1950. During that time thousands of young people have passed through the unit, which is steeped in scouting history.

Recently, through Grant aid, the generosity of a benefactor, and volunteers, the St. John's Scout Group building was refurbished. This supports a wide range of activities and services to our scouts and the community into the future.

A vibrant artistic community

John's Square is now a reinvigorated area that is home to a cluster of cultural facilities, the Artists' Apartments, Dance Limerick studios and performance space in St. John of the Cross Church, and the nearby Limerick Artists' Studios.



Application for six of the apartments is through an open call. The other two apartments are reserved for short-term use, both as a resource for existing arts organisations that provide cultural activities for the City and to establish new relationships with a variety of external partners through residencies.

The refurbishment of the Artists' Apartments adds to and complements strong existing cultural landmarks, Limerick School of Art and Design, Limerick City Gallery of Art, Culture House at No. 2 Pery Square and the Hunt Museum.

Above:
Veronica Nicholson, 'Guerrillas of Love: Intervention #1'

John's Square: A Living Cultural Quarter

Highlights from Limerick's Cultural History

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|-------------|--|-------------|---|
| 1977 | ev+a founded | 1999 | Lyric FM established and located in Limerick |
| 1978 | Appointment of a Midwest Arts Officer, headquartered in Limerick, the first appointment of its kind in the country | 1999 | Opening of Phase I redevelopment of Limerick City Gallery of Art |
| 1981 | Belltable Arts Centre opens | 2002 | Publication of An Integrated Arts Strategy for Limerick |
| 1985 | Carnegie building designated to Limerick City Gallery of Art | 2004 | Contact Studios established |
| 1985 | First Kate O'Brien Weekend | 2005 | Opening of newly refurbished St. John of the Cross Church for Daghdha |
| 1987 | First cultural agreement between The Arts Council and local authority signed with Limerick Corporation | 2008 | Irish Chamber Orchestra purpose built facility at University of Limerick |
| 1989 | Appointment of the City Arts Officer in Limerick City Council | 2009 | Creative Limerick (use of vacant spaces) |
| 1990 | Founding of Limerick Jazz Society | 2009 | Opening of redeveloped Limerick School of Art and Design Campus, LIT |
| 1990 | Acquisition of the National Collection of Contemporary Drawings to the Permanent Collection at LCGA | 2009 | Association of Irish Choirs relocated to Limerick |
| 1991 | Public Music Library opened at Limerick City Library Headquarters | 2011 | Phase II redevelopment of Limerick City Gallery of Art |
| 1992 | Development of Limerick Artists' Studios by Limerick Corporation and The Arts Council | 2012 | Opening of Lime Tree Theatre at Mary Immaculate College (500 seats) |
| 1992 | Old Custom House Limerick, designated as permanent home of The Hunt Museum | 2013 | Opening of 1-2 John's Square, Artists' Apartments, subsidised living space scheme for artists |
| 1993 | University Concert Hall opens | | |
| 1993 | Official opening of Limerick Artists' Studios | | |
| 1993 | Irish World Music Centre founded at University of Limerick | | |
| 1995 | Relocation of Irish Chamber Orchestra to Limerick | | |
| 1995 | Umbrella Project and Fresh Film Festival established | | |
| 1996 | Cuise Poetry Festival established | | |
| 1996 | European Structural Funds allocated to LCGA | | |
| 1997 | Hunt Museum opens at The Custom House | | |
| 1999 | Limerick Printmakers established | | |

www.limerickcity.ie



Concert recital by Claudia Boyle, soprano, Mairead Hurley, accompanist, Kate O'Brien Weekend, 2013, Photo: David Gaynor Photography

Investment in John's Square

After establishing in 1967 that the houses in John's Square were in a dilapidated condition, Limerick City Council acquired No. 1 & 2 John's Square and listed them as buildings of artistic, architectural and historic interest. In 1973 Limerick City Council restored No. 1 & 2 and subsequently won a European Architectural Award.

Under ACCESS I funding the office, studio and St. John of the Cross church were developed by the former Daghdha Dance Company and opened in May 2005. The Artists' Apartments, complete the process of refurbishing the buildings of No. 1 & 2 John's Square in their entirety.

The Square itself has recently undergone a €1.5 million redevelopment by Limerick City Council, the John's Square Public Realm Enhancement Scheme. The new pedestrian-friendly space provides the venue for performances and events, as well as an attractive amenity in which to meet, stroll and enjoy the City. It now forms an appropriate setting for the fine historical buildings which surround John's Square, including St John's Cathedral, St John's Hospital and the limestone townhouses.

These investments in the City revitalise the area, build upon an already dynamic heritage of arts activity and stimulate further development opportunities. This cluster of cultural facilities truly forms a vibrant cultural heart for Limerick City.



Just Breathing, Alice in Wonderland
Photo: AberCrombie Photography

1-2 John's Square Artists' Apartments

The refurbishment of the residential Artists' Apartments, 1-2 John's Square took place through co-funding by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Access II scheme under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 and Limerick City Council.

The €403,273 construction contract was carried out by Henry Connolly Builders. Brian Grubb Architect and Patrick Molloy and Partners Chartered Quantity Surveyors formed the design team on the project on behalf of Limerick City Council (The Architects Department and Arts Office).

The John's Square Public Realm Enhancement Scheme

The John's Square Public Realm Enhancement Scheme was co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Southern and Eastern Regional Program, administered in Ireland by the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly.

The €1.5m construction contract was carried out by Wills Bros Ltd, Civil Engineering Contractors.

The scheme design was prepared by Nicholas de Jong Associates (Urban Design), with O'Shea Consulting (Engineers) and Lawlor Burns & Associates (Project Management), on behalf of Limerick City Council (Transportation and Infrastructure).



Make a Move Festival
Photo: Damien Wilson/widurmedia.com

