OUR VISION FOR NEWTOWNARDS ROAD



THE BEATING HEART OF EAST BELFAST, THE NEWTOWNARDS ROAD WILL FLOURISH AS A UNIQUE AND VIBRANT DESTINATION, CONNECTED WITH OUR CITY AND WELCOMING TO ALL.

FOREWORD

This plan sets out a bold vision for the future of the Newtownards Road—one that is built on the values of inclusivity, sustainability, and shared prosperity. It is the culmination of extensive collaboration, informed by the voices of local residents, businesses, and stakeholders who share a common desire to see this historic neighbourhood realise its full potential.

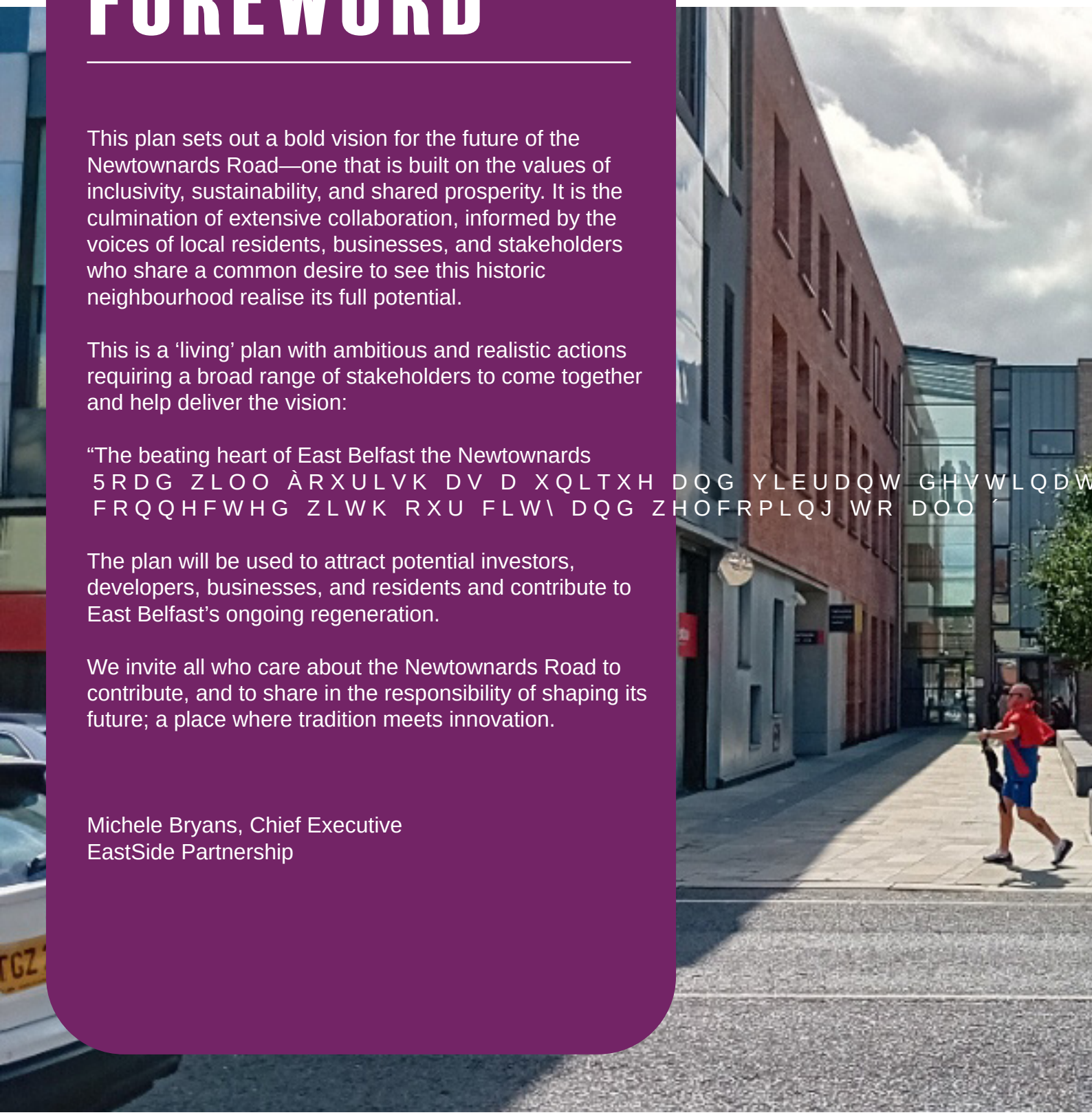
This is a 'living' plan with ambitious and realistic actions requiring a broad range of stakeholders to come together and help deliver the vision:

"The beating heart of East Belfast the Newtownards 5RDG ZLOO ÀRXULVK DV D XQLTXH DQG YLEUDQW GHVWLQDW FRQQHFWHG ZLWK RXU FLW\ DQG ZHOFRPLQJ WR DOO

The plan will be used to attract potential investors, developers, businesses, and residents and contribute to East Belfast's ongoing regeneration.

We invite all who care about the Newtownards Road to contribute, and to share in the responsibility of shaping its future; a place where tradition meets innovation.

Michele Bryans, Chief Executive
EastSide Partnership



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URBAN VILLAGES Thriving Places
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EAST SIDE PARTNERSHIP

the paul hogarth company



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- Places to Live, Work & Shop.
- Re-imagining the Road.

INTRODUCTION

The Newtownards Road is the heart of East Belfast and a vital arterial route emanating from the city centre. With a long and proud history, the road is home to many residents, businesses, churches and community organisations. Over the years it has V H H Q V L J Q L ¿ F D Q W L Q Y H V W P H Q W E X W O I D F H F K D O O H Q J H V V X F K D Y D F D Q W E X L O further unlock its potential, EastSide Partnership has facilitated a collaborative approach. Working through the Newtownards Road Action Group, urban design consultants, and the local community, a strategic development plan has been created to E U H D W K H Q H Z O L I H L Q W R W K H D U H D

This ambitious project aims to I X U W K H U U H M X Y H Q D W H Newtownards Road as a vibrant and attractive destination for residents, businesses, visitors, and investors. Utilising co-design and creative principles, the plan seeks to position the road as a catalyst for the ongoing regeneration of the area. By enhancing social and economic connections, the project envisions transforming the Newtownards Road into a thriving place where people are H D J H U W R O L Y H Z R U N H Q







Newtownards Road Northern Ireland, circa early 1900s





Living High Streets Framework Place Change Model

7 K H P H **People:**
Growing your skills and resources

7 K H P H **Place:**
Knowing your high street

7 K H P H **Imagining:**
What your high street could become

7 K H P H **Delivering:**
How to focus and prioritise

7 K H P H **Monitoring:**
& R Q ¿ U P L Q J S U R J U H V

7 K H P H **Maintaining:**
Loving your place

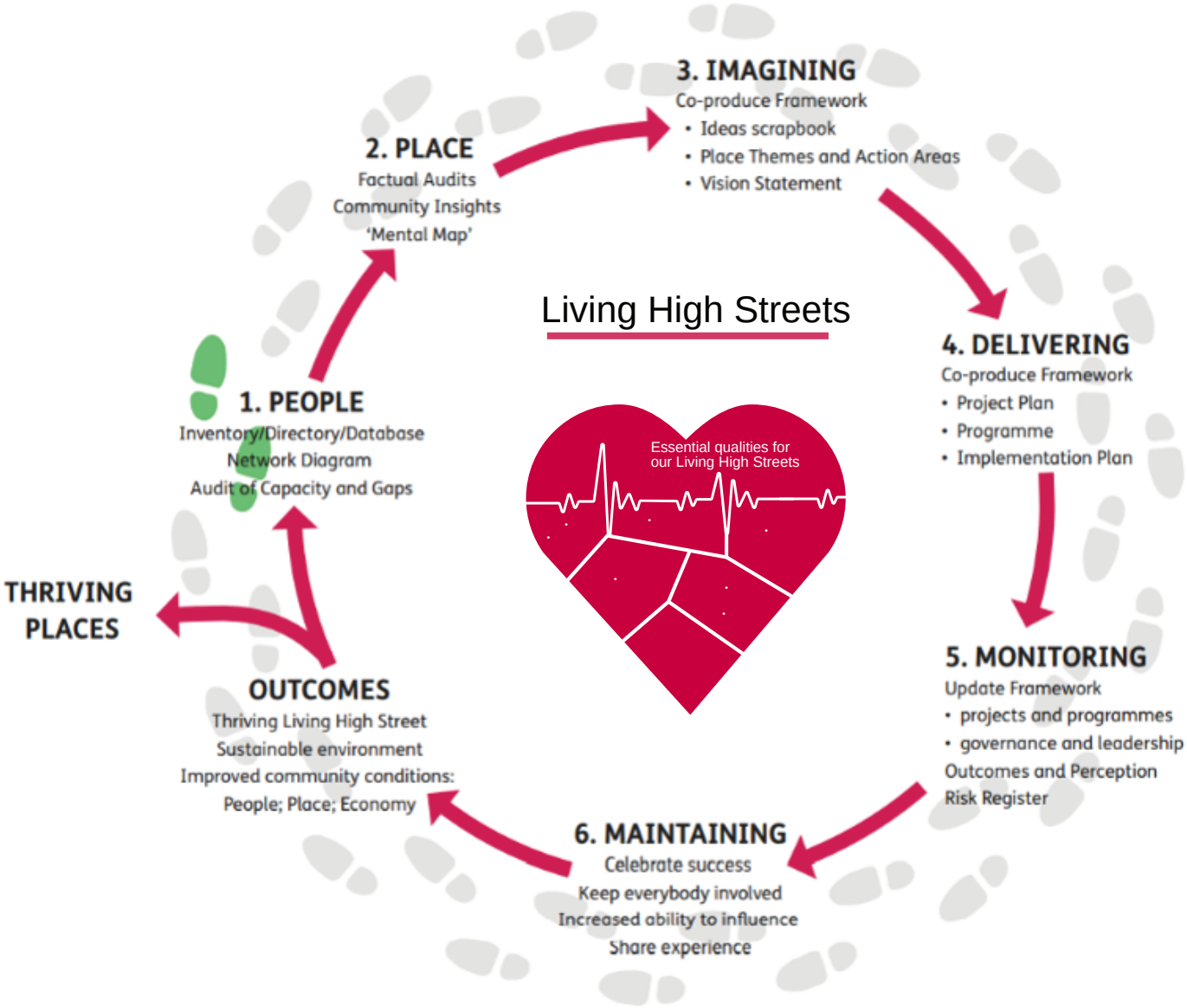
/ L Y L Q J + L J K 6 W U H H W V) U D P H Z R U N

The vision for Newtownards Road was shaped through the Living High Streets Framework Place Change Model, a comprehensive approach to urban revitalisation. Launched by the Ministerial Advisory Group and Department for Communities in 2024, Living High Streets focuses on transforming high streets. It emphasises a holistic understanding of place, considering physical, social, economic and environmental factors. The model involves stages such as assessment, engagement, visioning, planning, implementation and monitoring. It encourages collaboration among stakeholders and sets clear goals aligned with the community's aspirations.

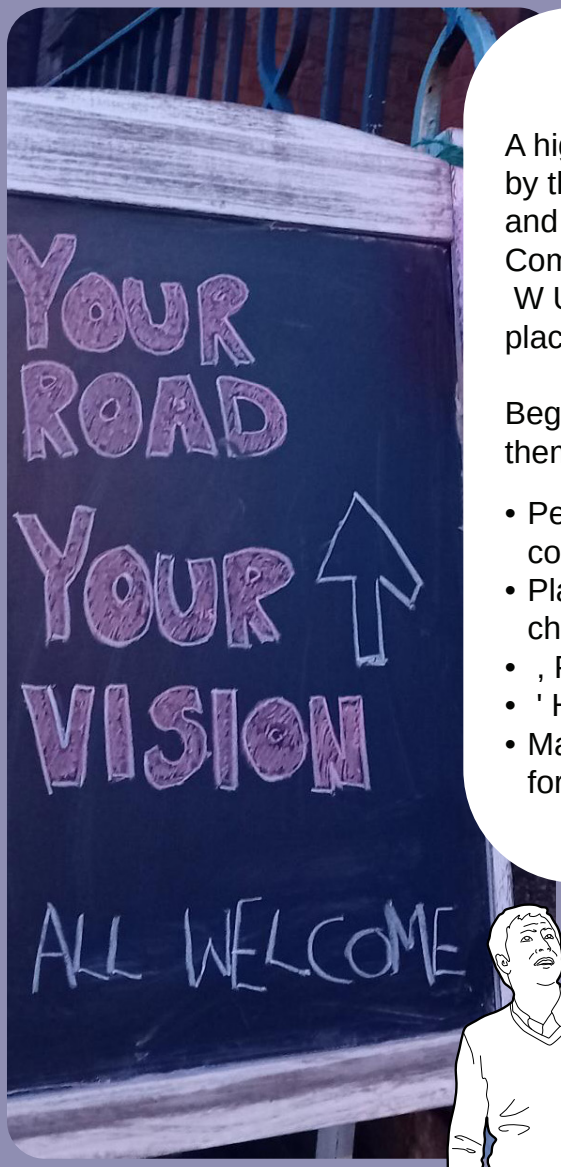
URBAN VILLAGES
Thriving Places

EAST BELFAST MISSION
THE METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND

thepaulhogarthcompany


Living High Streets
Essential qualities for our Living High Streets
1. PEOPLE
Inventory/Directory/Database
Network Diagram
Audit of Capacity and Gaps
2. PLACE
Factual Audits
Community Insights
'Mental Map'
3. IMAGINING
Co-produce Framework
• Ideas scrapbook
• Place Themes and Action Areas
• Vision Statement
4. DELIVERING
Co-produce Framework
• Project Plan
• Programme
• Implementation Plan
5. MONITORING
Update Framework
• projects and programmes
• governance and leadership
Outcomes and Perception
Risk Register
6. MAINTAINING
Celebrate success
Keep everybody involved
Increased ability to influence
Share experience
OUTCOMES
Thriving Living High Street
Sustainable environment
Improved community conditions:
People; Place; Economy
THRIVING PLACES

PROCESS

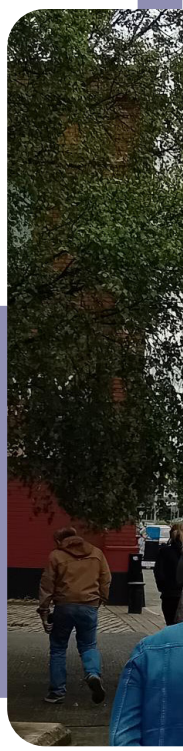


A highly collaborative process to shape this vision was led by the newly formed Newtownards Road Local Action Group and facilitated by Eastside Partnership and The Paul Hogarth Company. The Living High Streets Framework guided the W U D Q V I R U P D W L R Q H ‡ R U W H P S K D V L V L Q J place-based knowledge, and actionable urban design principles.

Beginning with a series of workshops, the process involved key themes such as:

- People: Building skills and resources through community input.
- Place: Understanding the unique characteristics and challenges of the Newtownards Road.
- , P D J L Q L Q J Envisioning what the street could become
- ' H O L Y H U L Q J Prioritising and focusing on actionable goals
- Maintaining: Ensuring long-term care and sustainability for the area











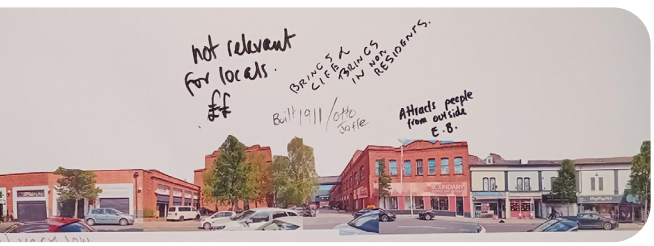
These workshops were held over a 9 month period, gathering input from various stakeholders through discussions and activities. Public engagement played a crucial role, particularly in October 2023, when a wide range of residents and business owners participated in shaping the plan. This consultation phase received robust community feedback, with over U H V S R Collected, which informed the strategic direction of the plan.

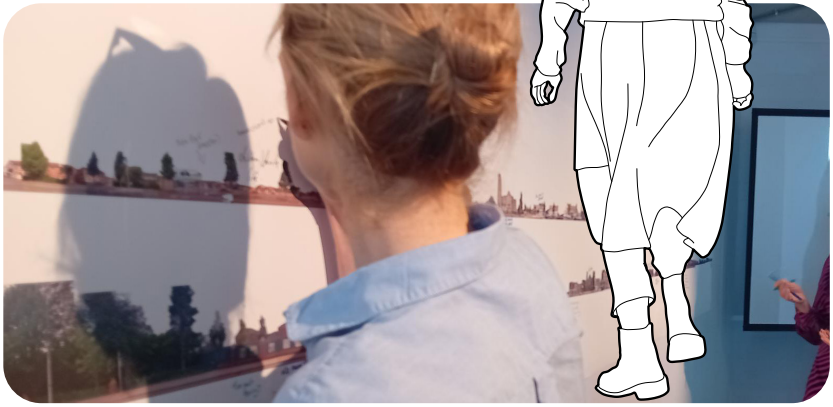
The collaborative workshops and public consultations culminated in the creation of a community-driven vision for the Newtownards Road, focused on enhancing the area as a vibrant and sustainable space for living, working and shopping. Further input from the community was welcome upon W K H G U D I W Y L V L R Q E H I R U H ¿ Q D O L V D W L R Q L Q 1 R Y H P E H U transformation of Newtownards Road.











POLICY CONTEXT

This section summarises some key policies of relevance to the Newtownards Road and urban regeneration as a whole.



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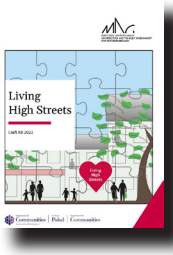
7KH \HDU SODQ IRU (DVWVLGH 3DUWQHUVKLS VHHNV WR KHOS IXO
connected and welcoming East Belfast. This will be achieved through a commitment to facilitate and co-ordinate relevant partners to work together for the regeneration of east Belfast

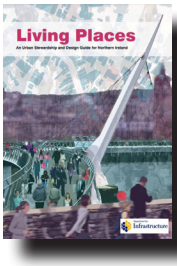


(DVW %HOIDVW 6WUDWHJLF 5HJHQHUDWLRQ)UDPHZRUN 65)
The East Belfast SRF provided a strategic approach to regenerating the broader area, including Newtownards Road. This framework aimed to address social and economic inequalities by boosting investment, creating job opportunities and improving the physical environment. It highlighted the importance of community-led regeneration and the role of collaboration between local government, residents and private sector stakeholders.

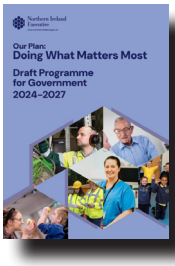
7KH /LYLQJ +LJK 6WUHHWV is aimed at revitalising urban high streets across Northern Ireland. Led by the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment (MAG), this initiative focuses on transforming declining town and city centres into vibrant, thriving places that support economic growth, community engagement, and sustainable living.
It aligns well with the vision for Newtownards Road as a destination, prioritising Community Involvement, Public Realm Enhancements and Cultural and Economic Vitality.



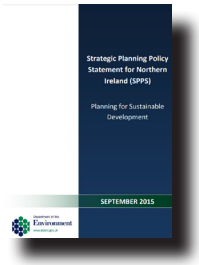
/LYLQJ 3ODFHV ± $Q 8UEDQ 6WHZDUGVKLS DQG 'HVLJQ ± * The Living Places Urban Stewardship and Design guidance document emphasises the importance of high-quality urban design in creating vibrant, sustainable communities. It stresses the need for well-designed public spaces that foster social interaction and contribute to a sense of place, relevant to transforming Newtownards Road's underutilised spaces. (Department for Infrastructure)



'UDIW 3URJUDPPH IRU *RYHUQPHQW The PfG sets the strategic direction for Northern Ireland's government, emphasising inclusive growth, sustainability, and reducing inequalities. It highlights the importance of regenerating urban spaces to improve economic opportunities and community well-being across Northern Ireland. (Northern Ireland Executive)



6WUDWHJLF 3ODQQLQJ 3RROLF\ 6WDWHPHQW (SPPS) This document provides planning guidance on various aspects of land use. It focuses on open space and recreation, encouraging the provision and enhancement of public spaces, which is directly relevant to plans for utilising dead space along Newtownards Road (Department for Infrastructure)



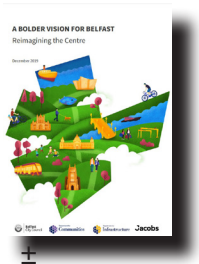
%HOIDVW /RFDO 'HYHORSPHQW 3ODQ The LDP guides the city's growth and development, emphasising sustainable, inclusive, and connected communities. ,W HQFRXUDJHV UHYLWDOLVDWLRQ H‡RUWV OLNH VXUSRV enhance economic growth, improve public spaces, and promote social cohesion. (Belfast City Council)



%HOIDVW $JHQGD & RI FXVWRPHU 3URPLVH Focuses on transforming Belfast into a city of equal opportunities, with an emphasis on regenerating key areas such as Newtownards Road. It supports increasing public spaces, improving infrastructure, and fostering a sense of community. A recently published Action Plans sets out how the objectives are to be achieved. (Belfast City Council)



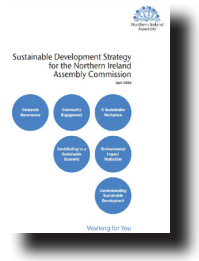
$ %R OGHU 9LVLRQ The plan aims to reimagine the city centre, making public spaces more accessible and connected, reducing congestion, and enhancing the overall environment. The approach can be mirrored along the Newtownards Road to enhance public spaces and promote pedestrian-friendly zones. (Belfast City Council)



***UHHQ *URZWK 6WUDWHJ\ IRU 1RUWKHUQ ,UHODQG** This strategy emphasises sustainable economic growth through environmental improvements, energy H‚FLHQF\ DQG WKH GHYHORSPHQW RI JUHHQ VSDFH XSSRU urban areas, like Newtownards Road, into more environmentally sustainable and vibrant spaces by incorporating green infrastructure. (Northern Ireland Executive)



6XVWDLQDEOH 'HYHORSPHQW 6WUDWHJ This strategy focuses on creating sustainable communities by encouraging economic, social, and environmental improvements. It is relevant to Newtownards Road's regeneration as it promotes reusing land, enhancing public spaces, and fostering social inclusion (Northern Ireland Executive)

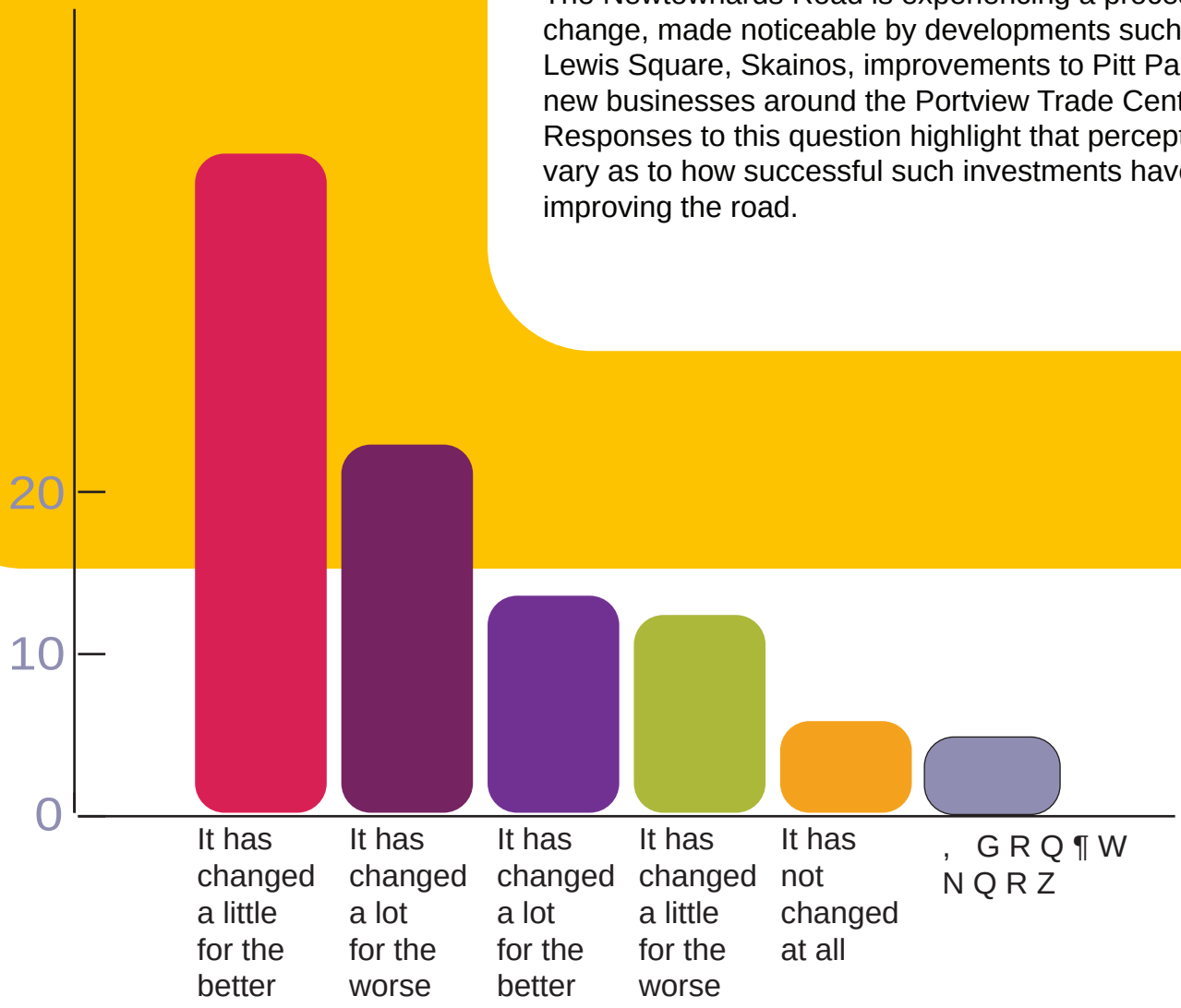


ENGAGEMENT

$ FROODERUDWLYH DSSURDFK KDV EHHQ WDNHQ WR HQVXUH W
EXVLQHVVHV DQG NH\ VWDNHKROGHUV DUH FHQWUDO WR VKD
VHULHV RI FRQVXOWDWLRQV ZRUNVKRSV DQG VXUYH\V IHHG
WKH FRPPXQLW\¶V DVSLUDWLRQV FRQFHUQV DQG SULRULWLH
UHVSRQVHV WR D FRPPXQLW\ VXUYH\ GHYHORSHG WR LQIRUP

+RZ GR \RX IHHO WKH 1HZWRZQDUGV 5RDG KDV FK

The Newtownards Road is experiencing a process of change, made noticeable by developments such as CS Lewis Square, Skainos, improvements to Pitt Park and new businesses around the Portview Trade Centre. Responses to this question highlight that perceptions vary as to how successful such investments have been in improving the road.



143 resp.

"New additions such as CS Lewis Square, East Side Arts Festival, Boundary, Bullhouse, Banana Block."

"It's a bit better with some new shops opening but I think their needs to be more done."

80 resp.

"Boarded up shops, unused buildings in disrepair."

"It's the lack of community & shops on the road itself that has taken away from the Newtownards Road....."

DQJHG RYHU WKH SDVW \HDUV"

47 resp.

"It is a more welcoming environment for all FRPPXQLWLHV ZLWK D PRUH G

"I feel it's more vibrant and more inclusive."

43 resp.

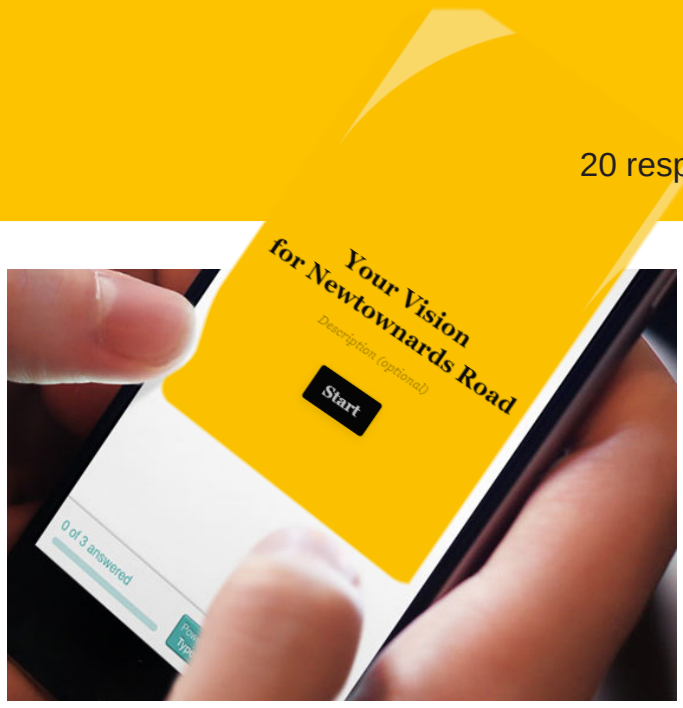
"Flags on lamp posts have got a lot bigger and stay up for longer even when tattered and frayed."

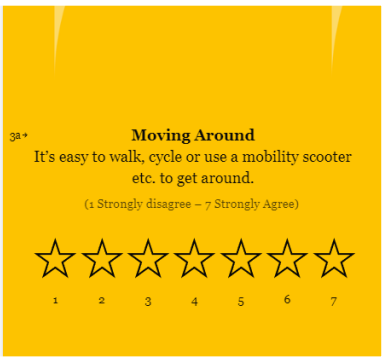
"Issues re access to housing and poverty have increased."

20 resp.

"Boarded up shops, unused buildings in disrepair."

"Some aesthetic improvements, but still highly polluted, car heavy, dangerous junctions and high levels of deprivation. Some good new businesses but feels like papering over cracks."







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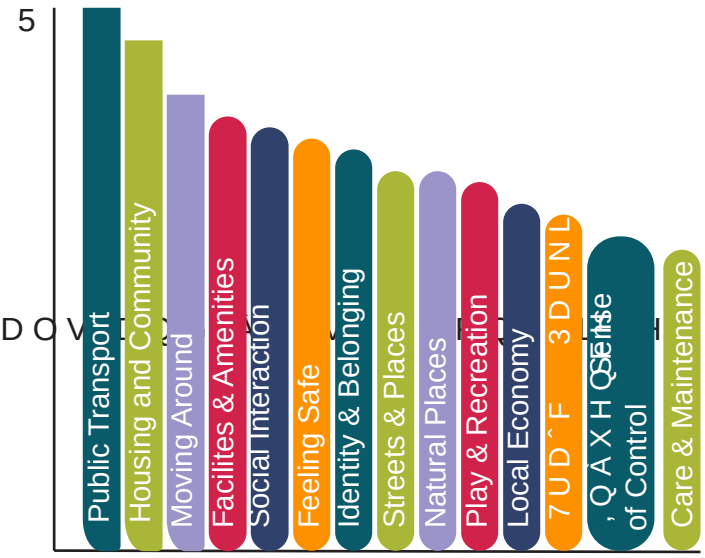
The respondents expressed a wide range of desires and aspirations for the Newtownards Road area, focusing on themes such as community vibrancy, economic revitalisation, cultural diversity, safety and inclusivity. There is a strong desire to see the area return to its former bustling state with thriving local businesses and a variety of amenities. Many emphasise the need for improved infrastructure, including better transport options, cycle paths and pedestrian-friendly spaces. There is also a call for the UHPRYDO RI SDUDPLOLWDU\ PXUDOV a desire for more green spaces, social housing and activities for children and families. Overall, the community seeks a cleaner, safer and more welcoming environment.



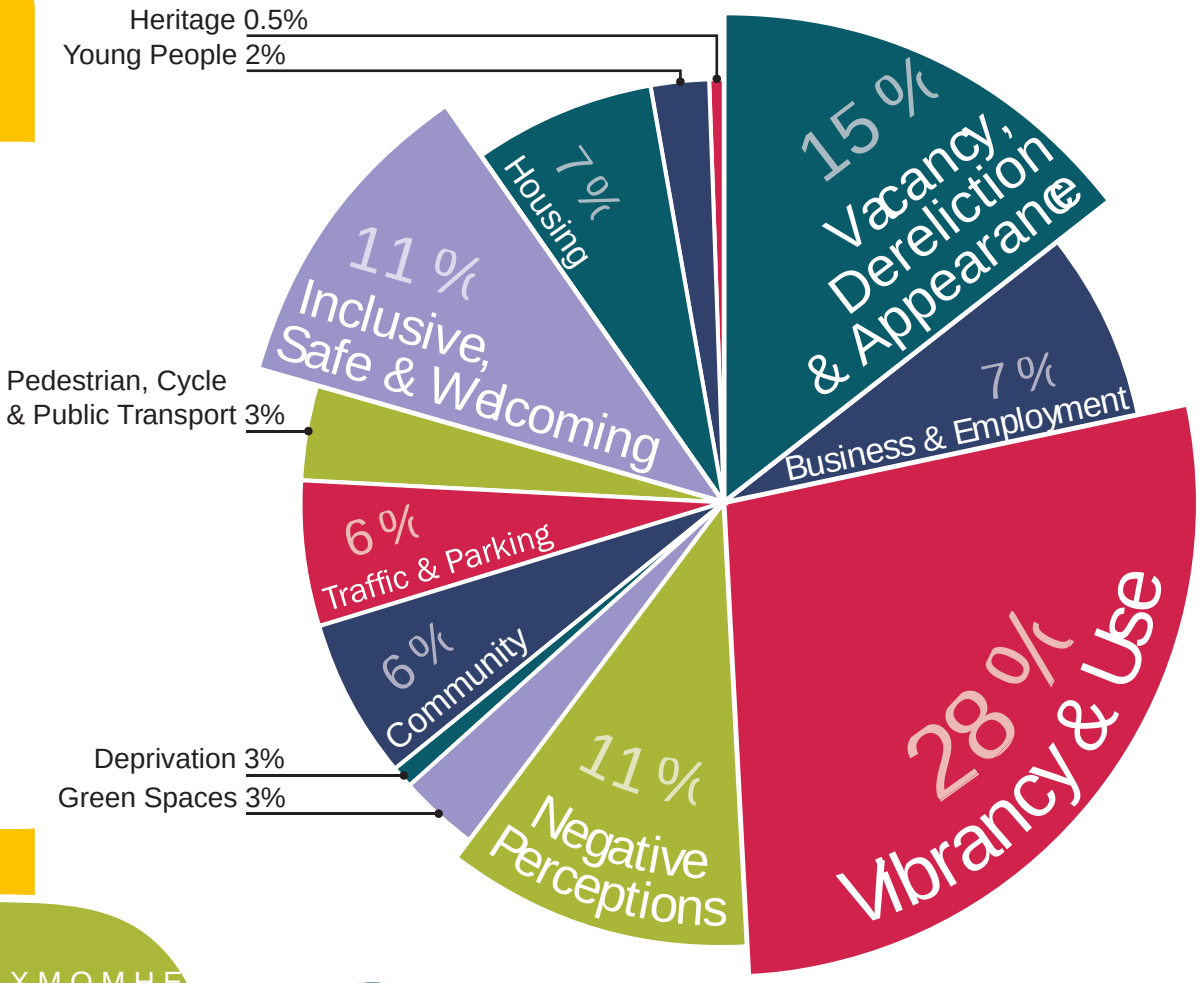
Getting rid of horrible murals & changing them for lots of proper artwork to brighten up the road & attract more visitors but also make it a pleasant place 'for people to live'.

A more inclusive space which doesn't leave long established communities and residents behind but empowers them as part of an improved future.

Thriving businesses and employment opportunities

To clear up all the run down abandoned shops and units that look derelict!

More opportunities for enjoying spending time on the Newtownards Road rather than being a commute to the city.



murals. More inclusion for everyone and incentive for new businesses to make use of existing properties.

For the lower end of Newtownards Road to be more like the upper end.

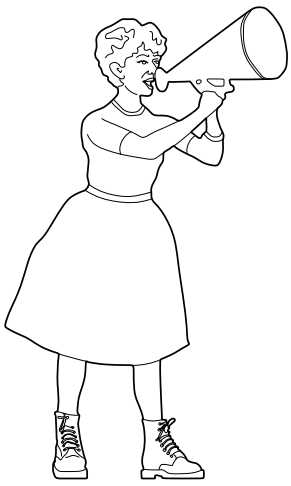
My wish is to see an increase in accessible housing.

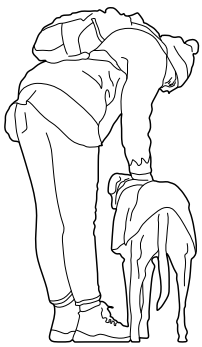
A more positive and inclusive area. Representing one society for all.

Help for local businesses!

That it becomes a vibrant area where people are proud to live, work and socialise.







ANALYSIS

The existing condition of Newtownards Road presents a mix of opportunities DQG FKDOOHQJHV WKDW UHÀHFW LWV KLVWRULFDO VLJQL¿F dynamics.

&RPPXQLW\

7KH H[LVWLQJ VRFLDO IDEULF RI 1HZWRZQDUG with varying needs and aspirations. While there are opportunities for community engagement and involvement in decision-making processes, there is a need for more sustained dialogue to ensure that the voices of residents and local businesses are heard.

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The road functions as a key arterial route, linking East Belfast to the city centre and surrounding neighbourhoods. However, the existing infrastructure presents challenges in terms of pedestrian and cyclist safety. Narrow paths, OLPLWHG FURVVLQJ IDFLOLWLHV DQG KHDY\ YH GLVFRXUDJLQJ IRRW WUDˆF DQG F\FOLQJ $ NH Road is to balance its role as a movement corridor with its need to provide a central focal point for the local community.



6RFLR HFRQR GLYLVLRQ

6RFLR HFRQRPLF challenges

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