



Ciaran Murray  
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### **Ballymun is unique in many ways.**

It is unique in that it doesn't have the commercial and economic infrastructure you would expect to find in a town its size (20,000 pop.) In the thirty years since the high rise towers were built, there has been no significant private sector investment in the area. The people living in Ballymun also have more than their share of social problems. Recently, however, Ballymun has become a uniquely important strategic location. It is right beside the airport, with direct access to the M50 and just four miles from O'Connell Street. Since it has land for development, it has the potential to become Dublin's most sought after location for investment.

Ballymun is also unique in the wealth of its community spirit and the sophistication of its well developed community network. There are somewhere between 150 and 200 different voluntary organisations active in the area. People living in Ballymun have an indomitable spirit, despite years of neglect, high levels of unemployment and a lack of even the most basic facilities and amenities. The area is now well placed to take advantage of the upswing in the economy. The complexity of its social problems, however, will require an inter-departmental Government response, if maximum benefit is to be gained from the regeneration project.

The Ballymun Regeneration Masterplan has been developed in consultation and partnership with people in Ballymun and the adjoining areas. It is a framework document which proposes an integrated strategy for the social, economic and physical renewal of the area. It is not a detailed blueprint for the kind of development that might take place in Ballymun. It takes an overview of the project. It looks at land uses and the development needs of the area. How jobs and investments can be encouraged in the area and how more private housing and a broader social mix might be integrated into the area.

The Plan is being submitted to Government along with an application for tax incentives for the area. Despite the phenomenal growth in the Irish economy in recent years there has been no improvement in living standards in Ballymun and unemployment has remained at a very high level. If the opportunities presented by the Regeneration Project are to be grasped, Ballymun's unique position must be recognised in the next round of the Urban Renewal Scheme by making it a special case for innovative incentives linked to solving social needs.

Highlights of the public consultation process include the Open Planning Day on the 29th November last when over 2,000 local people got involved in designing their new town. The numbers swelled to over 5000 when we launched the Public Exhibition of the Draft Masterplan earlier this month. This level of response was truly phenomenal and clearly demonstrates how much the local community supports the whole process. What is even more heartening was the fact that a large number of those who attended the Exhibition completed a very detailed questionnaire and their responses indicate an 85% overall satisfaction level for the proposals and strategies set out in the Plan.

Partnership and consultation have been integral to the project to date and we have allowed for flexibility to address any outstanding concerns in the detailed designs for the new town. It is now time to move the process forward towards implementation and I look forward, with the Ballymun community, to the bright new future symbolised in the Regeneration Project logo.

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Managing Director

### **The Foundation Stones for the New Ballymun**

- Masterplan based on quality design
- Vibrant Town Centre with a variety of commercial activity
- Flagship projects of regional or national significance with large local employment content
- Quality homes with good social mix.
- Economic development with sustainable local employment opportunities
- Identifiable neighbourhoods with relevant community facilities
- Well defined parks with appropriate recreational facilities
- Effective local administration with community based local estate management

