

RATHGAR
RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
LINK
• MAGAZINE •



RATHGAR VILLAGE Left Rathgar Rd • Christ Church Presbyterian • Highfield Rd original medieval Road from Roffinines • Pizen-House Chimneys in distance.

NO.67 FEB 2021

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So, here we are in February 2021 and we can see the glimmer of hope at the end of what has been a very difficult year for most people. Old and young we hope for a speedy and efficient roll out of the vaccine programme.

Throughout the pandemic, the Residents Association continued to meet up using Zoom. The volunteers who form the committee focus their time on various aspects of village life and Link aims to give you an update on some of that work. It should hopefully also act as a resource if you have issues that you want to address with the Useful Contacts page.

Coming out of the pandemic, it is great to think that we have grown as a community and recognise the importance that being part of a community brings, working together to help each other.

As an Association, we will endeavour to keep you informed on specific issues affecting Rathgar and act on your behalf – the best place for updates is the website – rathgarresidentsassociation.ie

If any of you have any ideas and want to help Rathgar to thrive as a community, then please get in touch, please join the association and the committee.



www.rathgarresidentsassociation.ie

Paddy Marron

Your Association continues to be concerned about changes that have taken place in recent years in legislation related to planning and in particular the various measures which have been introduced by the Department of Housing and Local Government to override local development plans.

The Dublin City Development Plan 2016-22 is a plan that was devised between the city planners, local elected representatives and input from the public at large (including your Association).

It is with all its shortcomings, a work of local democracy. It is a work that was devised by those who have a direct responsibility for our city, moderated by those elected by the citizens of our city and reflecting the ideas of ordinary citizens. The plan provides the framework for the city planners to assess proposals for developments.

However, the Department under a number of different ministers has seen fit to create a by-pass process which allows developers to take their proposals for Strategic Housing Developments (SHDs) directly to An Bord Pleanala. It also has approved and applied standards for such things as apartment heights, reduced apartment design standards-more studio and single units, lower floor to ceiling heights and less private amenity space(balconies). It can in effect (and it does) ignore the plans of the local authority -Dublin City Council.

The current chairman of An Bord Pleanala was previously assistant secretary of the Department of Housing and Local Government. As well, the minister appointed the Department's chief planner to the newly created post of Planning Regulator whose role amongst others is to enforce national policies.

Much of what is happening in the area of SHDs currently is a result of Urban Development and Building Height guidelines which became mandatory for planning authorities in 2018. This has resulted in a swarm of proposals for high rise buildings across the city and latterly such schemes are largely for "build to rent". But many of these schemes are not working. An example is a 22storey residential block at Capital Dock where half of its 190 apartments are still vacant two years after completion.

Local planning cases

Since the latest report in September last, the planning committee of your Association has reviewed week by week planning applications within the Rathgar Area and also significant planning applications across the city which if approved might set an undesirable precedent for the future of our area.

Below are some of the proposed developments which were reviewed, or submissions made by the RRA and decisions made by Dublin City Council and/or An Bord Pleanála.

189/190 Rathgar Road. There has been a series of earlier applications with each application setting an increasing higher density level. In this latest development, which is the fourth application, a fifth set back storey is proposed.

The planners have sought additional information.

74 Bushes Lane. Two applications with different designs. The earlier one refused by DCC but approved by ABP- with modifications. The later one approved by DCC.

63 Highfield Road. A proposed annex to a protected structure on an adjoining site at junction of Templemore Avenue. Additional information was sought, and permission was granted by DCC.

74b/74c Rathgar Road (Garville Mews). Approved finally by ABP.

31 Orwell Rd (Orlando). Permission was granted on a third submission by DCC for 4.two storey houses with pedestrian access to rear by way of new passageway on site.

23 Oaklands Drive. Proposal for two houses on a site to the rear with access from private road to the rear was refused by DCC.

John McCarthy

It has been a most peculiar year; our lives have been dictated by Covid-19, where we can go and what we can do. It looks like this new normal lifestyle will be with us well into 2021, and perhaps 2022, before what we knew as normal may return.

The most obvious difference I see around me is the behaviour of young families, I think it is really lovely to see families out together walking and cycling, being outside as families. I have been really struck by the volume of people out walking and exercising and noticing how crowded the footpaths, river walks and parks can be. I am well aware of the fact that we live in a very pleasant area where we can do these outdoor activities but are the needs of people of the area being adequately met in a situation like we are currently experiencing?

With the current and future housing policy suggesting that the three-bed semi-detached house is no longer viable, and apartment living is our future, we need to examine the planning area pertaining to apartment block development. With working from home becoming a more normal work practice, it is essential that homes are designed to accommodate this. The planning authorities need to take account of this new trend, increasing the minimum room size and each apartment having a balcony. Families living in apartment blocks make a point of the lack of communal space in these blocks, where children and adults alike can socialise. There is also a corresponding need for adequate outside play and social area in these apartment blocks.

Apartment blocks for the future need to be designed for family living.

Due to our 5Km travel restriction the familiarity with our local area has increased we are all hopefully out walking and exercising and noticing the conditions of footpaths and parks and the litter in general that seems to have accumulated. Over the past number of years, the poor condition of roads, footpaths and parks have been highlighted. There is a strong need to carry out a road, footpath and parks repair programme. Is it a matter of money? I fail to see the need to prioritise some capital projects over maintenance projects. Can we not get the basics right of good infrastructure before the glitter and glam of dubious capital projects?

In recent times the RRA has organised clean-ups of the local area, thanks to the local council who provide all the tools that are necessary to go litter picking. The council will by arrangement take away the collected rubbish. What this has highlighted to me is the inadequate amount of rubbish bins in the area and the maintenance of these bins. The decision has to be made that proper maintenance of the area is a more pressing matter than some capital projects.

The Dodder is a great resource as an amenity. I have walked from the Dropping Well to the Bornabrenna Waterworks, the variety of Flora and Fauna is very interesting. I recommend you to walk this stretch of the river, before you do so, google the Dodder and arm yourself with a list of what can be seen on the river. It makes the walk so much more interesting and bring a camera (phone). The only difficulty at the moment is the crowds doing the same walk.

GET WALKING AND GET TO KNOW RATHGAR

As John says, it is great to see an increasing number of people out walking. Benefits of walking are vast and encompass the physical, social and mental aspects of our overall health and wellbeing.

It is a low impact form of exercise and can be a gateway activity to higher intensity physical activities.

Walking is fun, free and flexible and is suitable for all ages and abilities, but its effects can be profound.

It helps our **heart and lungs** remain healthy and decreases the risk of heart disease.

Moving our joints helps to stimulate flow of synovial fluid which lubricates the **joints**, and the regular activity strengthens the **muscles and ligaments** that stabilise our joints.

Walking is also a gentle form of weight bearing activity and helps to maintain the **bone density** needed to keep our bones strong and healthy, It is also an ideal way to strengthen **muscles** – specifically leg and core muscles.

In addition to the physical benefits, being active helps boost your mood and relieve stress and helps us cope with the demands of life; Improving wellbeing, attention span and positive emotions and increasing self-esteem

If you're new to walking, you don't have to do it all at once, you can build up the number of minutes you walk by achieving small bouts of activity (at least ten minutes at a time is best). You can start at a slow pace and build up to a brisk pace!

It is important however to start with a warmup. A warmup can be very short, even 5 minutes may be enough. But listen to your body, only increase the pace when you are ready to do so.

The warmup does not have to be technical. It is about just that, "warming up". By starting your walk at a slow pace, it will give your joints time to get greased up and time for your heart rate to gradually increase, sending blood to the now working muscles.

For maximum health benefits it is optimal to work at a moderate intensity. Working at a moderate intensity will mean that your heart rate is higher than usual, and your breathing rate is higher than usual.

This should feel like a brisk pace. To ensure you are walking at a moderate intensity you can do a few simple checks like the **Talk Test**:

The talk test is an easy way to ensure you are working at the correct intensity; If you can have a conversation with someone next to you while still breathing faster than usual then you are working at a moderate intensity.

To get optimum benefits, it's important to think about your posture - **Before your walk, as well as during your walk, take the time to do a posture check.**

Having good safe posture increases the amount of energy you use, protects your joints and limits the chance of lower back pain.



So, knowing all the benefits that we're going to get from a simple walk, we've reprinted the Rathgar walking trail map for you, which was originally produced by the Residents Association together with DCC. There are two walks on the map which can be joined together to form one long trail and include the river, the linear park and historical landmarks, so enjoy your walk and enjoy Rathgar.

POCKET FORESTS

As we head into Spring, we hear from Ashe and Catherine and their new concept of Pocket Forests which could be particularly relevant to Rathgar, with our patchwork of spaces, small and large

Our trees are knee high, slips of things. They will look like dead branches when we tuck their roots into healthy soil and bed them down with clean oat straw. Hard to imagine on these dishcloth-coloured days but in a few weeks those young trees will push out impossibly green leaves, unfolding a spring, as longed for as any of us probably remember.

We are Ashe Conrad-Jones and Catherine Cleary, two friends who started a social enterprise in the Tinters in Dublin's south inner city during the lockdown of spring last year. We were inspired by a method of creating small native woodlands devised by botanists and environmentalists in Japan, India, the Netherlands and the UK. We wandered around our nature-deprived neighbourhood and dreamed of a web of native forests, from the size of parking spaces right up to the size of tennis courts, connecting us back to our native trees, shrubs and wildflowers and providing habitat for nature-starved people and wildlife. As spring arrives we need to heal from this stunted year when we couldn't bask in the sun of other people, and our arms ached from the loss. We have cut our cloth, stopped our gallop, streamed life through screens, the windows in our sensory deprivation chambers. In her podcast Cailleach (the Irish word for a wise woman elder) Suzie Cahn tells an indigenous story of the raising of a leader. The child is born and raised in a cave by their mother until the age of 18. They receive visits from people, who describe the world outside. But the child never leaves the cave. So when they emerge as an adult they are astounded by the preciousness of everything, the blaze of sky, the greenness of light under leaf-laden branches. Their locked-in childhood makes them the wisest leader. Because the preciousness of the world is never banal, never wallpaper to forget in favour of a goal up ahead. So none of their decisions will harm the world around them. In our own locked down lives we're awakening to the natural world at a time when nature has never needed us more awake. Our parks, beaches, mountains and woods have never been busier. But the natural world is suffering its own collapse. We are leaning into nature and putting our time and energy into things that start small and grow stronger.

Gardener Monty Don talks about how the act of looking is also gardening. Just standing, leaning on a spade looking at a tree growing or a vegetable you nurtured from seed is as much a part of the process. Even if we don't plant or grow trees those trees can do us good. A lone tree on a city street is forever socially distant from its sister trees, locked down into asphalt, assailed by noise and fumes, absorbing everything we throw at her and giving us back birdsong and the sound of the wind. For a few moments in the spring of 2020 we stood still and quiet enough to hear what those stoic presences were telling us.

We know trees can heal us. Architect Roger Ulrich discovered it back in the 1980s. He found a hospital gallbladder ward in Pennsylvania with 23 rooms with a window view of trees. A further 23 rooms had a brick wall for a view. Patient records over nearly a decade showed the patients in the rooms with the views of trees recovered faster and needed less pain relief than those unlucky enough to land the dud view. We plant native trees, shrubs and wildflowers in gardens for their owners to enjoy, in schools and communities for people to learn about and interact with soil and the complex magic of a forest ecosystem. We can design a pocket forest to suit small spaces, large gardens or community areas. We prepare the soil, plant the trees and provide plenty of easy to follow advice on how to manage your forest and enjoy its magic. This year spring will be more special than ever to us as we watch our pocket forests begin.

www.pocketforests.ie



FOCUS ON COMMUNITY

This year more than any other has taught us the importance of community and friendship. In every town and village across Ireland, people have put themselves forward and gone the extra mile to help others. One such person we are lucky enough to have in Rathgar is Lynda Corr.

Lynda moved to Rathgar 10 years ago. Born and brought up in Walkinstown, she grew up in an area where there was a strong sense of community and she was keen for her children to feel the same sense of belonging and connection to the area they are growing up in.

With this in mind she formed Rathgar Community Connect which was initially created for people in Rathgar to connect in a friendly, non-political, positive way and to help build a sense of community and belonging in our village. Pre-covid, Rathgar Community Connect hosted a successful Rathgar Village Street Feast and began working towards building street cleaning initiatives by local neighbours, in conjunction with Dublin City Council, in the immediate surrounds of Lynda's road (Harrison Row).

However, when Covid hit our country and community, Lynda decided to utilise the Rathgar Community Connect group to reach out to those in the community that needed assistance. With the help of a core group of neighbours and local volunteers who had responded to posters Lynda had put up in the village, the Rathgar Community Connect group delivered 3000 leaflets to households in Rathgar, offering assistance to anyone who was unable to access services in their normal way. As a result, in April, Rathgar Community Connect had almost 90 elderly and vulnerable people contact them, who they were happy to help. In addition, in response to the leaflet drop, there was a fantastic volunteer response and over 120 local people reached out to Rathgar Community Connect to offer any help they could give.

The team of volunteers that Lynda gathered together, (which in addition to locals in the community, includes local business owners, church leaders, and the community gardai), have been kept busy offering hands on assistance with shopping, hospital transfers, cooked dinners, as well as generally being a friendly ear to those in our community who needed it during these exceptional times. The group also felt that there was a need for an outdoor meeting place as we cannot meet in each other's houses and gardens and with this in mind, assisted Rev Purvis and the local businesses in creating the "Village Square" in Christ Church grounds, which forms a great social meeting point for the village and was very well received by locals. (The benches will be returning as soon as lockdown allows).

Although Lynda identified the opportunities before Covid, now more than ever, we appreciate people in the community like her and all those working with her to make Rathgar the best place to live for everyone.

If you or anyone you know would like to get in touch to offer help in the Rathgar community, you can find Lynda and her volunteer group on Facebook at Rathgar Community Connect. It is Lynda's hope that once Covid has become a distant memory that the group can return to its original purpose of bringing neighbours and those in the Rathgar community together to connect and build a collective sense of belonging and pride in our area.

LOVE OUR VILLAGE - GET INVOLVED

A group of the Residents Association members had started clean ups of the village on a regular basis prior to covid. We have continued on a low-key level but will expand them once Covid is behind us.

Sign up to our facebook page to get updates about when the clean ups are happening (<https://m.facebook.com/RathgarResidentsAssociation>) or contact us at info@rathgarresidentsassociation.ie if you would like to get involved.

We have the basic equipment from Dublin City Council, so if you want to tidy up a specific area or help with the wider clean up, we'd love to hear from you. All suggestions and help in the enhancement of our Village are welcome.

The logo for 'ALONE' is presented in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are contained within a red rounded rectangular box. A white circle is positioned between the 'O' and 'N', and another white circle is located below the 'E'.

ALONE

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

**CALL OUR NATIONAL SUPPORT LINE ON
0818 222 024 FROM 8AM-8PM, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK**

USEFUL LOCAL CONTACTS

City Councillors and local TDs

Councillors

Deirdre Conroy	N/A	deirdre.conroy@dublincity.ie
Carolyn Moore	N/A	carolyn.moore@dublincity.ie
Pat Dunne	0877764422	pat.dunne1@dublincity.ie
Tara Deacy	0879389904	
Anne Feeney	0872955256	anne.feeney@dublincity.ie
Mary Freehill	0868126378	marycfreehill@gmail.com

TDs

Chris Andrews	087 2851515	chris.andrews@dublincity.ie
Kate O Connell	083 1653401 / 01 618 3286	kate.oconnell@oireachtas.ie
Eamon Ryan	01 618 3898	eamon.ryan@oireachtas.ie
Eoghan Murphy	01.618 3324	eoghan.murphy@oireachtas.ie
Jim O Callaghan	01 618 3134/01 475 8943	jim.ocallaghan@oireachtas.ie

Local Gardai: Rathmines Tel: 01 6666700
Terenure Tel: 01 6666400

Dublin City Council: problems with litter, potholes, graffiti, abandoned vehicles etc
Go to Dublin City Council website and key in service request and follow instructions
or Tel: (01) 222 2222 or Email customerservices@dublincity.ie

Fixmystreet.ie – a great website to report and get action on litter, pavement and road condition issues graffiti, etc.

Keep up to date:

The Association's website: rathgarresidentsassociation.ie

Facebook: <https://m.facebook.com/RathgarResidentsAssociation/>

Contact the Association: info@rathgarresidentsassociation.ie

Twitter: @RathgarResident; <https://twitter.com/RathgarResident>