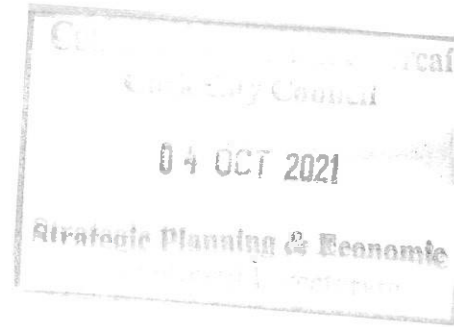




Douglas Street Business Association
Draft Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028:
DBSA Submission



Douglas Street Business Association:

"Village in the City"

2022- 2028 Draft Development Plan: Submission to Cork City Council

1.0 Introduction

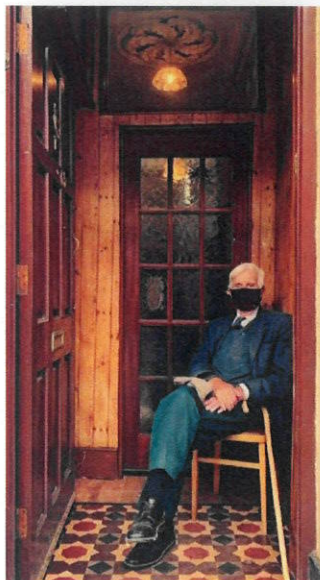
- 1.1 This submission has been prepared by the DSBA (Douglas Street Business Association) with the cooperation of the residents and commercial operators in Douglas Street and its immediate environs.
- 1.2 The South Parish Zone covers a wide area south of the River Lee and the Douglas St precinct occupies an area effectively at the centre of the zone. The DSBA have reviewed the overall intent of the draft plan outside of the Douglas St area and have noted its objectives. While the DSBA are concerned at all times to note and review the objectives of the wider South Parish Area their primary concern is to ensure that a carefully managed and coordinated Plan is embodied within the final Cork City Council Development Plan 2022-28. **(See Key Map Ref S608/S1)**
- 1.3 In preparing this submission the DSBA have at all times engaged with the residents, commercial interests and other interested parties in the Douglas St area and have considerable support for the proposals therein. Notwithstanding this the DSBA do not set out to represent other parties who might have differing views.

2.0 Brief Background to the DSBA

- 2.1 The Douglas Street Business Association was formed in April 2016, triggered by an increased amount of anti-social behaviour which was having a detrimental effect on the area and impacting on the residents and businesses on Douglas Street. Edel Curtain (Coughlan's Bar) Justine Looney (Cork Flower Studio) and Dr Sinéad Cotter (Langford Hall Medical Centre) rallied local businesses, councillors and residents and our first meeting occurred on 16th April 2016 in Coughlan's Bar. There was a general consensus that what was happening was unacceptable and action needed to be taken.

A committee was elected at this meeting and agreed to meet once per month.

Original Board - Edel Coughlan / Coughlans Bar Chair
Sinéad Cotter / Langford Hall Medical Centre - Secretary
Peter Murphy / FMP Architects - Treasurer
Val O'Mahony / The Gables Bar
Justine Looney / Cork Flower Studio
Breda McCarthy /Bia Blasta Cafe



We contacted all the businesses on the street and invited them to join the DSBA, with very positive engagement. Meetings started as planned and we invited City Hall personnel including City Architect Tony Duggan and City Centre Coordinator Paul McGuirk as well as the local community Gardai to attend. A number of local councillors including Mick Finn were also involved from the start.

To tackle the anti-social behaviour, we formed a WhatsApp group which included the Community Gardai. We also devised a strategy to clean up graffiti whenever it appeared.



As soon as any of us witnessed public drinking etc we messaged the group and as many as possible contacted Anglesea Street Garda Station.

While the response from the Gardai could be delayed, very gradually the situation began to improve. We also contacted the local Simon Community and worked with them to identify solutions to on street drinking. While initially the antisocial behaviour was the main focus of our meetings, there was a sense as a group that we could achieve a lot more to enhance our neighbourhood and foster a sense of community in our "Village in the City".

We identified a derelict, unsightly house on the street and obtained permission to paint it. A lovely vivid blue brought it to life and we gathered old photographs of past residents of the street, had them enlarged and fitted them into the vacant windows. A total transformation that became a focal point for locals.

In 2017 we had an audacious plan to close the street to traffic and put on a festival to celebrate the heritage, businesses & vitality of the area. Through consultation, collaboration and community, Autumnfest was born. By combining the talents, contacts and imagination of all the diverse members of our group, we put together a program of music, dance, circus performance, food, storytelling, art and games. Fundraising table quizzes, sponsorship and matched funding allowed us a budget to ensure all participants were paid for their work, with the business volunteers pulling together to create magic!

On Sunday the 24th of September, with the sun shining and the street completely clear of cars, the Fire Service Pipe Band marched down Douglas Street under the fluttering bunting, heralding the start of an extraordinary day.

The late Ronnie Herlihy, local historian and South Parish treasure, starting things off with a walk-through Douglas Street, revealing a fascinating rich history that many were not aware of. Young and old were enthralled as he jumped from Medieval times to the Civil War and back.



The Lord Major, Cllr Tony Fitzgerald, cut the ribbon to officially kick off festivities and we were off! Circus performers enthralled the crowd with their extraordinary feats as the dancers from the Joan Denise Moriarty School put on a lovely display. From pizza making and face painting to balloon animals and buskers, residents and visitors alike were entertained and delighted.

Things wrapped up at 6pm with a palpable buzz lingering for hours after. There were lots of volunteers to help tidy up and within an hour the street was back to normal. But what a day it had been!





Autumnfest 2019

We followed that initial AutumFest with a Christmas Jumper event and switching on of the Christmas Tree lights, Spring Clean Ups, Planting Days, and other social events. AutumnFest is our signature event and we have enjoyed increased crowds

(upwards of 5000) and participation in the following years as well as attendance from the mounted Gardai.

Sadly the Pandemic has stalled our plans temporarily, but we look forward to a bigger and better AutumnFest 2022!

The following YouTube link gives a flavour of the day <https://youtu.be/qYvoTSleGQQ>

As a collective, we have been recognised both locally and nationally for our efforts, featuring in a full page feature in the Irish Times, numerous articles in the Examiner, Evening Echo and on local radio.

In 2018, we were the overall winners of a Cooperation Ireland Pride of Place Award (Best Urban Neighbourhood with a population under 1000) as well as being recognised by the Cork Environmental Forum for our greening projects. RTE dedicated an entire Nationwide programme to Douglas Street in December 2019 which was a fantastic achievement for all concerned.



Cork Environmental Forum 2019 award



Pride of Place award 2018

Collaboration with other groups in Cork has been key to our success and have helped us realise projects such as the Food Forest on Summerhill South in conjunction with Green Spaces for Health.

Groups we have worked with:

An Garda Siochana Cork

Community circus Cork Healthy Cities

Cork Learning Neighbourhoods

Cork Environmental Forum Transport Mobility Forum

Benchspace Green Spaces for Health

Nagle Place

Cork Sports Partnership

Cork Midsummer Festival

We supported the City Council in their Planning Application for the Cluid Housing Development at White Street. It has been a great addition to the area and we were delighted to recently welcome each of the residents to their new neighbourhood with a gift of a houseplant for each of the residents.

Other groups include TMF and Benchspace who worked with us to bring Irelands first Parklet to Douglas Street. Originally installed as a temporary feature, local support from residents and businesses ensured that it now has a permanent home outside Cork Flower Studio. The Peoples Parklet has been an astounding success and has been the inspiration for a host of Parklets around the city, putting Cork firmly on the map as a “liveable city”.

Our latest project is the ‘Pocket Park’ on Langford Row, a previously overgrown and disused green area. Neighbours were struggling with the level of anti-social behaviour happening there so we approached the Council about taking it on as a

project. We dropped flyers into all the surrounding homes and gathered together a great group of local volunteers to clear, dig and plant. We hope to dedicate the park to the late Ronnie Herlihy, with local history from his book about the South Parish to feature on visitor boards. We are working with Benchspace to install raised beds, to be planted with shrubs propagated for us in the poly tunnel at Nano Nagle Place. Keeping it local! In keeping with the Cork Healthy Cities plans for more active, intergenerational play, we are also installing a Boules Pit. This is all through funding applications and sponsorship and we progress to the next phase each time we get more funding. Plans also include bike parking.

Last summer we undertook a survey of the residents to find out what their thoughts were on the future of the street. The results (attached) were incredibly encouraging; more bike parking, less cars, a slowing down of through traffic, more greening, safer infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, all very similar ideas to

what we, the DSBA, have been discussing. We have also put forward an expression of interest with Cork Smart City to pilot a Smart Neighbourhood on Douglas Street and we look forward to pursuing this in the coming months.

As an Association, we've established a membership base with annual payments which we use to fund planting, paint for covering graffiti and AutumnFest. We've harnessed the energy and vitality of our members and the residents in Enhancing our little corner of Cork, the "Village in the City".

We've fund raised.

We've painted derelict buildings.

We've adopted greening projects.

We've tackled anti - social behaviour.

We've won awards.

All of this while holding down full-time jobs We have demonstrated that investment in our street is merited.

3.0 Historic Area Plans and Development Plans

3.1 In preparing this submission to the City Council regarding the Draft Development Plan 2022 the DSBA have reviewed information contained in the following Action Plans and Development Plans:

3.1.1 *The South Parish Area Action Plan 2010*

3.1.2 *Cork City Development Plan 2009-2015*

3.1.3 *Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021*

3.1.4 *Current Draft Plan 2022-2028*

3.2 South Parish Area Action Plan 2010

It is noteworthy that as far back as 2010 the City Council addressed many of the policy issues which are now being raised as follows:

Item 3.3 Page 8:

Aim: "To improve the quality of Douglas Street generally and specifically to create an attractive gateway space at the western and eastern ends of the street"

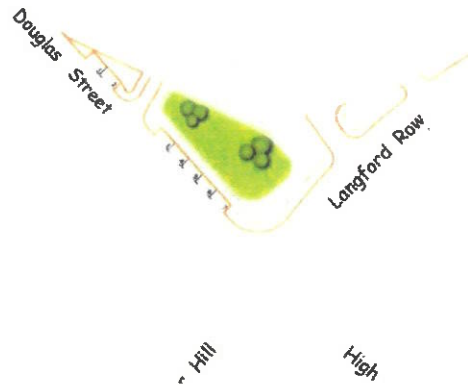
Design Objectives: "To create a new focal point space at the eastern end of Douglas Street to provide for the needs of the area" and..."To reinforce the western gateway into Douglas Street so that it is more attractive and offers a considerable improvement in the pedestrian realm".

Item 3.3 Page 9:

Eastern focal space to Douglas Street:

"Create a new focal public space at the entrance to Douglas Street from Summerhill South (see figure 8 below)"

Figure 8 New Public Space at Douglas Street/Summer Hill South Junction



Cork City Council: *South Parish Area Action Plan 2010*

4.0 Prioritizing the Douglas Street Area

4.1 During the last five years the DSBA have closely monitored issues which have negatively impacted on the Douglas Street area and which include the following:

- 4.1.1 *Poor Public Realm:* With the exception of the first successful “Partlet” which was installed in Douglas Street three years ago there has been little or no coherency in the planning and implementation of suitable open spaces or rest areas.
- 4.1.2 *Traffic Impact:* Geographically Douglas Street has traditionally been a short cut for traffic linking the west side of the South Parish area to the east. The street is one way from the west to Mary Street and two way from there to Summerhill South. The traffic issues created have the most serious impact on the amenity value of Douglas Street and are as follows:
For a large section of Douglas Street the two way system cannot operate without one lane pulling in to allow the other to pass. This continues to cause major frustration for pedestrians, bicycle users and for the vehicle users themselves with daily traffic jams and hold ups on the street.



One way system at Nagle Place

The one-way section is uncontrolled and allows vehicles to travel at speed. In addition, the two-way section where it gets wider at the eastern end of the street allows cars going eastwards to Summerhill to “catch the lights” at speed.

Deliveries to commercial premises while necessary are uncontrolled and contribute to constant traffic delays and frustration.

Due to the lack of proper street amenity planning, cars have randomly parked on defined paved open areas and pavements compromising pedestrians.

Ultimately the most serious impact of traffic is on pedestrian users and cyclists, it has also brought about decay to the public realm.

4.1.3 *Anti-Social Behaviour:* There has been a history of anti-social behaviour, drug use and graffiti and alcohol consumption outdoors in the Douglas Street area which has to an extent been reduced in recent years due to the intervention of the DSBA and local concerned citizens. Local Community Groups and the Gardai assisted in monitoring and controlling these issues.

There remains however a threat of increasing anti-social behaviour and this can largely be resolved by adopting relevant policies but would also be greatly improved by upgrading the public realm. It has consistently been proved in planning that the creation of a good workable public realm leads to increased civic pride and a better environment.

5.0 DSBA Proposed Objectives

- 5.1 The draft proposals for Douglas Street are set out in the following attached documents which are as follows:
- 5.1.1 Overall map of Douglas Street indicating draft objectives for the existing road system and environs (see **Drg No S608/S1**) attached.
 - 5.1.2 Sample map setting out the principles for an additional Partlet location including bicycle parking, planting and widened footpaths. (see **Drg No S608/S2**) attached.
 - 5.1.3 Sample detail of partlet protection on narrow street (see **Drg No: S608/S3**) attached.
- 5.2 *One Way System:* On the overall map **Drg No: S608/S1** we have set out the principles for an upgraded road traffic system through Douglas St and for roads linking Douglas St with Georges Quay. This is simply a guide setting out preferred solutions. The extent of the one-way system for Douglas St will be subject to access for commercial and emergency activities. It is stressed however that there is majority support for a carefully managed one way system taking into account and prioritising pedestrian needs and a better public realm.
- 5.3 *East and West Hubs:* In recent years Douglas St has slowly experienced some renewal with increased foot fall and some redevelopment. This uplift has accelerated in two areas as set out on **Drg No S608/S1** and falls into a number of categories namely:
- 5.3.1 Nagle place (West Hub)**

Nagle Place including the UCC Architectural School have rejuvenated the west end of Douglas St and have increased foot fall in this area. The Nagle Place Hub should have a more defined route to the City Centre via Mary St. Furthermore, traffic should be calmed in this area. The link with Douglas St going east should be better defined by better public realm management as set out in the following drawings.
 - 5.3.2 Douglas St (East Hub)**

This is physically a more open area at the east end of Douglas St., It has a high density of commercial premises and public houses with an established tradition for entertainment, it also has higher footfall due to passing pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

It has a car park and some historic attempts to uplift the public realm which were poorly planned which is characterized by poor parking and daily traffic jams, the traffic impact could be described as “chaotic” particularly at the Rutland Street junction.

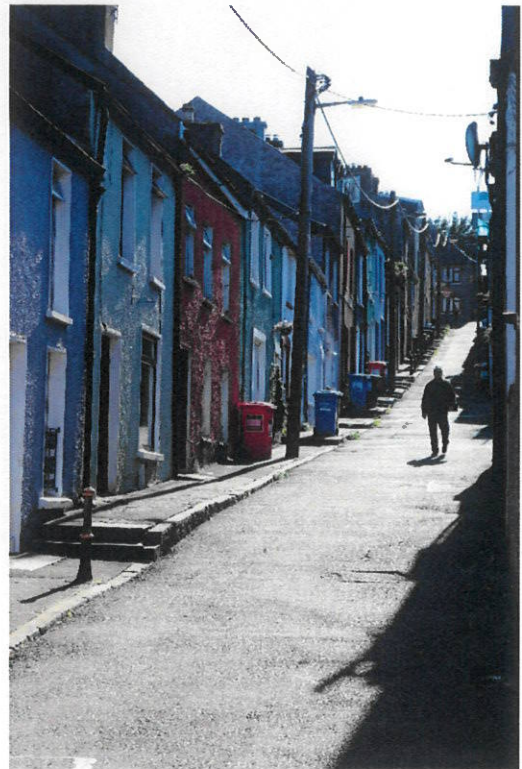
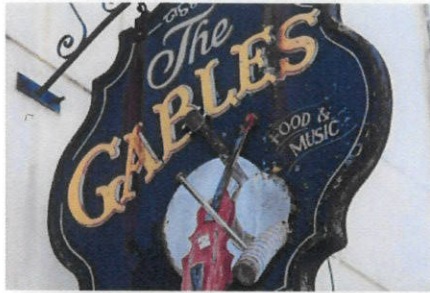
This Hub has the advantage of open space and wide streets and should be reviewed and replanned giving public realm and pedestrians priority. This should include a reduction in carparking and increased landscaping. Access to this area for vehicles should be carefully investigated and a review of commercial delivery routes which should be carefully managed to take account of public realm and pedestrian needs.

This hub has become a key area for outdoor entertainment particularly during the annual Douglas Street Autumnfest and consideration should be given to an open-air entertainment space semi covered area or similar.

5.3.3 Middle Douglas St Area

See Drg Nos S608/S2 and /S3

This is the middle portion of Douglas St between the East and West Hub. This area and adjoining side streets typify the *Village in the City* streetscape which characterises the Douglas St area. It is our view that this streetscape should be identified for general protection and building heights should be limited to maintain this unique character. In this regard the DSBA welcome the **ACA** designation.



We recommend a one-way system for this area carefully managed to combine with public realm proposals. Priority should be given to traffic calming. Where necessary set backs can be identified for commercial deliveries.

Consideration should be given to greening, bicycle parking; Disabled Parking and limited street parking. All pavements should be protected to avoid cars mounting pavements.

The attached drawings identify *sample* proposals for setbacks, partlet, widened footpaths etc., The overall proposal for Douglas St (and adjoining streets) should also consider semi enclosed bin storage areas.

6.0 ACA Designation

The proposed ACA designation is welcomed. It is noted that there are four protected structures in Douglas St including the entire Nagle Place campus all of which create a curtilage to be protected. Furthermore there are other structures of significance in Douglas Street and its environs which may not be listed but should be considered in future planning submissions.

7.0 Planned Projects

Bin Storage

We have identified a stretch of Douglas Street near the convent, where the neighbours are willing to participate in a pilot project to keep their domestic bins on the street in a storage unit. Bin clutter on the footpaths is a major issue and long term, we would like to see underground bin storage to eliminate this problem completely. We hope to integrate bike parking and planting in the unit.

Bike Parking

Upwards of 7 businesses have put forward an expression of interest in installing bike parking outside their premises.

Greening

We have gathered a list of residents and businesses who have committed to 'adopting' a green space outside their own door. This would involve ongoing maintenance, watering, weeding etc.

Christmas Window Competition

We are holding a competition this Christmas where we invite residents and businesses to decorate their front window, upstairs or down, and compete for a cash prize. We hope to highlight the community that exists in an urban environment and make a strong case for 'Over Shop Living'.

8.0 Executive Summary: DSBA Proposed Local Objectives

8.1 Overall, the DSBA are recommending that a Masterplan for the Douglas Street area should be prepared. This masterplan should be a complete plan for the area prepared in partnership with the DSBA and other commercial and residential interests.

Any piecemeal works to the public realm or infrastructural works should be limited to necessary public safety and maintenance works. It is accepted that finance may not be available for the full menu of works however a masterplan will ensure that any works carried out will fit into a coordinated well managed plan for the area in the long term.

8.2 It is our view that the following objectives should be adopted by the City Council when formulating their plan for Douglas Street and its environs:

- 8.2.1 To analyse and review the social and physical issues impacting on the Douglas Street area both historic and recent.
- 8.2.2 To review incentives for residential development including infill and new development in order to increase residential density.
- 8.2.3 To seek solutions to reawaken the Village character of the area.
- 8.2.4 To devise policies which will enable families and single people to return to the area and increase footfall.
- 8.2.5 To create a better public realm which will include wider footpaths; traffic calming and traffic management for the future; provision for disabled parking; bicycle parking and planting.
- 8.2.6 To identify areas which will be designated as open space and to recognise the unique character of Douglas Street which has a tradition of music performance and Street festivals.

Appendix 1: Drawings