

# SLIGO

## READY TO GROW

**CAPACITY TO DELIVER**



**Submission to the  
National Planning Framework**

**by Sligo County Council**

**16 March 2017**

The National Planning Framework should set a vision for achieving sustainable and effective regional development. An integral part of the National Planning Framework should be the recognition that successful countries have vibrant cities at their core, driving economic growth within their regions. This submission demonstrates that **Sligo has the vision, capacity and ambition to be the regional growth centre for the North-West.**





# SLIGO: NSS GATEWAY

In 2002, the National Spatial Strategy (NSS) recognised Sligo's potential to promote regional development in the North-West.

Sligo's **Gateway** designation was intended to stimulate the achievement of critical mass in terms of population and economic activity.

For 15 years Sligo has been ready to perform its Gateway functions, but the prevailing economic circumstances prevented the implementation of the NSS regional development strategy.

Although the Gateway vision has not yet been realised, **Sligo's capacity and willingness to grow** have strengthened.







Sligo wishes to be **“an enterprising, inclusive, resilient and environmentally sustainable place which values and celebrates its unique landscape and rich culture and heritage and where the wellbeing of future generations is central to everything we do”**

(Local Economic and Community Plan 2016).

By retaining Sligo’s designation as a regional growth centre, the National Planning Framework (NPF) can help achieve this vision.

There is a significant track record of collaboration and partnership amongst public agencies and private sector stakeholders working together in the interests of Sligo to promote and develop economic, social, cultural, environmental and community activity on the basis of the LECP’s shared vision.





## FUNCTIONAL AREA

Located at the point where the Western Region meets the Border Region, Sligo is the largest urban centre in the North-West, serving as an administrative, employment, commercial, health and education centre for a hinterland (or Gateway functional area) that is substantially larger than the hinterlands of other towns with similar populations.

Sligo's functional area extends far beyond the County boundaries, as demonstrated by the thousands of people who travel daily for work from Mayo, Donegal, Roscommon and Leitrim (the population of Sligo and surrounding counties exceeds 400,000). It has been estimated that the daytime population of Sligo City can be as high as 40,000.

The Gateway Development Index reports of 2009 and 2012 have shown that the Gateway

functional area has in fact expanded (based on POWSCAR data) during the economic crisis. Despite the negative impact on the local economy, Sligo's Composite Index Score has been calculated at 5.0, the same as the national average, both in 2009 and in 2012. Higher than average scores were calculated for health, wellness and public safety, and a consistently positive public perception demonstrates Sligo's attractiveness as a place to live and work.

This outstanding resilience and Sligo's location close to the border with Northern Ireland, taken in the context of Brexit's potential implications, present a **unique opportunity for the National Planning Framework to proactively support the North-West by directing growth into Sligo.**



# GROWTH POTENTIAL

Within walking distance of Sligo's historic town centre, there is potential for large-scale, strategically-planned urban extensions (e.g. Docklands, Caltragh, Ballinode) which would represent the opposite of urban sprawl evident in other cities.

Following Sligo's NSS Gateway designation in 2002, the Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004 identified five growth areas, with a capacity to house **an additional population of 27,800, for a total Gateway population of circa 47,000.**

Local area plans were prepared in 2004 for Hazelwood-Ballinode (capacity of up to 6,600 people) and in 2009 for the North Fringe (up to 5,800 people). While in 2011 public consultation was carried out for the Docklands area (up to 2,900 additional people), it was Cranmore/East Sligo area which was prioritised for urban and social regeneration.



Sligo's Main Drainage Scheme, a 50,000-PE wastewater treatment plant completed in 2008, has the capacity for expansion to serve 80,000 PE.

National roads link Sligo to Dublin, Belfast, Galway, Letterkenny/Derry, with good connections into Counties Mayo, Leitrim, Donegal and Roscommon. Sligo's growth potential is also supported by the rail link to Dublin, the international airport at Knock (Ireland West) and the smaller Sligo Airport (Strandhill).

Excellent broadband, utilities, infrastructure and the availability of well-serviced sites have determined several international companies to locate in Sligo. A new 32-ha IDA business park is planned at Oakfield, in the south-western environs of the Gateway City.



# PLACE-MAKING

Within Sligo's urban fabric lies an immense potential for regeneration and the creation of a vibrant place. Amongst landmark architectural buildings, historic streets and squares, riverside promenades, cultural and civic institutions, several urban design frameworks have shown how to build high-density, mixed-use developments, which enhance and expand on the city centre qualities.

Sligo Local Authority's proactive approach to place-making is best illustrated by the 2016 Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) Regeneration Masterplan. The previously commissioned Centre Block Masterplan (1999), the Courthouse Block Urban Design Framework (2005), the Quay Quarter Urban Design Framework (2009) and the Inner Relief Road Urban Design Study (2009) are other examples of Sligo's commitment to place-making.





# EDUCATION & ENTERPRISE

Sligo benefits from the presence of two third-level colleges. Sligo Institute of Technology and St Angela's College (NUIG) offer courses in business, engineering, humanities, science, nursing, health studies, home economics and education. Working closely with the IT, Sligo College of Further Education (Ballinode) is the largest provider of further education in the North-West.

These institutions have a proven track record in providing high levels of educational attainment and research to a combined student population in excess of 7,000 coming from all over Ireland and from overseas. They have sufficient capacity for expansion on their existing campuses.

Sligo IT, Letterkenny IT and Galway-Mayo IT are jointly pursuing the creation of a Technological University within the North-Western region, which will be better equipped to supply a highly-educated workforce to the region's enterprises.



Sligo has a long tradition of successful indigenous companies and industries straddling the FDI sector, SMEs and micro-businesses, with particular growth opportunities for those involved in precision engineering, tool-making, medical devices, ICT, creative industries and tourism. The potential for expansion and for the creation of new businesses is acknowledged and pursued by the relevant agencies involved in supporting these sectors.





# CAPACITY TO DELIVER

At the end of 2007, Sligo Local Authorities sought funding from the Gateway Innovation Fund towards an overall investment of €187,620,000. Four fully designed and financially appraised projects were put forward for funding:

- the Eastern Garavogue Bridge and Approach Roads
- the enhancement of O'Connell Street
- the Cultural Quarter including New Museum and refurbishment of The Model Arts Centre
- the Cleveragh Regional Park

The aims of these projects were to provide key infrastructure, high quality cultural and recreational facilities while developing the urban core and promoting connectivity.



The Cultural Quarter and the enhancement of O'Connell Street have not been funded to date.

However, the Regional Park at Cleveragh has been partly realised and progress is underway regarding land acquisition for the construction of the Eastern Garavogue Bridge.

Sligo County Council, in co-operation with all public and private stakeholders, continues to pursue the implementation of policies and objectives of the Sligo and Environs Plan (2010) and the actions set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan (2016).



Next is a summary of progress to date and planned actions, grouped under four headings that better define the vision for Sligo 2040... a **Compact City**, a **Liveable City**, a **Green City** and a **Creative City**.

# PROGRESS TO DATE AND PLANNED ACTIONS

## Compact City

### ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

**Rebuilding communities by replacing sprawl with compact urban quarters.**

**Promotion of high-density, mixed use development, which complement and enhance the historic urban fabric.**

**Provision of new links between urban quarters, suitable for a range of transport options.**



### PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- Sligo East City (Cranmore and Environs) – the Regeneration Masterplan was adopted in December 2016, the implementation is already underway.
- 40 hectares of land are currently zoned for residential and mixed-use development in the City and a further 380 hectares of housing land are included in the Strategic Land Reserve.
- The Docklands area is available for redevelopment right on the edge of the City Centre (up to 1,160 new homes).
- The widening of Hughes Bridge (2016) has alleviated traffic congestion along the main north-south artery (N15/N4).
- Within walking distance of urban core there is an opportunity to create sustainable communities in Caltragh and Ballinode (over 7,000 new homes combined). A further 2,300 homes can be built in the North Fringe area.
- The Eastern Garavogue Bridge will further improve north-south circulation and will serve the new Ballinode community.
- The Western Distributor Road is needed to service the Caltragh area and link the new IDA business Park into the transport network.





# Liveable City

## ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

**An inclusive city, with human-scale urban fabric and a vibrant core, attractive streets, friendly and safe for the young and old.**

**Multifunctional public spaces that can regenerate civic engagement and democratic participation.**

**A city offering easy access to affordable homes, education, healthcare, leisure and recreation, where people can lead healthier and active lives for longer.**

## PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- The enhancement and pedestrianisation of O'Connell Street has been planned since 2004. In 2016, funding was obtained from the NWRA for an upgrade that will see limited vehicular access with pedestrian priority, new widened pavements, new street furniture and landscaping, reduced traffic flow and share space for cyclists.
- New public squares are planned for Stephen Street and Quay Street car parks, and three other locations (Adelaide Street, Centre block and Connaughton Road)
- Sligo Business Improvement District (BID), initiated in 2014, brings together a variety of businesses committed to promoting and improving the trading environment in the City Centre
- In 2014 Sligo County Council signed up to the national Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme. Sligo's Older People's Council was established in 2015.
- Sligo University Hospital (SUH) serves the people of Sligo, Leitrim, South Donegal and West Cavan. SUH has a Medical Academy with NUI Galway, which includes clinical rotations and education for medical students from NUI Galway on the SUH campus.



# Green City

## ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

**Making efficient use of natural resources, respecting the environment, maximizing the usage of open spaces and promoting eco-friendly design and construction methods.**

## PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

- Zone 1 of Cleveragh Regional Recreation and Amenity Campus has been completed. Three more zones are planned, one of which includes water-based recreational facilities.
- Doorly Park, an established riverside amenity area, has been redeveloped with new cycling and walking trails, as well as a multi-use games area (MUGA), playing pitch, play equipment and outdoor gym.
- The network of cycleways and walking routes is gradually being expanded throughout the city. A total of 23 green corridors are identified in the Sligo and Environs Plan
- The pontoon jetty at Ballast Quay in Sligo, managed and operated by Sligo County Council, is designed to be used by leisure craft for day trips or short-term stays in the City, but is and also available for long-term berthing.





# Creative City



## ELEMENTS OF THE VISION

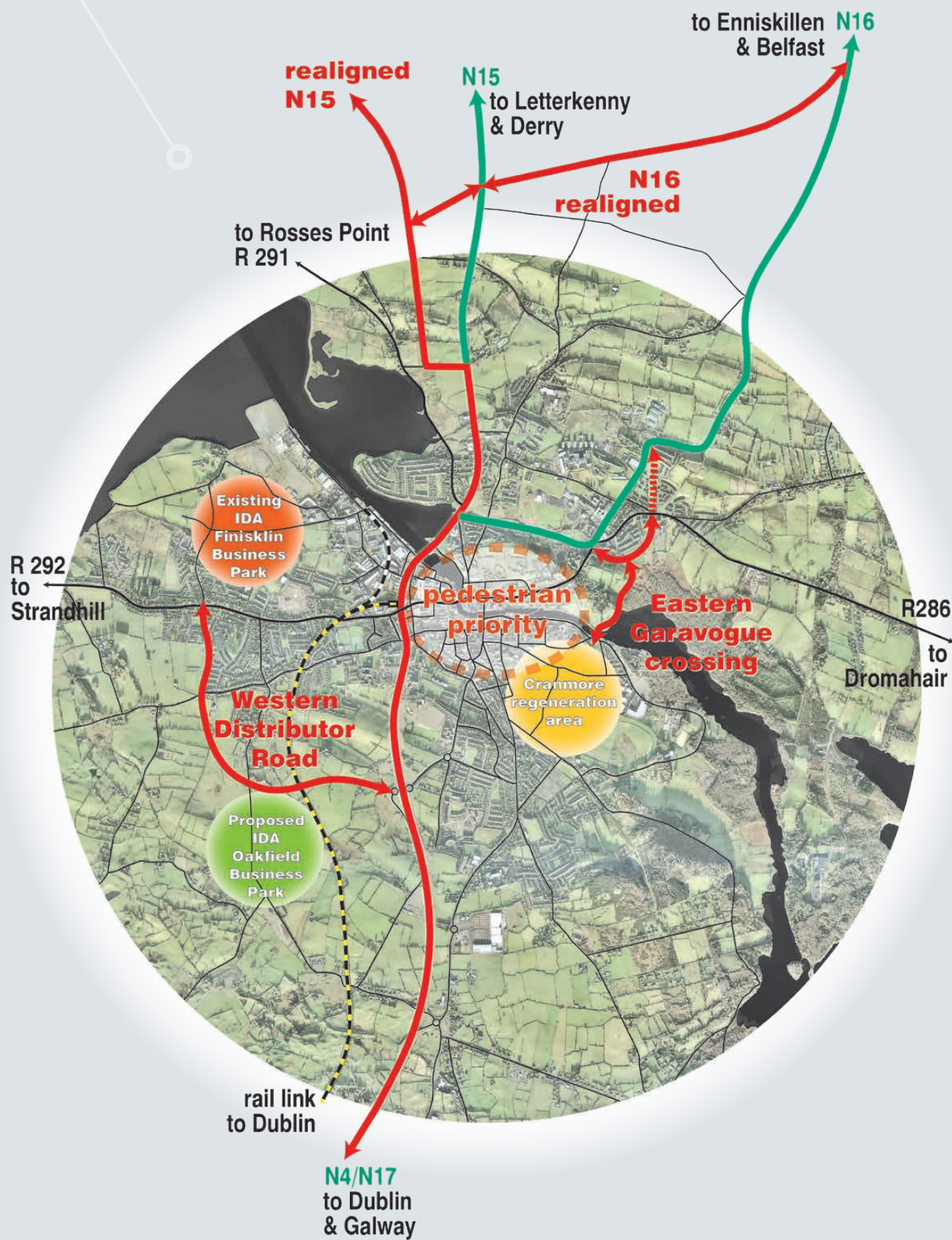
**Supporting innovation and entrepreneurship, expanding education and providing a skilled workforce to industry.**

**Promoting diversity and delivering high-quality cultural and tourism products, of regional and national significance.**

## PROGRESS ACHIEVED AND PLANNED ACTIONS

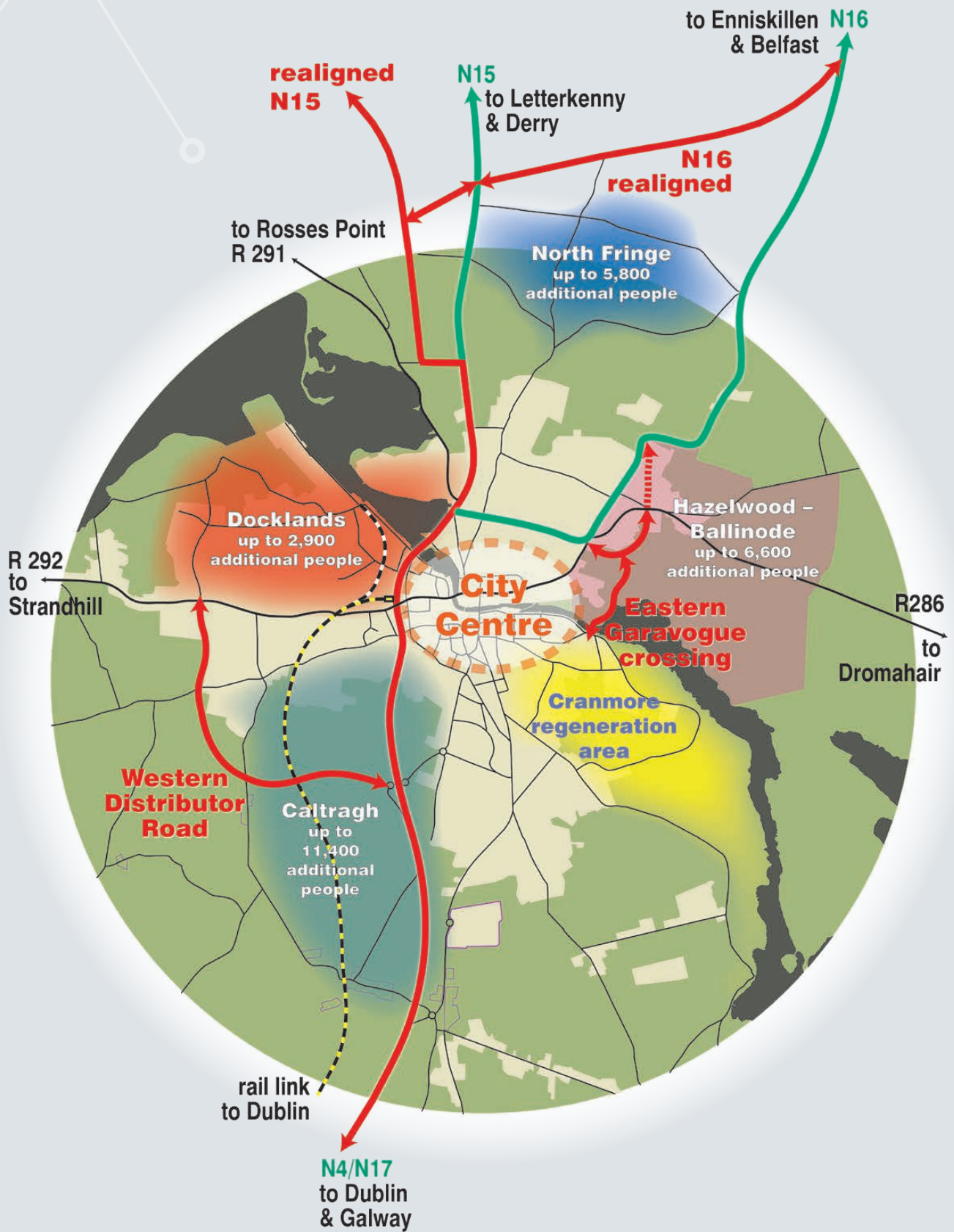
- Sligo IT and St. Angela's College provide third-level courses responsive to changing market demands
- The Innovation Centre at IT Sligo is home to over 35 businesses at different stages of development and provides the support, encouragement and the mentoring skills that these start-ups need in order to survive. The Innovation Centre has close relations with Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office.
- For creative industries and international businesses looking for a 'soft landing' in Ireland, Sligo's Building Block offers a full suite of working solutions in a four-storey building (2,000 sq.m.) located right in the City centre. A variety of business services is available, together with WiFi access up to 1000Mb/s.
- The IDA is committed to creating 32 hectare Technology Park at Caltragh / Oakfield.
- Sligo County Council is currently exploring the establishment of an Economic Development Forum, to direct a cohesive economic vision for Sligo.
- The Model Arts Centre, redeveloped and extended in 2010, has become a world-class visitor centre, displaying the best Jack B. Yeats paintings and graphics collection in Ireland.
- A plan for revamping Hawks Well Theatre has received partial funding from DAHRRGA. The redevelopment will have the potential to transform the theatre into an artist hub for the North-West, providing a visitor experience that is lively, accessible, authentic and interactive.
- The planned County Museum proposes to showcase Sligo's rich archaeological and cultural heritage, and will include a Yeats Interpretative Centre.
- The implementation of a number of significant tourism projects capitalising on the Wild Atlantic Way is ongoing.

## Existing and planned major transit routes





## Housing land reserve and transport framework





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