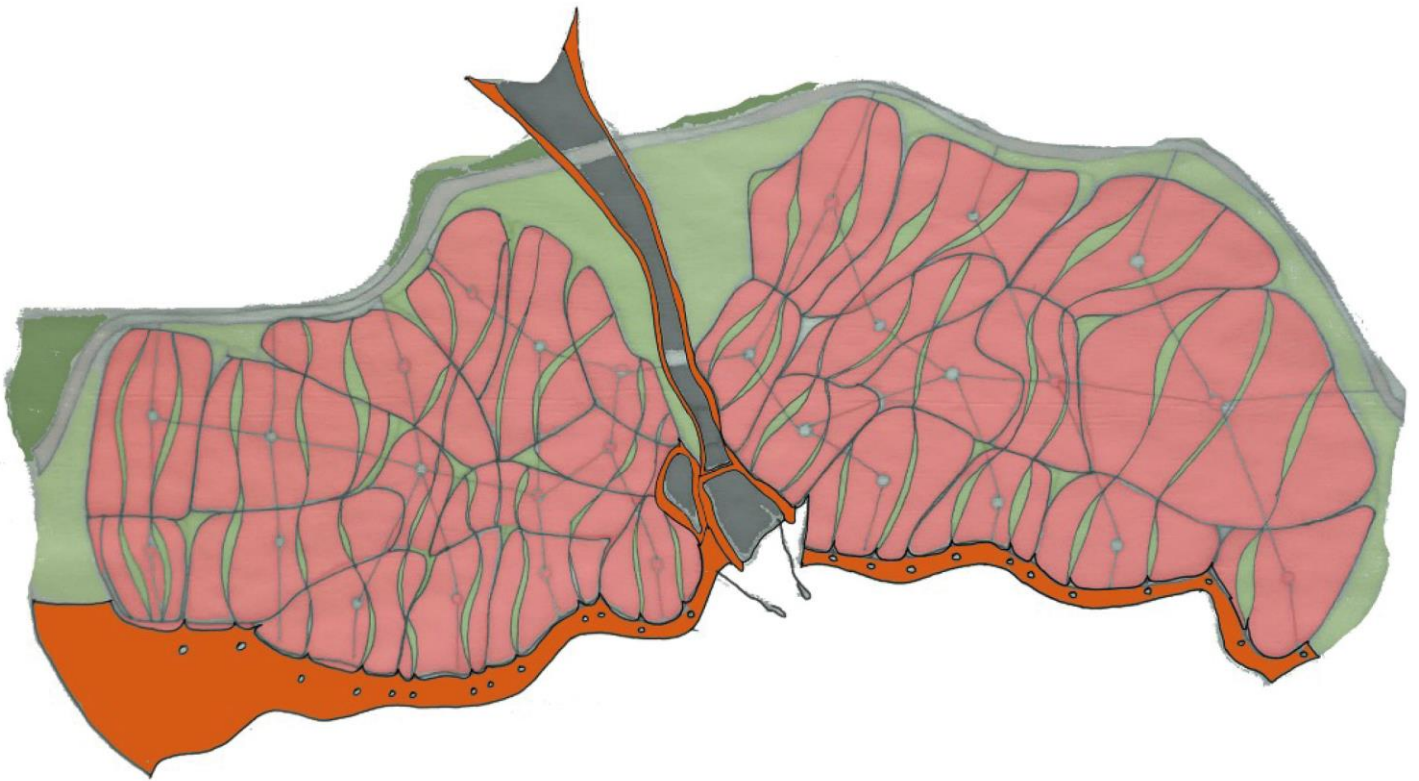


# The Greater Galway Charter for Sustainable Urbanism



October 2023



**THE ACADEMY  
OF URBANISM**



## A Shared Vision for a Thriving City

This Charter is the product of an extended period of discussion and reflection by a selection of Galwegians, working alongside others with place-attachment and knowledge of the City and its hinterland. It also draws on lessons and encouragement from supportive built environment professionals who have experience of transformational planning in cities across Europe.

Galway City now stands at a crossroads, where realities and pressing challenges of the current generation meet with the imperative to plan longer term for a growing, diverse and prosperous future population, with a proper focus on quality of life and care for the wider environment.

The purpose of this Charter is fourfold:

1. To set out a **core philosophy and future vision** to guide Galway's future, drawing on its own identity and characteristics alongside practical lessons from other places.
2. To provide a **general stimulus for discussion** about the best use of land, buildings and transport modes within a changing national, regional and global context.
3. To offer this out to **wider civic audiences across Ireland and farther afield** as a 'Charter for Sustainable Urbanism', drawing upon the approach and traditions of the Charter of Athens, the ICOMOS Charters and the AoU Freiburg Charter.
4. To provide a **rallying point for 'sustainable urbanism'** that professional, political and other civic urbanists can endorse.

This Charter is therefore a statement of intent, a commitment to guiding principles that will shape decision-making around development of the City over the next 50 years. It aims to promote Galway as a shining example of city-making, providing a wonderful home for current and future Galwegians, and bringing benefit to the wider region.

As this journey of civic transformation continues, we invite all stakeholders – elected members, residents and businesses, organisations and institutions – to join in creating the next chapter of the Galway story; one that will stand as testament to the vision, resilience and the boundless potential of the people of Galway.

You are invited to endorse this Charter, its Principles and its Propositions.

## Part A Galway Charter - Anchoring Principles

The Greater Galway Charter is underpinned by four anchoring Principles that guide what the Galway should aspire to be as a City and a Place, namely:

1. **Sustainable:** by looking long term, across generations, with a particular regard to physical, environmental and cultural assets, at a local, national and global scale.
2. **Inclusive:** by considering all sectors and ages of the current and future population, both as 'internal' residents, occupiers and businesses, but also as 'external' commuters and service users, visitors and investors.
3. **Responsive:** looking to adapt to future circumstances to support the long-term social and economic wellbeing of a confident, outward-facing Galway, alongside a respect for the quality of environment that will support such wellbeing.
4. **Proud:** supportive of the special identity and heritage of Galway as an international, Atlantic-facing, bilingual Irish city with deep roots in the Gaeltacht and many facets of Irish culture.

These four Principles inform and run through all twelve thematic Propositions in Part B of the Galway Charter.

## Part B Galway Charter - Propositions

### **Proposition 1            Densification and 'Intelligent Growth'**

We believe Galway should follow the model of a 'compact city'; reinforcing its 'gentle density' and intensity of activity to provide a viable, compelling alternative to sprawl across its rural hinterland, with the resultant positive social, economic and carbon benefits.

We aim to build a city that can accommodate a population of up to 250,000 people over the next half a century. We strongly advocate that this growth happens primarily **within Galway City's 2020 'footprint'**, inside the perimeter established by the Galway orbital route. This means making the best of our land resource by intensifying all existing parts of the city, only developing greenfield sites that adjoin the existing city envelope.

### **Proposition 2            Liveable Neighbourhoods**

We propose that the key city 'building blocks' should be a series of walkable, liveable neighbourhoods with easy access to local facilities and services, as well as the city centre. This 'city of short distances' should enable essential daily services, and some employment, to be readily accessible within an easy walk or cycle.

We advocate that new public services – such as schools, primary health care, libraries and local authority facilities – be located alongside private investment in commerce and shopping, in identifiable local neighbourhood centres or larger district centres. Wherever practicable, such service and enterprise activity should be woven into the built fabric, including alongside new residential areas, to ensure viable catchments which support shopping, leisure and employment facilities.

### **Proposition 3            Vibrant, Living Core**

We advocate that Galway should have a diverse, lively and occupied city centre. This should be a safe, energised place that includes individuals and families living throughout, alongside commerce and a ground floor level with active use, surveillance and interaction through windows and own door access.

We propose conserving and consolidating the existing historic city centre by creating a pedestrian core that is the commercial, cultural and social centre of the region. New developments will be sensitively curated to ensure that they contribute positively to the city centre.

We advocate redeveloping the Headford/Tuam Road areas as a mixed use extension that links to the historic core, the University of Galway, the Corrib River, the old dock area and the urban hinterland, in all directions.

We support (1) the Port relocation and expansion to enable the redevelopment of the inner harbour facilities for recreation, housing and as a base for marine activity and renewable energy related commerce; and (2) the sensitive incorporation of new teaching, research and student housing into the city core by both universities.

**Proposition 4                    Sustainable Access and Transport**

To maintain access to the historic city, including its centre and many functions, we advocate minimising the impact of vehicle trips and traffic congestion, while ensuring greater opportunity to invest in public transport and active travel.

We support the investment in transport infrastructure necessary to steadily remove private vehicular traffic from the city core, including an integrated public transport network where most dwellings are within two hundred metres of a frequent, dependable service.

We support the development of safe, segregated active travel corridors along an east/west axis, linking the neighbourhoods and city core with the Corrib and its associated canals and coastal edges. This will reduce car dependence and aid the transition to a carbon neutral city.

**Proposition 5                    Range of Affordable Accommodation**

We advocate the creative use of mechanisms to ensure a fair and functional city through the provision of affordable premises to rent and to own. This applies not only to housing, retail and business premises, but also to cultural and community space.

We advocate a range of housing types and tenures to strengthen established neighbourhoods and underpin the formation of new suburban centres. This should combine a mix of medium density apartments and lower rise housing on infill/brownfield and greenfield sites, which specifically include a proportion of affordable provision.

**Proposition 6                    Stronger Design and Placemaking**

We seek a much higher standard of design of buildings, spaces and infrastructure in order to reinforce Galway's special identity and sense of place, addressing climate change and energy needs, and building continued confidence in our creative city and its communities, both internally and externally.

We advocate pursuing the highest standards of design and construction in all building work, embracing both adaptive re-use and new build. Key processes to support this should include (1) a three-dimensional approach to planning and shaping city form, (2) project design review and (3) a design strategy for an attractive and inclusive public realm that is robust and safe, supporting the transition towards more active travel.

**Proposition 7            Broadest Range of Services**

We advocate retaining and expanding as widely as possible the range of services available, not only inside the central core, but across our liveable neighbourhoods, in order to serve the local, regional, and in some instances national, population.

We support initiatives and investment by public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver high quality services to residents and communities, particularly in health, education, childcare, and recreation. This investment aspiration extends from core services like retail, health and food, to tourism and culture, science and technology, property and financial services, and to visitors and occasional users of the city as well as locals.

**Proposition 8            An Inclusive, Social City**

We believe Greater Galway's future depends on the skills, culture and co-operation of its people, whatever their background, age, ability or ethnicity. We propose building future social cohesion from an appreciation of the place, its history and including all people in the discussions about shaping the future.

We advocate the use of mechanisms that promote community engagement, enable ongoing dialogue, provide shared events and experiences, and encourage a strong sense of a welcoming, connected city.

**Proposition 9            Creative Cultural Capital**

We support building on the renowned creative assets and identity of Galway as a culturally diverse, dynamic and creative place.

To consolidate its role as a leading 'Creative City' into the future, we advocate more venues, events and activities, including some landmark/signature ones. We also advocate more space and support for creative production across a range of studios, venues and diverse media.

**Proposition 10           Supporting a Progressive, Renewing Economy**

We believe Galway needs to keep renewing its economy every 10 to 20 years, with fresh talent, economic development and infrastructure to support that. Public and private sectors need to work in partnership to embrace a knowledge-based, digital economy that will attract inward investment and encourage indigenous entrepreneurship.

Our current focus should include innovation and technology, education and skills, culture and the arts, health and services, though these may change over time. It will be important that the physical city and its component elements can support and

underpin the attraction and retention of the various companies, start-ups and workers we will need in these sectors, as well as international tourists and students.

**Proposition 11 Greener Infrastructure**

We propose the continuing development of a city-wide network of 'blue and green' infrastructure that links residents to the natural world, providing local amenity and identity, enhancing biodiversity, supporting leisure and wellbeing, and fundamentally underpinning climate resilience.

We advocate strong networks that connect existing green and blue biodiversity reservoirs with new provision, in order to build up a wider range of parks and amenity/play space that support an increased range of flora and fauna all across the city.

We also advocate a system of policy and design measures to foster greater biodiversity within all new and retrofitted development in the city.

**Proposition 12 Co-ordinated Delivery**

We aim to communicate the Charter's Vision for Greater Galway to the widest possible audience in order to promote discussion and collaboration in delivering on the potential of the City and its hinterland. This can empower communities to take ownership of, and contribute to, the making of their future neighbourhoods and city.

The implementation of the Charter themes needs to be supported and co-delivered by a grouping of 'place leader' agencies and actors in an inclusive manner. They should review the direction and actions regularly with civic organisations, local business and the wider citizens and stakeholders, who all provide cross-community capacity.

To ensure that Galway achieves success over time, we will need to collectively leverage support – at National, Regional, and International levels – in finance for land and public realm investment, economic infrastructure and development construction, as well as effective planning policy, governance, placemaking tools and delivery processes.

## Part C Declaration

**WE**, the undersigned, hereby declare our support for the **Principles and Propositions** of the **Greater Galway Charter**. We hold that it provides a compelling vision and sound guidance for the development of Greater Galway over the coming decades, serving as a tool to help avoid the risks of sprawl and congestion, excessive gentrification, or loss of place identity.

We commend its content to public representatives and policymakers, community and businesses, investors and service providers of Galway and, where relevant, to other comparable towns and cities across Ireland.

Signature	Name	Organisation/Affiliation
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**Galway City Council**

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Date .....

**University of Galway**

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Date .....

**Atlantic Technological University**

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Date .....

**Galway Chamber**

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Date .....

**Academy of Urbanism**

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**RIAI**

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