

OCT 2024

REIMAGINING SHERIFF STREET PARK

REPORT

Reimagining Sheriff Street Park

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Acknowledgements

MAKE SPACES FAIR AND FUN FOR EVERYONE

A Playful City is pleased to present this Report outlining the consultation process for Sheriff Street Park (also known as Rainbow Park), and the findings for how the community would like to see the space transformed.

At a glance

7

The following took place over seven months.

11

Eleven Local Stakeholder & Community Organisations partnered on the project, and are behind this report.

10+

Community Engagement and Consultation Events

1000+

Through in person engagement events, workshops, door to door and online surveys we've reached thousands in the local community.

580,000

The Sheriff Street Park Project featured in media with a reach of 580,000 people

NEIC GREENING STRATEGY & SHERIFF STREET (RAINBOW) PARK

The NEIC Greening Strategy was initiated by Dublin City Council in 2018, based on findings from the Mulvey Report to identify opportunities to develop and improve streetscapes and open spaces within the NEIC, for the benefit of the local community, and visitors alike.

The Greening Strategy noted that

“within the area as a whole there is an evident deficit of quality green space, exacerbated by the fact that much of the population live in terraced housing on narrow streets or high density apartments with little or no private gardens or access to public open space. Publicly accessible green space is provided at an average rate of 1.89sqm per person, which lies in stark contrast to an average of 49sqm per person for Dublin City Council in its entirety.”

Section 3.9 of the NEIC Greening Strategy sets out the project phasing for the NEIC. Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park is identified as being earmarked for funding and development during the last Phase 3, between 2023 - 2026, if feasible.

This report seeks to support the feasibility of Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park being included in the third and final phase of the NEIC Greening Strategy by Dublin City Council.



WHO WE ARE

A Playful City is a not-for-profit that works with communities to create more playful, healthy and inclusive public places by providing end-to-end consultation and placemaking services.

As firm advocates of universal design, we design spaces with and for the entire community, especially groups that are often left out of traditional consultation processes. We use playful

techniques to meaningfully engage and consult with communities. We inject playfulness and creativity into all of our projects - from how we research and engage with communities right through to the final community briefs. We are constantly questioning and learning through play, together.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Play

We believe in the power of play for adults and children alike - playfulness and creativity are at the core of all our projects.

Inclusivity

Public spaces should be designed with and for the entire community.

Health

Our work makes spaces and places healthier for people and the planet.



OUR PROCESS

Listen

Each of our projects kicks off with a listening phase. A Playful City spends time listening to the community and wider stakeholders to get a sense of the current state and desired future state before we even think about putting our ideation caps on. In order to deliver a project, we need to facilitate conversations and listen carefully to what communities have to say. We take an emotions-led approach to get to the core of how a community feels and how they would like to feel. This allows us and them to think big without being limited to solutions and ideas and also allows us to meaningfully engage with children and young people in particular. A Playful City believes communities are the experts in what they need.

Learn

Communities are experts in what they need, but A Playful City are experts in how to deliver it. Our multidisciplinary team takes time to make sense of the insights and translate them into strategic and actionable solutions and interventions. As strong believers in learning through play, our learn phase always includes what we call a 1:1 prototype - this is essentially us testing an idea or intervention in situ and in real time. Whether it's a trial event or a rough prototype of a physical intervention, this is us asking the community 'have we heard you correctly?' and is the best way to learn what works, what doesn't and what needs to be improved on.

Deliver

Finally, we take the learnings and insights from both our listen and learn phases and deliver a final community brief. We call it a community brief as all insights and actions have come from the community in some way and will inform the next stages of work. This supports sustainable development and local ownership, two pillars of A Playful City's work. Our community briefs do not mark the end of the project but are the seeds of the next chapter. They are usually live documents, intended to inform the next stage of work, empowering communities and collaborators to continue to create more playful, healthy and inclusive public places.

INTRODUCTION

REIMAGINING SHERIFF STREET PARK PROJECT

A Playful City has been partnering with community champions and local groups in Dublin's North East Inner City since 2017. The local community around Sheriff Street have consistently expressed frustration at the lack of community/green space for children, young people and adults in the area.

To address this, the Reimagining Sheriff Street Park project was established in February 2024 by A Playful City, in partnership with the local community, with kind support from HubSpot.

A Playful City believes that a bottom up approach to decision making can lead to more sustainable and attractive community spaces. This project is an opportunity to showcase how community-led, co-created changes to the public realm can positively impact the people and lives of this community.

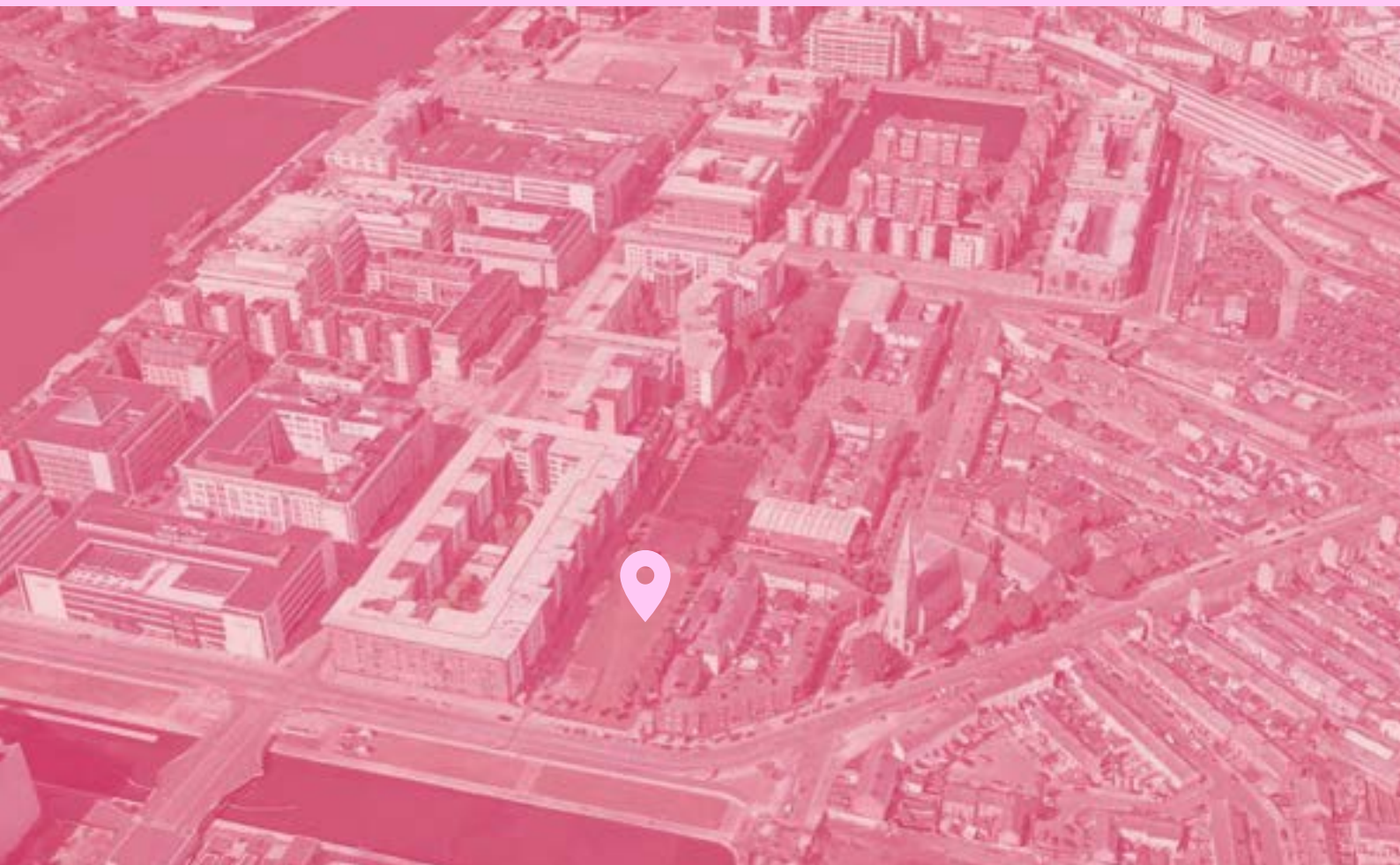
REIMAGINING SHERIFF STREET PARK REPORT

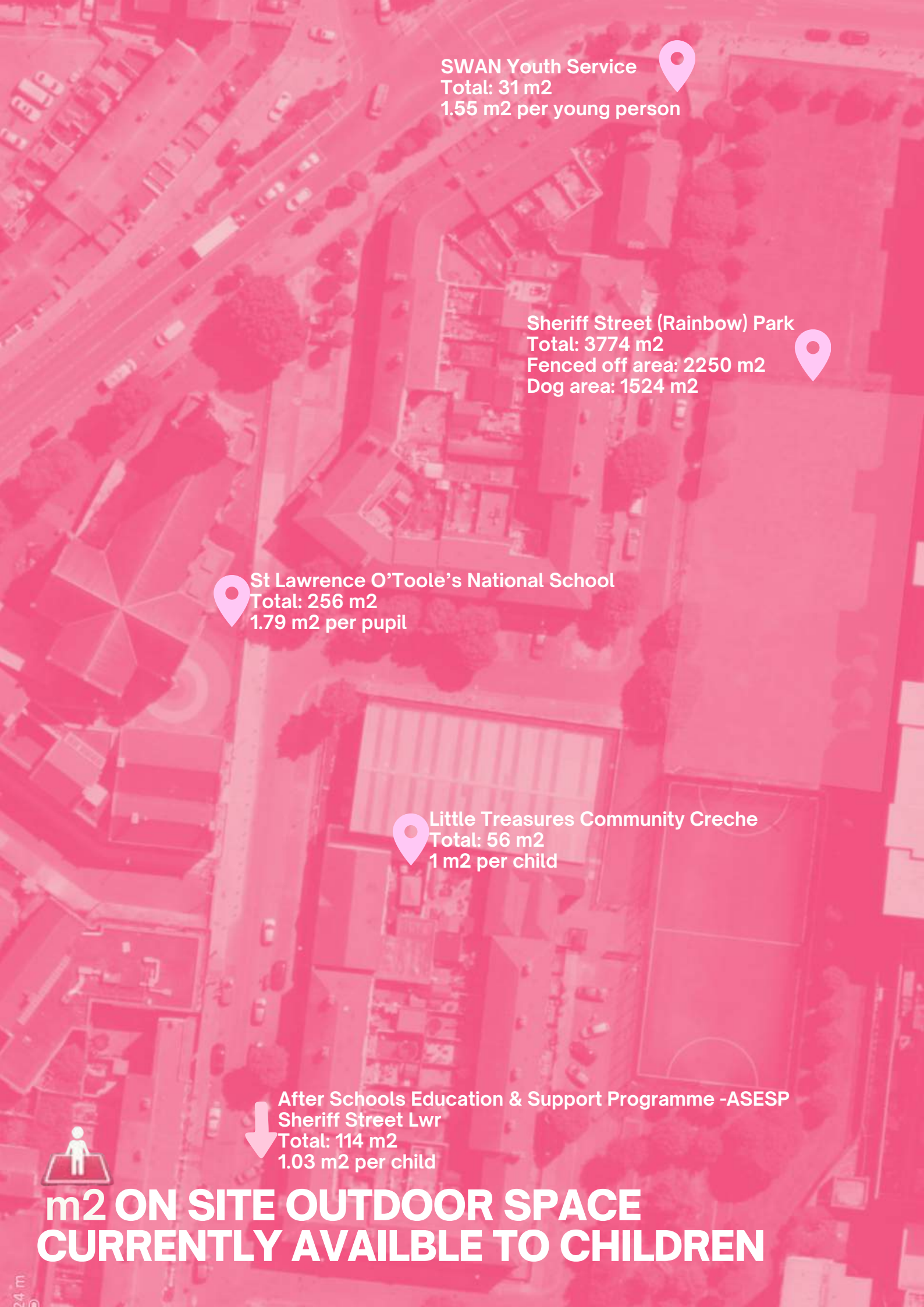
Since March 2024, A Playful City has partnered with local community champions and run multiple workshops and pop up events to listen to the views of the local community, learn from them and deliver prototype style events to show the potential of Sheriff Street Park (also known locally as Rainbow Park) as a community space.

A Playful City is pleased to present this report outlining the project, consultation process and findings on how the local community would like to see Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park transformed.

Where is Sheriff Street Park?

When we talk about Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park we are describing the ‘green’ open part to the front facing Spencer Dock, as well as the ‘brown’ locked part beside it and next to the astro-pitch. There is also space around the perimeter of the park, which is currently not used.





SWAN Youth Service
Total: 31 m²
1.55 m² per young person

Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park
Total: 3774 m²
Fenced off area: 2250 m²
Dog area: 1524 m²

St Lawrence O'Toole's National School
Total: 256 m²
1.79 m² per pupil

Little Treasures Community Creche
Total: 56 m²
1 m² per child

After Schools Education & Support Programme -ASESP
Sheriff Street Lwr
Total: 114 m²
1.03 m² per child



**m² ON SITE OUTDOOR SPACE
CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN**

How is Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park currently used ?

Sheriff Street/Rainbow Park is a space comprising of three parts;

Local groups and residents have indicated that the **green space** front facing Spencer Dock is generally locked, and if open it is commonly used by local dog owners as a place for dogs to foul.

The green space is opened twice a year at successful community led events as part of Community Week in August and as part of the Big Scream in October.

Historically the **brown locked space** was a community space, local groups have indicated that promises had been made by the Council in relation to opening up this space for the benefit of the community, but this has not happened to date.

The local school had prefabs in the brown space for a time when their own school was being redeveloped. Since the prefabs were taken out, the large brown space has been permanently locked.

Local people have also pointed out the potential for use of the **perimeter of the park** which runs around the outside of the fences of the whole space.

ENGAGEMENT METHODOLOGY

The next section of this report, sets out the phased methodology of the project from March 2024 - October 2024. A summary of combined recommendations from the various engagement methods during Phase 1 and Phase 2 can be found in the Phase 3 section of the report.

The full findings are set out in Appendix 1.

LISTEN - PHASE 1

From March - April 2024, A Playful City partnered with key local community stakeholders to firstly ask them how they felt about Sheriff Street Park (Rainbow) Park and how they would like to feel in this space.

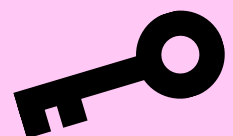
From May onwards, A Playful City sent out surveys to the wider community, and gathered more feedback through pop up events at the space. Further details of these can be found in the 'Phase 2 - Listen section of this report.

These community partnerships, listed below, are a blend of groups A Playful City has worked with since 2017, and new connections made for the Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park Project.

- Little Treasures Community Creche
- SWAN Youth Service
- North Wall CDP
- St Lawrence O Toole's National School
- After Schools Education & Support Programme -ASESP
- East Wall Men's Shed (members from Sheriff Street area that would like to have a Men's Shed in the Park)
- Sheriff Street Senior Gardening Group
- Sheriff Street Running Club
- Local Sports Groups
- Local Residents Association

Most of these groups are within a 5 minute walk from Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park, but access to the park is limited as the gates are often locked.

These key stakeholders have together expressed a willingness to work with DCC to open Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park for the benefit of their service users and for the wider community.



LISTEN - PHASE 1

Regular meetings with the Festival Committee - which includes DCC, SWAN Youth Service, Resident Committees, Local Community Gardai, After Schools Education & Support Programme - ASESP, North Wall CDP, Little Treasures Community Creche.

Separate regular meetings with individual organisations - North Wall CDP/Little Treasures, ASESP, SWAN Youth Service.

Meetings with St Lawrence O'Toole's National School from March - June 2024 and again in September 2024, following the summer holidays.

LEARN - PHASE 2

The following section outlines the process//engagement methods run with key project stakeholders and partners, and with the wider community.

- **Key Stakeholders**

Key stakeholders were identified as those willing to be primary key holders for the currently locked and empty brown space at Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park.

A majority of key stakeholders would like to see the creation of a Community Garden, in the locked part of the park. It is in this section that key stakeholders feel the large number of young children, teenagers and residents could be given a safe and clean space, well maintained and managed, to explore free play and gardening and to learn about nature.

It is also in this space that the Men's Shed could exist if given sufficient space, where they could do things like wood working etc. similar to East Wall Men's Shed.

Mud Island Community Garden Workshop

Members of Mud Island Community Garden kindly welcomed the key stakeholders for the project into Mud Island for an A Playful City inspirational workshop in the space.

There were representatives from each of the key partner groups, in total 31 people engaged in the Mud Island workshop.

A Playful City ran a workshop in the space, the event was an opportunity for local partners to engage, listen and learn from each other to each other, and to learn from the experience of those running Mud Island. All attendees agreed the workshop was a successful and inspirational day.





LEARN - PHASE 2

Little Treasures Creche/North Wall CDP and Sheriff St After Schools (ASESP)

A Playful City first met with long time collaborators from Little Treasures who assisted in reaching out to other local key stakeholders.

Staff from Little Treasures and the After School on Sheriff Street proved invaluable collaborators on the project, supporting A Playful City throughout through promotion of our work on the project, sharing out surveys, inviting A Playful City onto the local Festival Committee and including and working with A Playful City in locally run events in June and August.

Staff and young people from the After Schools also went door to door to residents with surveys to gather further feedback for this report.

Primary school (St Lawrence O Toole) workshop session in Sheriff Street Park

This workshop was developed on foot of surveys designed by A Playful City for the local school. The surveys were filled out by children from 3rd - 6th class. The findings were then collated by A Playful City to create a playful workshop and event in Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park for the school children and staff.

A Playful City created a lo fi “play on the way” route from the school to the park for the children, who were welcomed into the space, gave feedback on the themes developed with them, and used the space as a place to play.

This event was also an opportunity for the children and staff to see the potential of both the green space and brown locked space for the benefit of the children, a mere 2 minute walk from their school.





LEARN - PHASE 2

Visit to East Wall Men's Shed with members of potential Sheriff St/North Wall Men's Shed

A Playful City met with a number of local men who attend the East Wall Men's Shed as there is no similar facility for local men around Sheriff Street, despite the fact that there is a group of men local to Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park who would like to access the locked part of the space in order to use it as a Sheriff Street Men's Shed.

A Playful City met with these men a number of times, and were invited over to the East Wall Men's Shed to understand the potential of what could happen in the brown locked space at Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park.

These local men have indicated that they could be the “eyes and ears” of the space, and could support making planters, benches etc for the benefit of the community for the space, and generally.

SWAN Youth Service facilitator training

SWAN Youth Service has a facility directly opposite the green space at Spencer Dock, A Playful City has partnered successfully over a number of years with SWAN Youth Service on projects aimed at supporting young people who use their service.

A Playful City met with SWAN Youth young people and staff throughout the project to hear feedback on how they might like to use the park.

Many young people and staff from SWAN Youth Service supported A Playful City staff throughout the pilot by facilitating key events on Sheriff Street in June and in the park in August 2024.

LEARN - PHASE 2

WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Adult and Youth Surveys - May -August 2024

Diversity and Inclusion Week Event on Sheriff Street June 2024.

- This large community event is run annually by staff from NWCDP on Sheriff Street Lower.
- A Playful City was kindly invited to take part in the event, to use it as an opportunity to share information about the project and to gather more feedback from residents. SWAN Youth Service young people and staff also supported A Playful City at this event.

Community Week Finale Event August 2024

- Community Week events are run over the course of the week in the green space at Sheriff St Park by the local Festival Committee. A Playful City met with the Festival Committee regularly over the 6 months, to gather feedback on the project.
- A Playful City was also kindly included in the finale day in August. Flags for all participating partners on the project were erected to show the support of community partners.
- Pop up prototypes like planting, seating and a mud kitchen were set up to give a sense of what the park could become.
- Information boards were set up to share news on the project Further feedback was gathered from attendees of all ages through dot voting, surveys and chats.
- SWAN youth service staff and young people were a big help on the day - helping APC to set up and take down, gathering further feedback from local attendees.

Door to door surveys, After Schools Education & Support Programme - July 2024

- Young people and staff from Sheriff Street After Schools (ASESP) went door to door to houses on Lower Sheriff Street and surrounding streets to get feedback on the project from local residents.



RECOMMENDATIONS PHASE 3

A number of recurring issues and ideas emerged from engagement with key stakeholders and adults, children and young people living in the Sherriff Street area, highlighting the great opportunity to transform the space in a way that will provide for the diverse needs and desires present in this community.

From cross-analysis of the feedback from each of these groups, A Playful City has drawn out the following recommendations for how Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park can be improved.

These recommendations can be further explored with the community and built upon with Dublin City Council support in the future.

There was overwhelming support from key stakeholders to create a community space in the brown locked space, with support from Dublin City Council.

This section of the report outlines the recommendations from the various engagement methods carried out during Phase 1 and 2 of the project, culminating in the delivery of this report/community brief for Dublin City Council, to sow the seeds for the next chapter for Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park.

The full findings for Phases 1 & 2 can be found in Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATIONS - PHASE 3

Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park is a space comprised of three parts:

- a green space to the front
- a permanently locked brown space to the rear
- a perimeter running around the entire space

The “Brown” Space at Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park

The key stakeholder recommendations in relation to the brown space at the park, have come from 25 respondents who represent eleven local organisations, with over 500 service users locally. All stakeholder groups are located within a 5- 10 minute walk of the park.

All respondents feel that the below recommendations, if implemented, would help support the emotional, physical and mental well being of their service users by connecting them to a local natural space:



- They see the potential of the brown space to become a Community Garden which can be developed by them with their 500+ service users, and the wider community.



- It is in this space that key stakeholders feel the large number of young children, teenagers and residents could be given a safe, well maintained, clean space to connect, learn and explore nature through play, gardening, locally run events and quiet, restful spaces to sit and relax.



- It is also in this space that a Men’s Shed could exist if given sufficient space, where they could do things like support with making benches, planters and general wood working similar to East Wall Men’s Shed.

The “Green” Space at Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park

Recommendations for the green space, have been collated from 56 adult surveys, 49 Youth Surveys and 25 key stakeholder surveys.

A Playful City has identified key elements or themes arising from engagement with local stakeholders in relation to the green space:

RECOMMENDATIONS - PHASE 3



- **Greening**

Community garden and planted areas to create an inviting space for residents of all ages to connect and enjoy nature. Additionally, natural areas and features, including grasses, hills, boulders and trees become inviting play spaces to be actively used, allowing numerous opportunities for loose parts play, such as collecting natural materials, den building and exploring.



- **Inclusivity and Accessibility**

Design the park to be welcoming and accessible to all, with areas tailored for different age groups, genders and activities. Include accessibility features such as wheelchair and buggy-friendly paths to accommodate everyone.



- **Social and Community Engagement**

There is a desire for the park to become a space where the community can gather, with areas for sitting, socialising, and organised activities such as outdoor classes and community events.

Programme for the Park: Start with small-scale programming for the space eg yoga in the park, weight lifting/exercise classes, tai chi, painting to gauge interest and refine the approach before wider implementation.



- **Structures**

Rather than separating "play spaces" and "nature spaces," integrating landscaping and structural elements can draw children through the entire space, creating a blend of play and nature for all ages to enjoy. Interactive playful elements, both familiar (e.g. frames, swings) and less familiar, throughout the space to encourage children to engage in play, whether prompted by design or by their own invention.

Thinking of the whole of Sheriff Street (Rainbow) Park as a playground itself offers numerous benefits and opportunities that extend beyond the standardised playground.



- **Restful Areas**

Restful, community-designed spots in nature encourage longer visits and relaxation. Spaces created with input from the local community to ensure they are both functional and welcoming, offering areas for resting, socialising, and watching activities for all visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS - PHASE 3



- **Involvement and Engagement**

Work with current community-led committees to oversee park management, ensuring representation from various groups to run community events, performances, and workshops in order to encourage park use and support a deeper sense of ownership and pride amongst residents.

The Perimeter of the Park



- Respondents noted that the perimeter of the park could be transformed to facilitate running/jogging for the 150+ female members of the Sheriff Street Running Club.



- Respondents also recognised the need for a designated dog park for dog owners.

Themes from Rainbow Park Survey

- **Park Cleanliness**

When asked for three words to describe Rainbow Park, the vast majority of responses mentioned the park being dirty, unsanitary and filled with dog fouling. Dogs and dog fouling were again mentioned frequently when respondents were asked what factors would stop them from visiting the park, and the issues associated with the space. However, it should be noted that many commented that the park could be fun and enjoyable for children and families, when in use for Community Week at Halloween.

- **Lack of Amenities and Recreational Facilities**

Respondents frequently commented that the park was boring, with nothing to do. **When asked what they liked about Rainbow Park at the moment, 18 responded with; “nothing”.**

A common theme was the lack of support for community-driven initiatives or events at the park, leading some to feel disconnected from the space. Some respondents would like the park to serve as a community hub with organised activities like gardening.

Other suggestions also included swings, disability swings for wheelchairs, slides, seesaws and sensory play.

- **Accessibility**

Seven participants commented on the lack of accessibility of Rainbow Park, saying that it was locked early which prevented them from entering, with two of these respondents commenting that the park “never seems to be open”.

One participant commented “by doing the survey, giving the community a say in what goes into it”, made the future developments of the park more inclusive.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY FINDINGS: WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Generational Presence and Historical Significance**

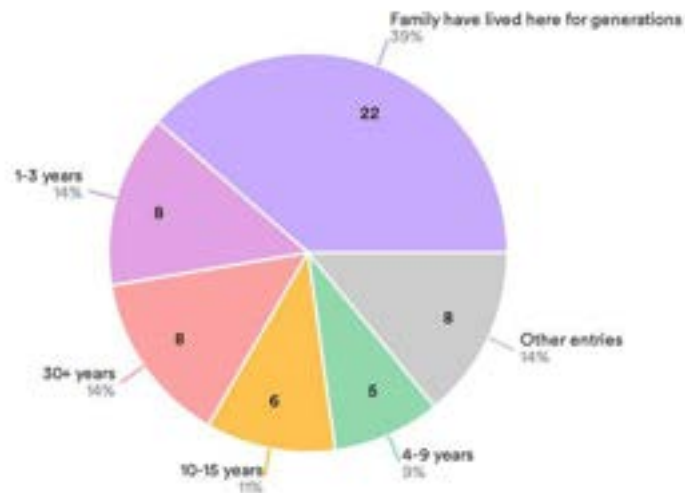
Several respondents noted that they or their families have lived near the park for generations, indicating a strong connection and attachment to the space. This long-term presence suggests that improvements aligning with historical and community values could strengthen engagement and pride in the park.



SURVEY FINDINGS: WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

How long have you been a resident of the area near Rainbow Park?

57 Responses- 5 Empty



Have you ever been asked for your opinion about the design of a local public space before?

55 Responses- 1 Empty



APPENDIX 1

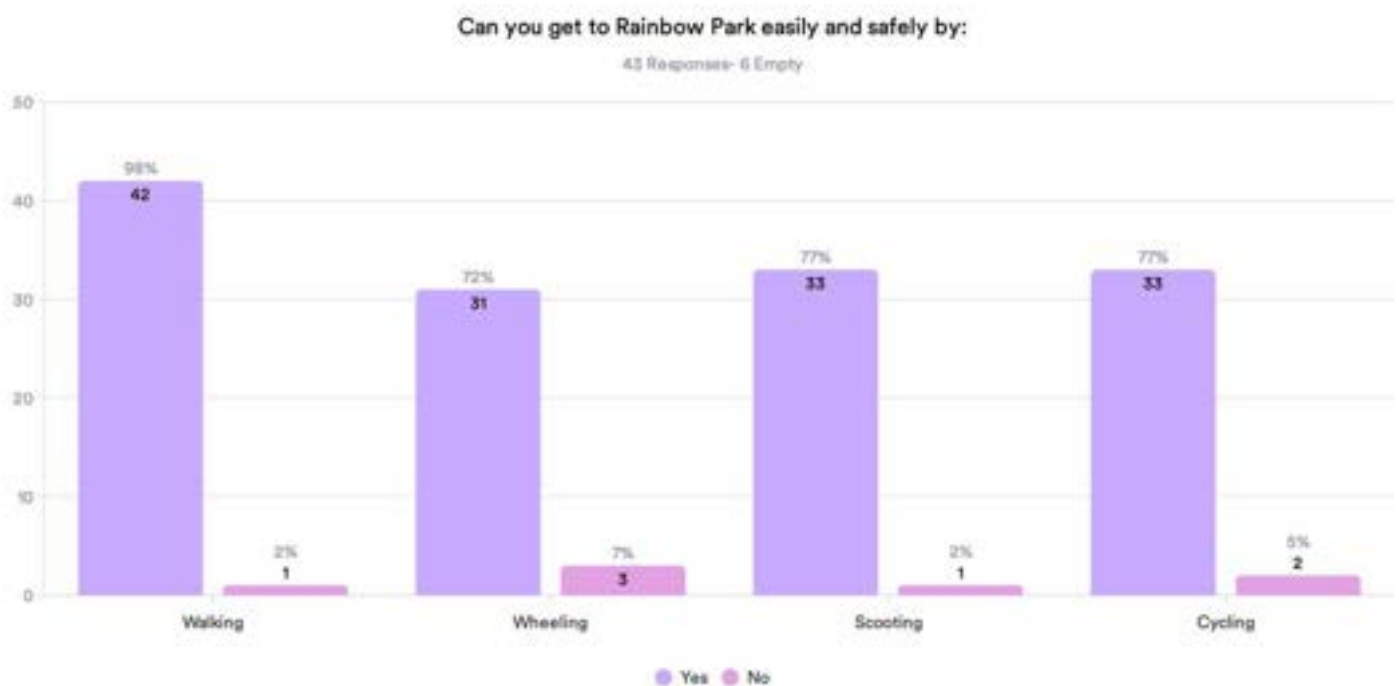
SURVEY FINDINGS: WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Themes from Rainbow Park Survey

Youth Survey - 49 responses

- **Accessibility and Safety**

Most respondents feel they can access Rainbow Park safely and easily by walking, wheeling, scooting, or cycling. A few respondents noted difficulties or unfamiliarity with certain modes of travel, such as wheeling.



- **Play Preferences and Activities**

There were a number of preferences for play and activities mentioned by the respondents including;

Popular Activities: Swings, zip lines, trampolines, monkey bars, and slides are frequently mentioned.

Games: Common games include hide and seek, tag, football, and chasing.

Play Types: Respondents mentioned a variety of play types such as free/social play, physically active play, and creative/fantasy play.

APPENDIX 1

SURVEY FINDINGS: WIDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- **Desired Features and Improvements**

Although many respondents described Rainbow Park as being “fun”, there were some suggestions for improvements that can be made and features that can be introduced to make the park more enjoyable;

Physical Equipment: Suggestions for additions include basket swings, trampolines, zip lines, climbing frames, and monkey bars.

New Attractions: Some participants expressed a desire for unique features like a stage.

Infrastructure Enhancements: Requests for more swings and larger, more diverse play equipment.

- **Suggestions for Creating Rest and Social Spaces**

Many respondents mentioned a lack of seating or picnic areas where families can relax. Suggestions included picnic tables, benches, and designated picnic spots. Adding these facilities could promote social interaction among visitors, making the park not just a play area but a space for family and community bonding.



APPENDIX 1

Green Space: Despite its current state, Sheriff Street Park is valued as a green space within the city, providing a rare spot of nature in an urban environment.

Opportunities to Improve: There is a strong belief in the park's potential to become a vibrant community hub, with space for various activities and events.

Location and Size: The park's central location and large open space are seen as assets that could be better utilised for community benefit.

APPENDIX 2

A PLAYFUL CITY MEDIA COVERAGE REPORT

AUGUST 2024

Online, Print and Radio

- **Pat Kenny Show, Newstalk** - Transforming sheriff street park into a vibrant community space
- **The Irish Times** - Community calls on council to turn 'unused' inner city green space into 'vibrant hub'
- **The Irish Times** (Print – pg.2) – Community wants 'unused' park turned into vibrant green space
- **The Irish Independent** – 'We need more space' – community urges council to transform north inner city park
- **Breaking News** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Echo Live** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **The Connaught Telegraph** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Dublin People** – Research seeks to breathe new life into green space in North Inner City
- **Western People** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Waterford News and Star** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Kildare Nationalist** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Offaly Independent** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **The Anglo-Celt** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Roscommon Herald** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Carlow Nationalist** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Laois Nationalist** - Locals take part in regeneration plan for green space on Dublin's Sheriff Street
- **Dublin Gazette** – Breathing New Life into North Inner City's Green Space

Full text of all articles [HERE](#)

WE'D LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our community partners for their incredible support and input. Your collaboration has been instrumental in the making of this report, and we are truly grateful for the time, resources, and energy you've dedicated to our shared goal. It is through partnerships like yours that we can continue to create positive impact and strengthen this incredible community.

A Special Note of Thanks to HubSpot

A very special thank you goes to our funders, HubSpot, for their generous support. Your commitment to our cause has provided us with the resources needed to bring this community vision closer to a reality. We are deeply appreciative of your belief in our mission and the trust you have placed in us.

Thank you to everyone who has made this journey possible. We look forward to continuing our work together!

