

Making quality places: Placemaking and urban regeneration



Rialtas na hÉireann
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Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF)

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Outline

Urban regeneration and urban problems.

Placemaking.

What makes a quality place?

Placemaking and the URDF.



1 Urban regeneration and urban problems

Urban regeneration is a multi-dimensional process which seeks to address urban problems.

It has social, economic and environmental/physical dimensions – and is often led by a particular theme (Culture-led, housing-led etc.).

It is longer-term and area-based. It should result in real and tangible improvements.

Partnership is a key feature, along with broader governance structures.



Urban problems are complex and they mostly result from urban processes related to larger, longer-term changes in demography, society and economy.

In Ireland, we have problems of loss of community and business due to the established trend of suburbanisation (moving from the urban centre to the urban edge).

This comes with a range of the associated problems for the centre, such as shrinking and less diverse communities, the decline of local economy, decaying, vacant or underused urban fabric, traffic congestion, and poor quality urban space.



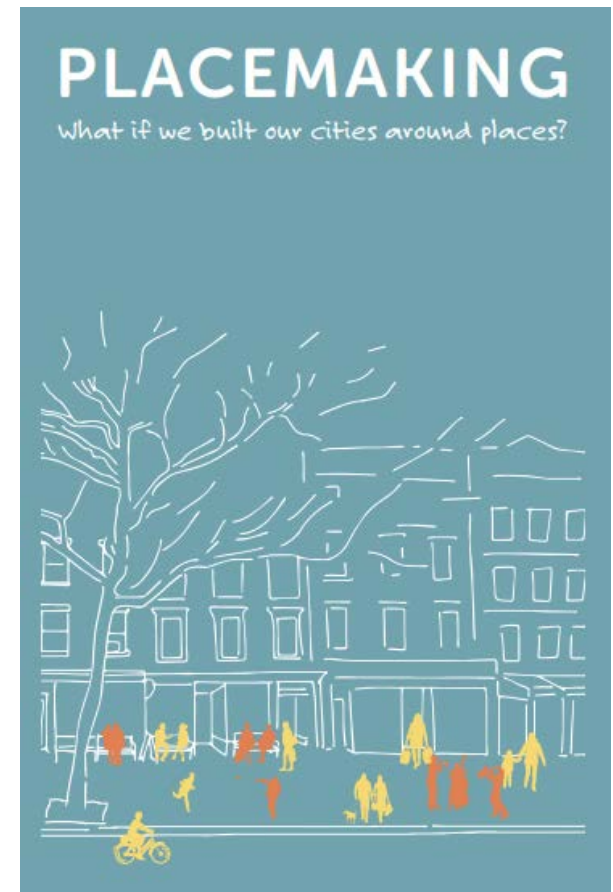
2 Placemaking

Placemaking is an multi-facetted and multi-party approach to improving and creating quality places.

It focuses on the interaction between people and the urban environment and achieving a high quality of life, sense of place and belonging.

It is supportive of and overlapping with concept of sustainable towns and cities.

Planning and urban design play a central role in realising quality places.



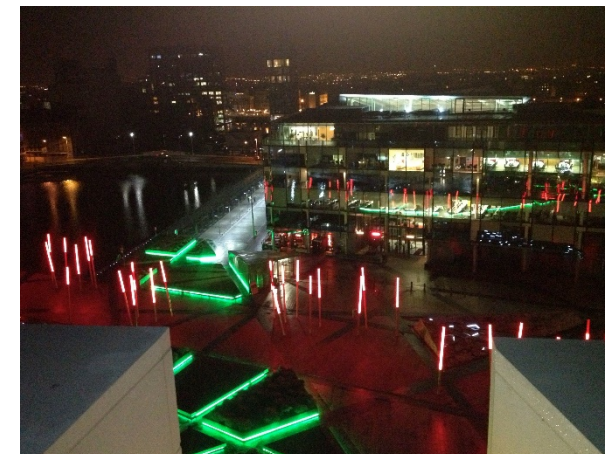
3 What makes a quality place?

Quality places share some common characteristics:

A strong character and sense of place – cultural, built and natural heritage is understood, valued and enhanced.

A rich diversity of functions and activities – underpinning viability and vitality.

A highly adaptable urban structure and buildings – for future, longer-term changes in society and economy.



A well-connected network of streets and spaces of high quality for all users – to promote urban life, community coherence and sense of shared ownership.

Priority for walking, cycling and public transport – to reduce our reliance on the car, (and by so doing improve health and wellbeing).

Coherent, legible and attractive streetscapes – providing continuity and enclosure, variety of frontages, vibrancy and interest.

Integration of various characteristics of quality places.



3 Placemaking and the URDF

A wide range of projects can be funded through the URDF and they all should make a fundamental and transformative contribution to placemaking.

Plan-led regeneration

Regeneration is area-based and must be plan-led. Informed and up-to-date plans must underpin URDF bids/funding. We need more and better local area planning.

Plans should be based on a proper and deep understanding of the area.

Plans should be innovative and informed by best-practice in other places (Ireland and abroad).



Exemplary projects

Projects should emerge from, and make a strong contribution to, larger plan strategy and objectives.

As catalysts for urban regeneration, projects should produce area-wide, social, economic and environmental/physical benefits.

Broad partnership is essential in project planning, procurement, delivery and management

Projects must be forward looking, innovative, and exceed standards and expectations.

Feasibility needs to be understood but longer-term viability/robustness is crucial.



The urban centre

The URDF can make a significant contribution to difficult, long-standing and urgent problems in the urban centre.

Funding should focus on:

The survival of the main street, providing the conditions for new businesses and households for the existing building stock.

The major problems of traffic and congestion, making substantial improvements to the quality of streets and spaces and allowing the return of street life and community.



Attracting significant new commercial or civic development, which broadens or deepens the function and use mix of the centre.

Unlocking underused/vacant land, and addressing coherence, connectedness and diversity of uses and community/civic uses.

Putting in place the conditions for a regenerated, cohesive and diverse community.



Some final comments

The URDF places urban regeneration at the centre of the debate about our towns and cities and it will bring local communities and businesses into contact with the urban regeneration process.

The URDF is not a panacea for urban problems. These will take many years to resolve, and will require major additional and sustained investment along with a supportive policy and regulatory environment around urban regeneration.

The operation and effectiveness of the fund should be reviewed as it is rolled out.

There is a potential role for the Regional Assemblies in managing the fund to secure coordinated approaches.

As a long-term initiative, the URDF (and the NPF and NDP) must be robust to political change.

Thank you!



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