

FORGOTTEN COMMUNITIES

CLONGRIFFIN & BELMAYNE
COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dr Maria Quinlan





On behalf of both the Northside Partnership (NSP) and the City of Dublin Youth Services Board (CDYSB), we are delighted to present this exhibition which outlines some examples of the findings of Dr. Maria Quinlan's research into the needs of the Belmayne and Clongriffin areas.

In commissioning this research, we sought to engage with both communities in a way that elevated their voice and captured the lived experience of residents. In addition, we aimed to develop a more comprehensive picture of the areas from a social and demographic perspective with a view to understanding the challenges faced by the communities and identifying gaps in services that are essential in supporting communities to thrive.

We would like to thank Dr. Quinlan for the dedication and rigor in which she undertook the research and for her use of creative methodologies such as photovoice to ensure all residents had an opportunity to participate in the research.

We would also like to thank all the residents and community groups from across both areas, who gave of their time and energy in participating in the research and in expressing their views and experience of living in the areas. In particular, we would like to thank all the young people who contributed to the research. Given the high numbers of young people growing up in the area, it was critical that their voices and experiences were captured to enable a deeper understanding of community needs.

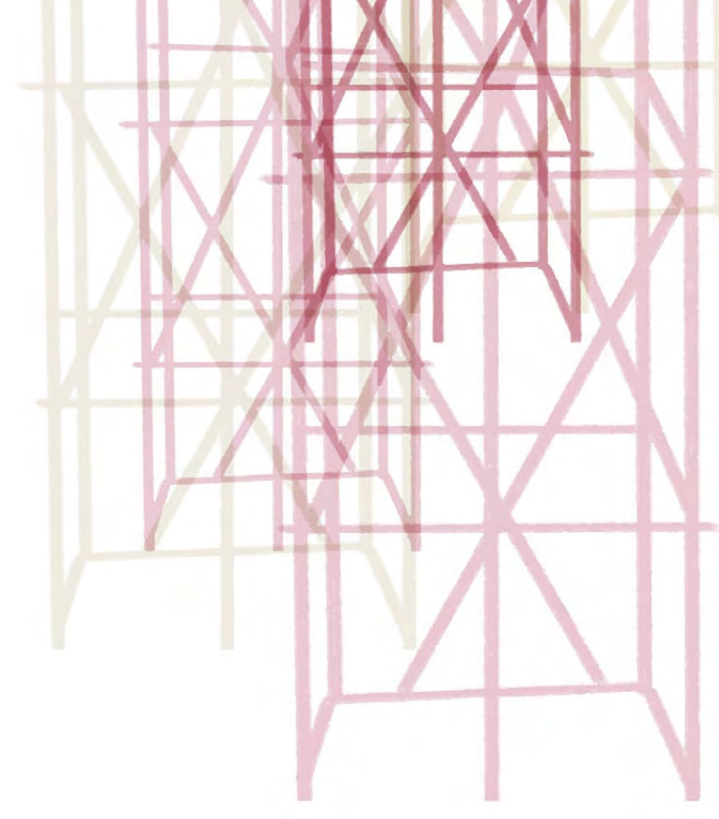
This exhibition presents the authentic voice of the community and it is important that their views are aired and acknowledged so that we can fully understand the experience and perspectives of residents living in a rapidly changing community.

Both NSP and CDYSB aim to utilise the research to advocate on behalf of both communities for the increased services, supports and facilities that are essential for a community to flourish. In particular, we recognise the immediate need to provide accessible, multipurpose, community space that can be used as a centre for essential community services and provide a focal point for community engagement and connectivity.

We look forward to working in partnership with all stakeholders, community, voluntary and statutory, in supporting the vibrant and diverse communities of Belmayne and Clongriffin and in ensuring the individuals and families, that make up the communities, have access to the resources and opportunities to achieve their full potential.

Paul Rogers
CEO
Northside Partnership





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This represents feeling trapped, on one side is the green and on the other side is two chairs, and someone trying to make the most of what they have. We can't do much anymore because it's surrounded by people who just want to wreck everything. You try to improvise what to do, like you put a chair out the back garden, like summer last year we just stayed in the back garden because we didn't want to go outside because it's not safe, and it's not just kids adults are being harassed by teenagers too.

This for me also meant abandonment or unused potential. Those chairs when they were first made were probably used and now they're just abandoned in the ditch, god knows how long they've been there. And behind you can see a pillar, and it was meant to be a post or something years ago, it had a purpose, and it's left there forgotten, so it's sort of like the shopping centre [in Clongriffin], left there unused.



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There's a lot of unused potential in these areas, there's a lot of land locked behind gates, that's what I'm trying to show in these photos. Gates that are preventing us from having a better community. When there's an issue they build more fences to stop [young people] from getting in instead of building more places for them to go. There was a massive problem during COVID where people were going in partying there and they just stuck a big fence in, making it look even worse.

This represents locked away potential and the structures in our area. The establishments we could have, I remember we used to have a coffee shop near the Centra but it closed down for whatever reason and it's just lying there, not being used and there's a lot of stores like that, lying there unused. You could have a coffee-shop or something. Behind there, behind that fence there used to be a cool place where you could just chill, there was a bench and a big tree log you could sit on which was really nice, but now it's just locked away.



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I thought this showed the entrapment of ourselves in our homes. I love going out at night, it's so lovely, I love the atmosphere. But you can't really do that a lot of the time because there's a gang of teenagers always jeering you, always calling you names or whatever. They're just not letting you mind your own business and you're letting them mind their business. It represents how uncomfortable it feels, feeling stuck in your home at these times.



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That's about sexual harassment in the area, I know some friends who are getting cat-called, and I about a year ago I was walking around the skate-park and this guy, he looked kind of high he was like touching my hips and my hands and saying all these disgusting phrases and I don't know if it was because he was high but it was really gross, it was disgusting, and I just don't feel safe walking around here. This photo represents feeling burnt-out and trampled on because I thought that my area was safe, but then I go out and someone does this to me and I'm like whoa, wait a minute.



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This just represents sports, having a good time – unused potential, unused space that could be used for facilities for teenagers and kids to enjoy themselves.





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There's lots of space, I'd like there to be a volleyball court, maybe in Father Collins Park – there's too many football courts, it's dominated by one sport. I really like [the park], but for the amount of people it would be nice to have more facilities – like a basketball court...at the moment there's only the skatepark and two football fields really, and there's loads of area where you could build new stuff....there's only football facilities because that's known as the biggest sport I guess, there's not many other sports facilities in the area....there's a lot of people who play volleyball in Clongriffin and Belmayne.



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Rubbish, and unpleasantness of the community in some areas. In general some areas are just not clean. Trash everywhere, no one cleans it up....it's sad, it looks bad, there's other people coming from other countries and they see this, I just don't like it.



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There should be more bins around the area, you'd be looking for about twenty minutes around the area for a bin, that goes for Clongriffin and Belmayne, there's hardly any bins around, you have to go to the middle part of the area to find a bin, and that obviously influences people's decisions to throw rubbish on the ground. Not enough people are willing to put their rubbish in their bag or pocket and carry it around – if we had more bins there'd be less of this pollution.



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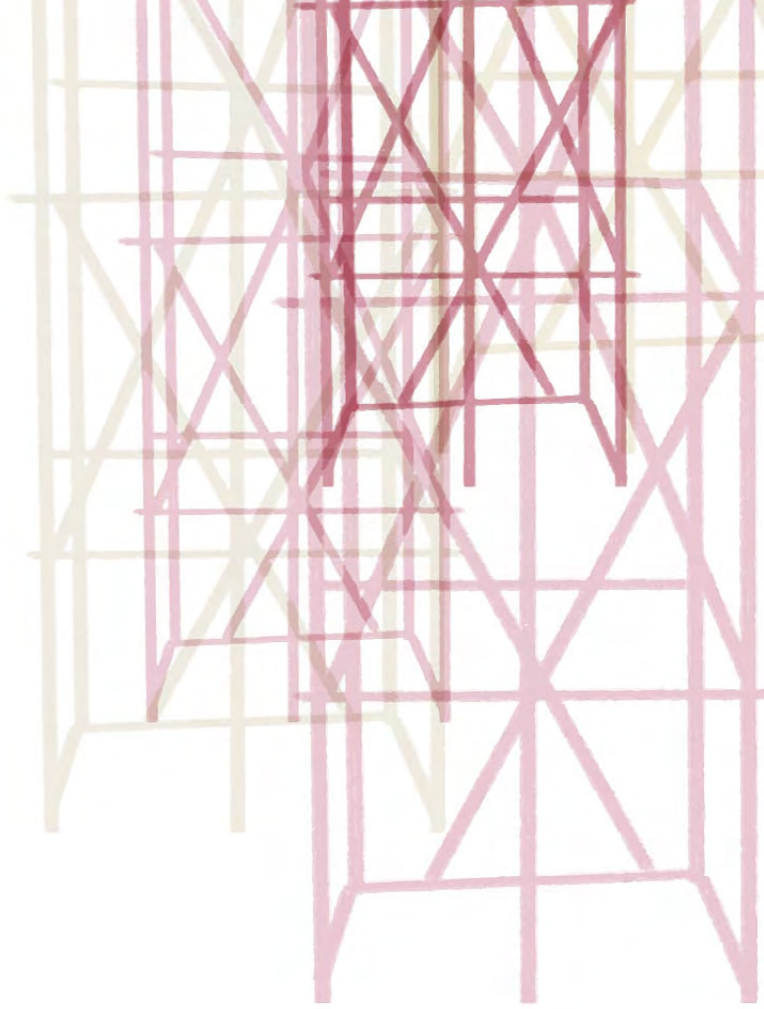
This represents young kids getting involved in drugs and alcohol, I've seen a literal nine year old or ten year old walking around with rum in his hand in the park, and that was a few years ago.



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Stuff getting defaced, beyond recognition. Years ago in Beau Park there was a playground and then teenagers just burned it down, on the fly just burned it down for whatever reason. Now the space there just lies unused. It creates more of just nothing to do for people in our area, and it's just sad that people would think that way and do stuff like that.





© Clongriffin / Belmayne Resident | 2021

Quiet town centre when it should be bustling with life and activity....Clongriffin has a lot to offer; with the park and Dart station and the few businesses that have dared to risk setting up here. But other than the park, there is no place here that brings the community together. There needs to be a Community Centre that provides a hall and other facilities to the area, to allow children and adults partake in indoor activities together. There needs to be a supermarket that draws attention and brings people into the area and will encourage other businesses to set-up shop here. We need more restaurants and coffee shops. We need a safe place for our children and teenagers to be able to safely meet up and be productive together.

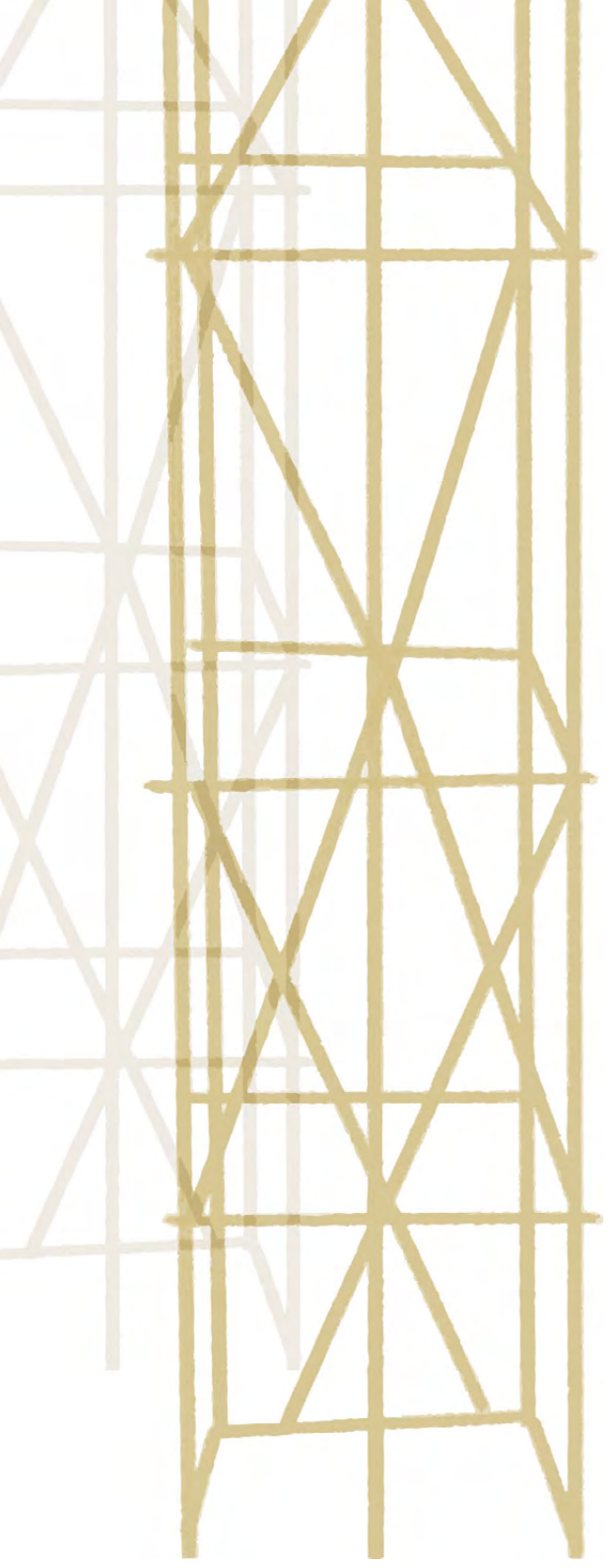


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I thought I'd take pictures from the brochures we received when buying our house back in 2005!! Most of these promises have not been kept. It would be really great if the retail spaces started to fill up, I don't understand why most of them are lying empty, we can only assume it's to do with rental costs... If the shopping centre were to open it would create employment as well as creating a central community area. A focal area seems to be really lacking in making Clongriffin a town. I do know the Junction is there but a pub, shopping centre, cafe or somewhere that is a hub of Clongriffin would really be beneficial to the area.

Another serious issue for the area is the lack of schools, secondary schools in particular. We were lucky enough to get our daughter into the new Educate Together Secondary School and hopefully that will allow my son to go when his time comes, but I'm sure that won't be guaranteed if things stay the way they are. With all the new builds going on, it's becoming a real stress related issue for any parents I talk to.



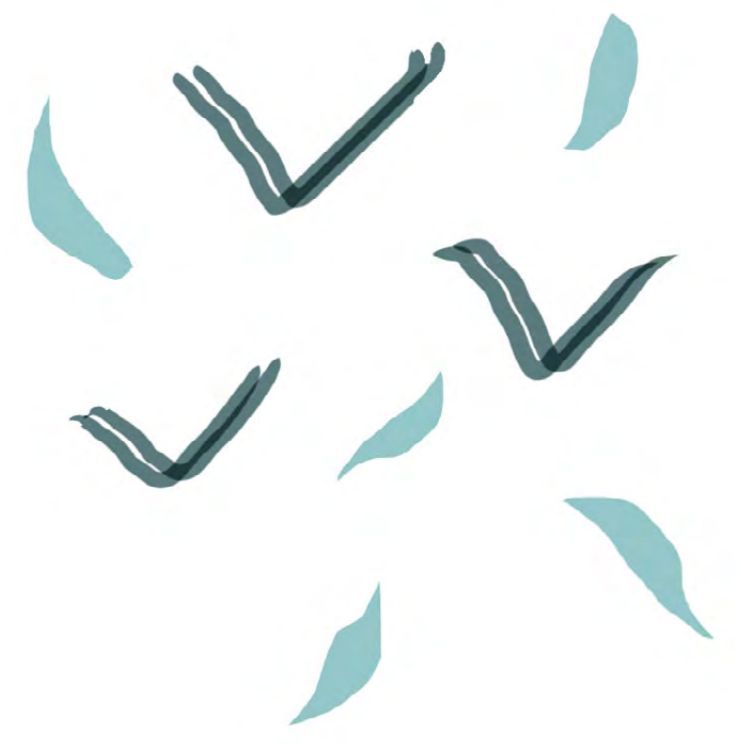
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Apartments are being built so quickly and at such a dense rate that it feels like we are being closed in on. Everywhere you look there is high rise building... But no facilities to match the rate of growth of buildings. A homeless crisis isn't solved by putting up boxes with nothing around - that creates a prison and isolation. One must ask the question... Is this the legacy the local authority want to leave for the future generation? To be left with no facilities and no support?



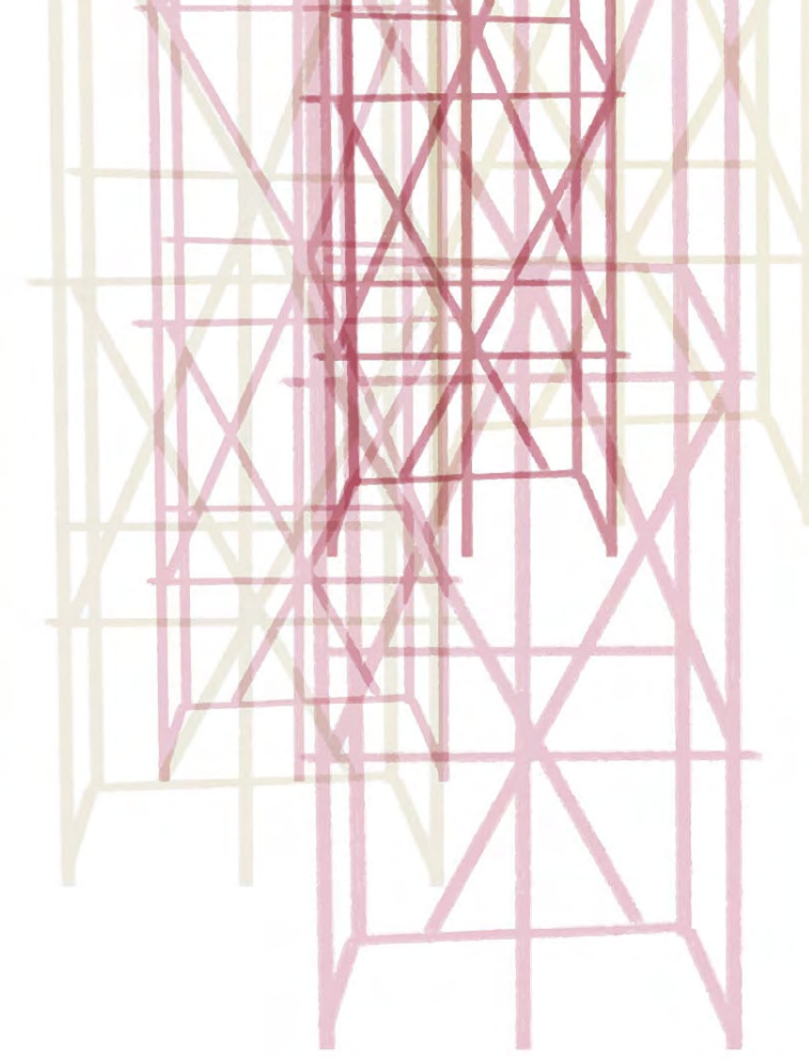
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Empty retail units. I pass them everyday for the last 7 years, they look worse with passing time. I've heard of a few people who were trying to rent them, start a business here, cafes, shops, a bakery... all were denied or excuses were given, redtape, etc. It feels so endlessly tiring trying to change something and constantly hitting a wall. It's like Clongriffin is not allowed to have things like community hall, shops, cafes. It feels like someone decided we don't matter and are not worth becoming a town. All these empty units but no space for people to meet up, attend a class, course, it's really debilitating.



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We need a space for youth - to cut down on vandalism. Because there is nowhere else for young people to hang out, no community centre or youth club space, they tend to congregate here in the park by these gates.

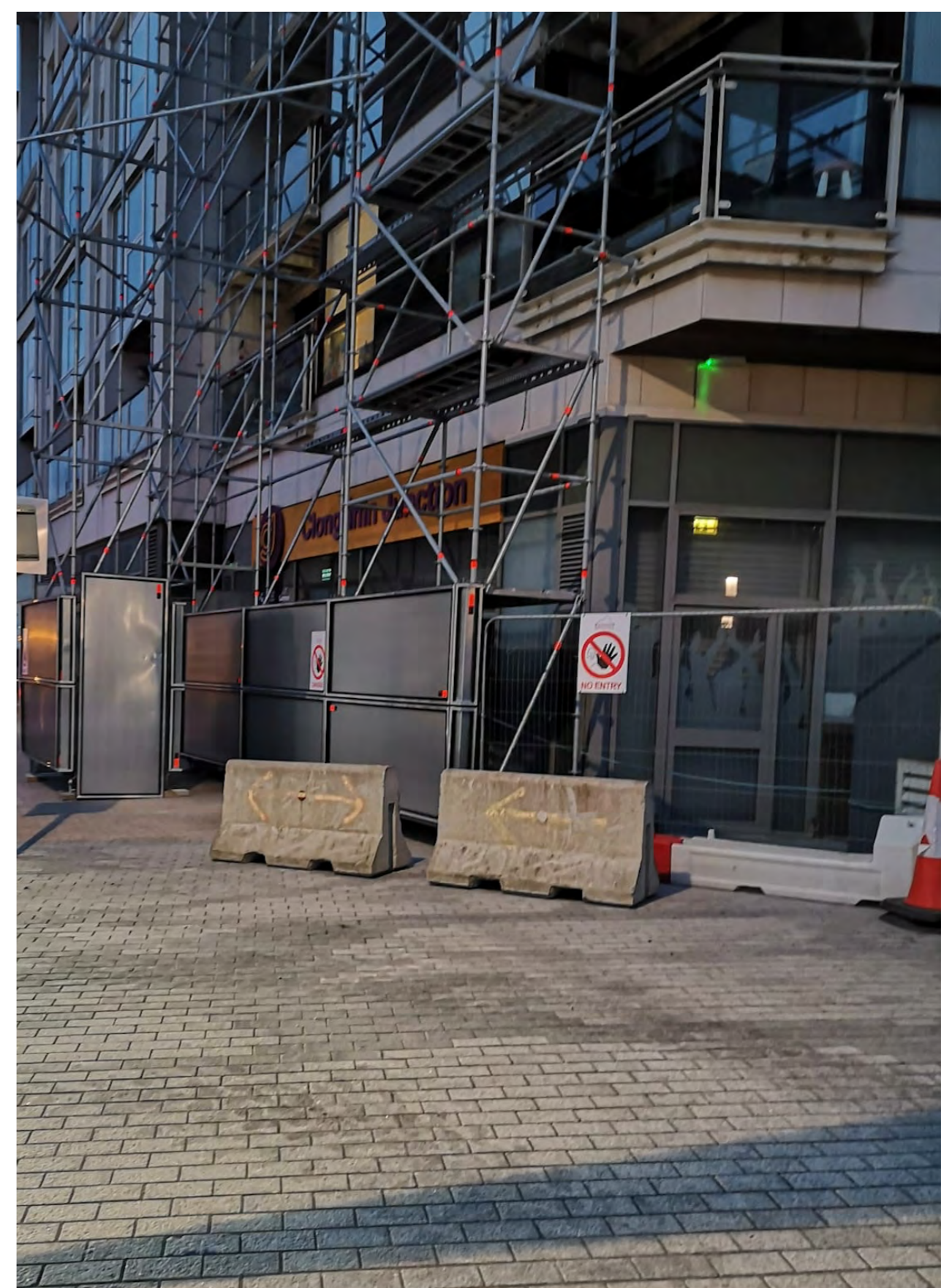


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There are no designated spaces for young people to be or to do activities/youth cafes. The hub is too small and you need to get young people into youth services young. The amount of young people who live in the area means that making this space would avoid future problems.

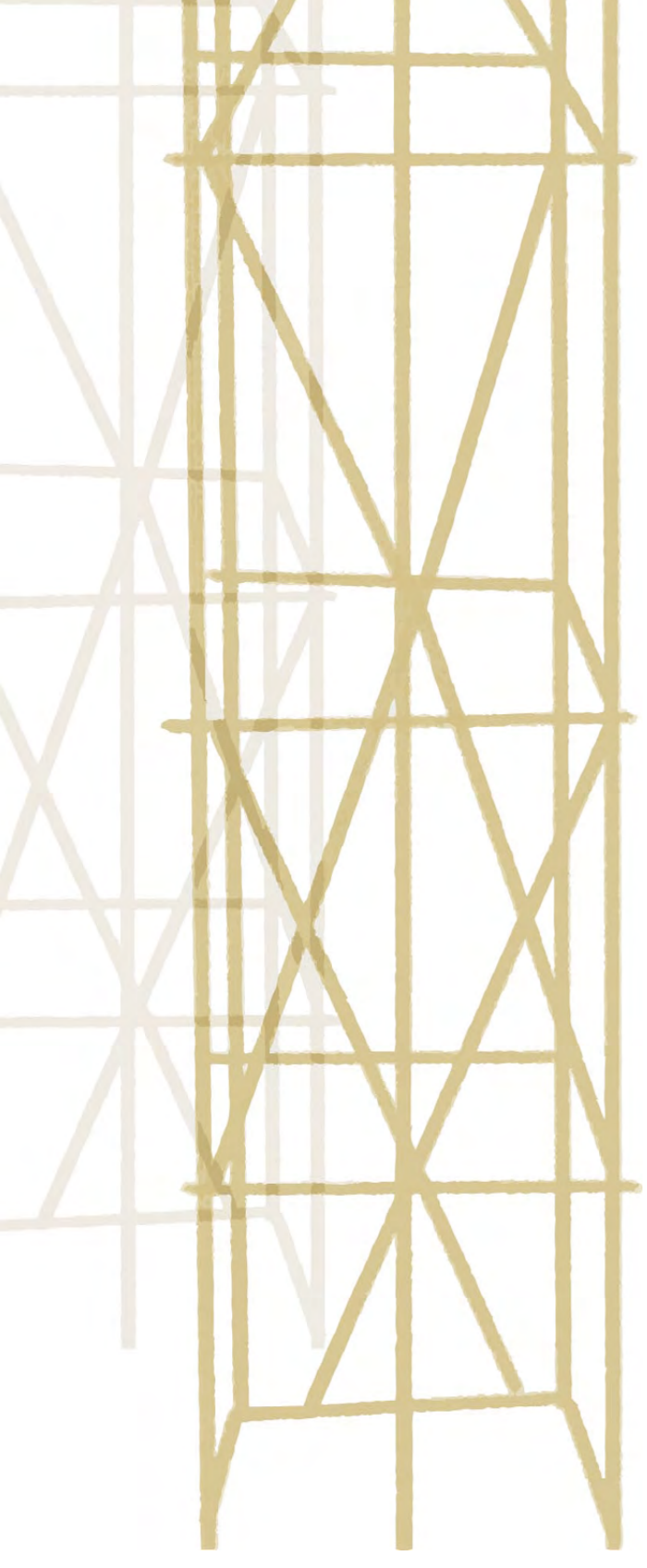


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This picture is of The Junction, the only community space available and it is representative of all the barriers of entry that have been placed on its use. To use this space you have to sign a lease with DCC that is witness by a solicitor and have insurance in place with an indemnity for DCC of €6.5 million. That is a huge barrier of entry to the average group.

This picture is representative of how inadequate The Junction is in catering for the needs of the local community. This was a Christmas event and the queue went right around the corner and up the street so you only see half of the people in line. It is clear from this the The Junction is not adequate in size and is simply not fit for the purposes of servicing the needs of the local community.



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I took these pictures of rubbish because I feel like this place is slowly turning into a dump - a dumping ground for people... Homes are so important but people need more than a roof over their head. People need family services, schools that actually cater for the increased population, adequate youth services, community services and activities...we need to know that we belong to this place...



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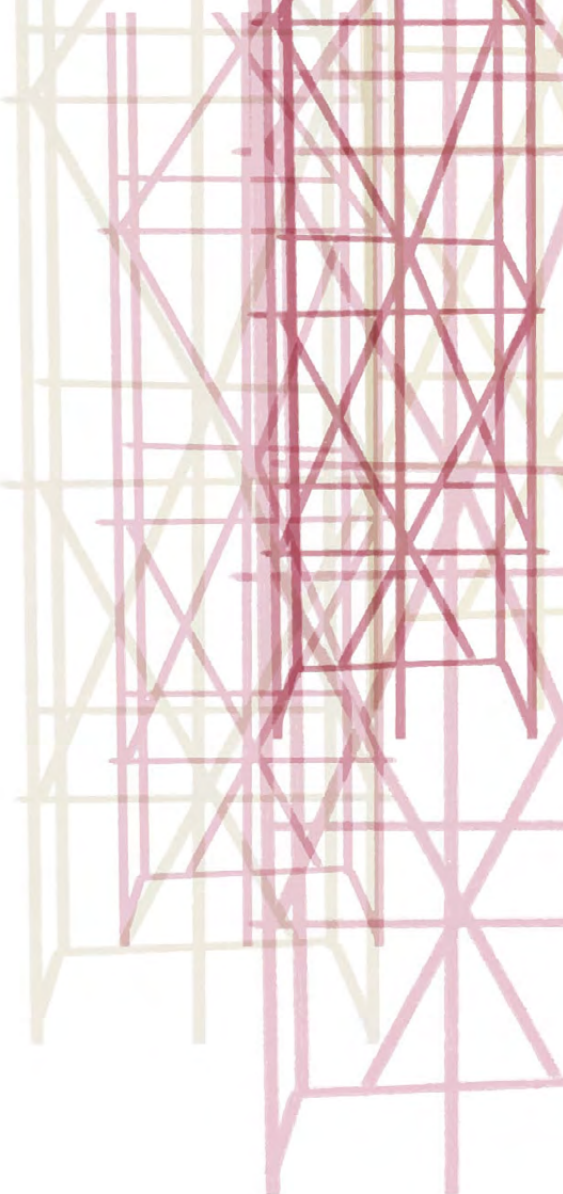
I took the following pictures because it is so depressing walking down Clongriffin Main Street. There are so many empty business units... Why aren't they in use? I've met many people locally who have had great ideas about what the units could be used for. People want to use their local amenities. People want a vibrant community. I have heard people talk many times about how great it would be to have proper cafes here... Instead we're left with window images of cartoon characters happily drinking coffee.



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There are not enough schools or amenities for children and young people in this area and it's spilling over. It's clear from talking to people and reading local Facebook pages that some serious anti-social behaviour is happening... I'm scared for the young people engaged in this activity...who knows what is going on in their lives. Unfortunately, I also find myself becoming scared of those young people too...





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Clongriffin DART Station used to be such a bright beautiful space... now it's depressing. I don't feel safe arriving here at night. I've seen people dealing drugs outside here - even people urinating in broad daylight... When I arrive at this station, it feels like a no go area. Once again, visual images are used to cover windows that are cracked and vandalised...It feels like this what's been happening in the local area over the past number of years. Pile people in and paper over the cracks.



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This is a blocked road which should link two roads together between Parkside/ Belmayne & Balgriffin. It has been like this for over 10 years & is a small inconvenience however it represents the Jurassic-like slowness of estates and infrastructure being taken in charge by DCC and/or Fingal. It represents to me estates and lives in transit, for such a long time now...



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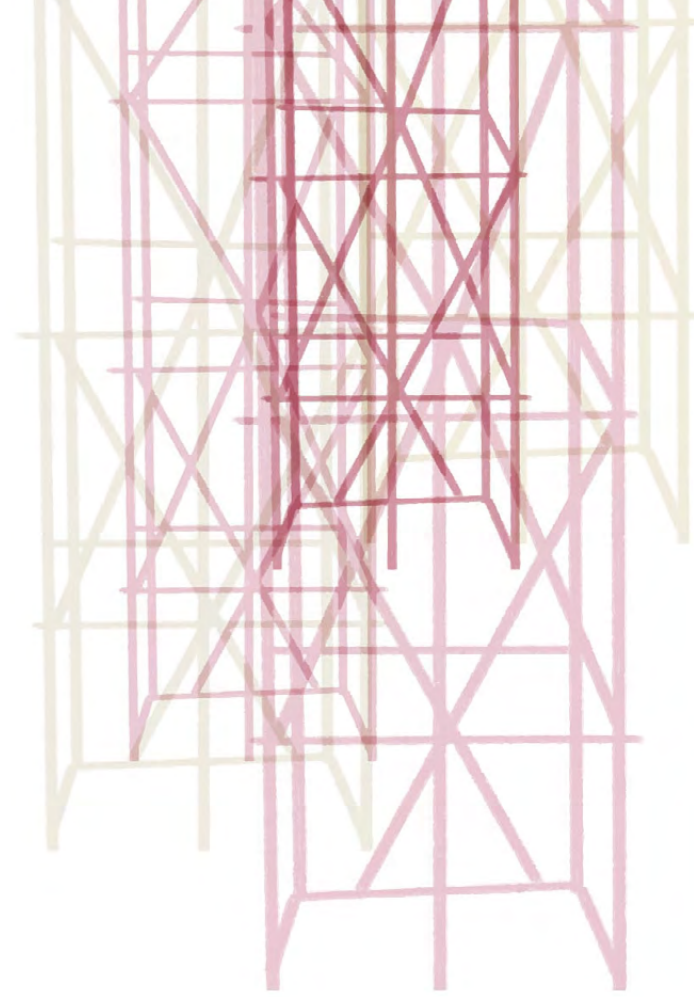
These top two photos are of Parkside. Beautiful and sunny, clean areas for children to play and a new astro pitch going in...The bottom photos are of Belmayne playground. Dirty, unsafe and locked shut so nobody can enter as it's so dangerous. When I first bought my house in Belmayne 13 years ago it was such a lovely development with great potential. It was a happy bright place to be and now I feel it's been abandoned and forgotten while all the new estates around us are getting great amenities for the residents who live there. There is also a creche here beside the playground and sadly the children can't use it.



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For me what this signifies are the plans that were made for this area to be a vibrant and busy area, full of shops and restaurants where local residents could enjoy a range of amenities on their doorstep and not have to travel to town to experience city life. In reality this has all been discarded, like the shopping trolleys and the vision that was sold to local residents has been taken away from them. It signifies loss rather than hope. In our job we are working with people who are the most marginalised and socially excluded and to me, Belmayne symbolises the inequities that exist within our structures.



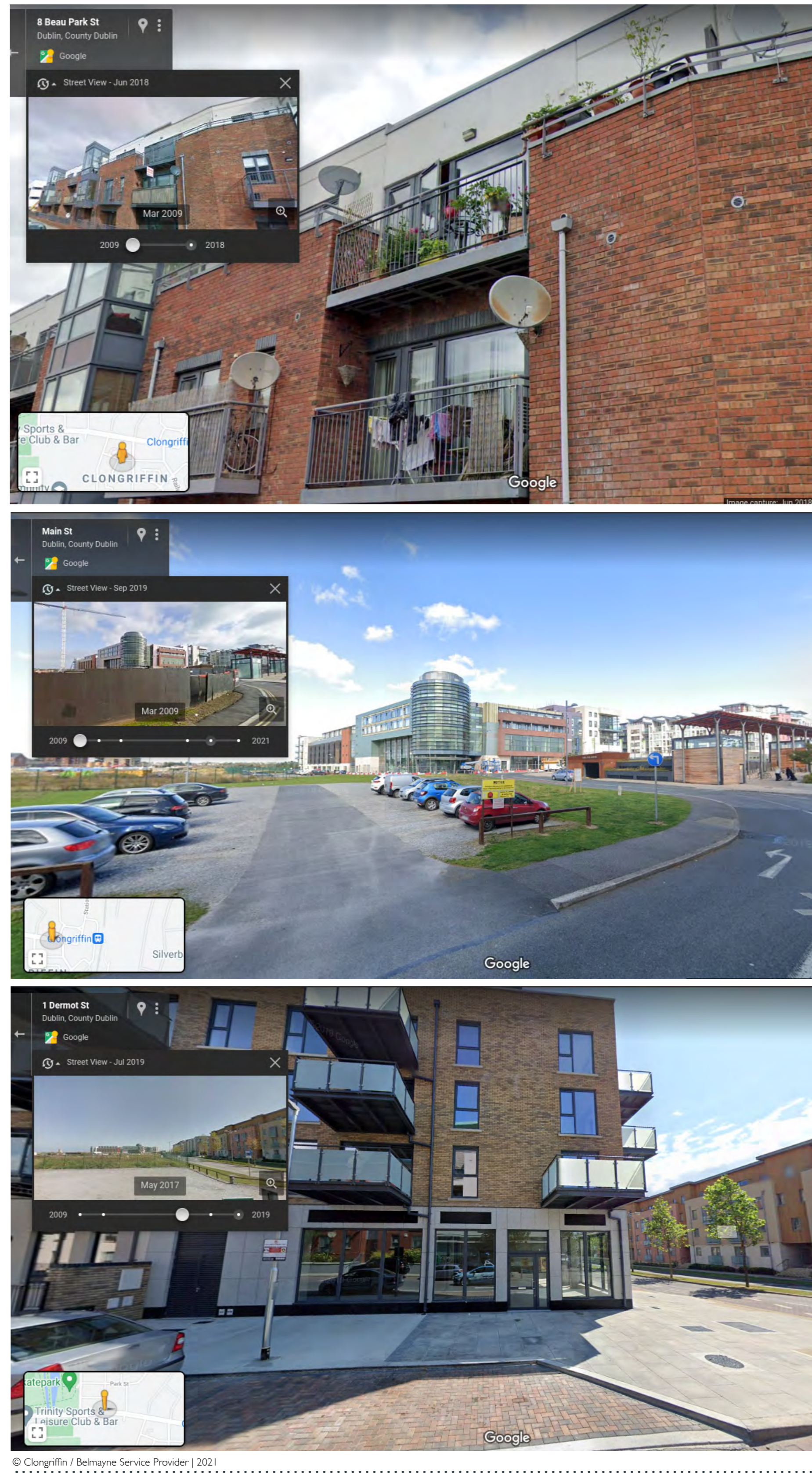


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The picture at the top is of Main Street in Belmayne. The road has been left in a poor state over the last 15 years. Dublin City Council (DCC) has been in the process of taking charge of this road for years.

The second picture shows the large fence surrounding Belmayne as the estate is surrounded by wasteland owned by DCC. The shopping trolleys shows the volume of shopping trolleys being left on the estate.

Then there are some pictures of which show the problem with litter at the estate and residents trying to tackle the problem by scheduling litter picking days.

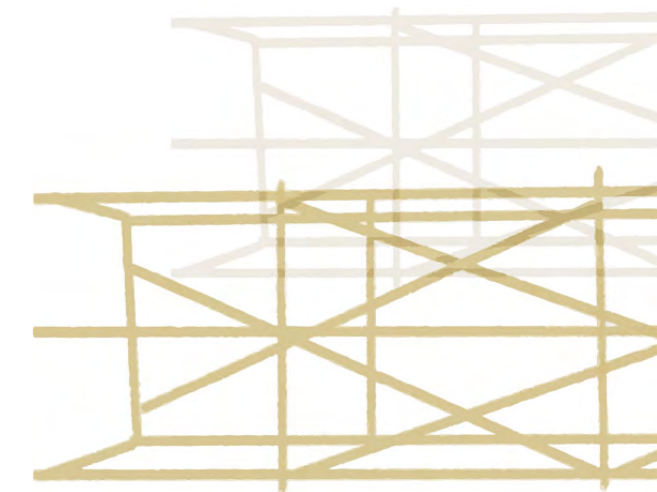


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I've used google street view to capture the ethereal quality of the area, because that's what it reminded me of - it's like a silent city-scape. These images show the area in 2019 versus 2009. So you can see the transition of the community, how it's changed over ten years. You can see that the main shopping centre had already been built in 2009, but nothing's really changed about it since. What does that say about the use of the community space? What does it say about what was planned and what has developed?

The second picture in 2009 shows an empty field, and in 2019 it's already a full apartment block - with retail potential but it's still empty. So it's still very much 'potential', everything is clean, but it's empty.

In 2009 it was vacant, and there are to-let/for sale signs up - whereas now there are potted plants on the balcony's; bikes; clothes drying - you can see cards in someone's kitchen window. So people are very much making these a home, people are caring about where they are living. I think it's quite intimate - going from an empty shell to people trying to create a community.



Belmayne/Clongriffin

Blocked Path to Doras Bui

1. Limited Accessibility

2. No direct Transport

3. No Support

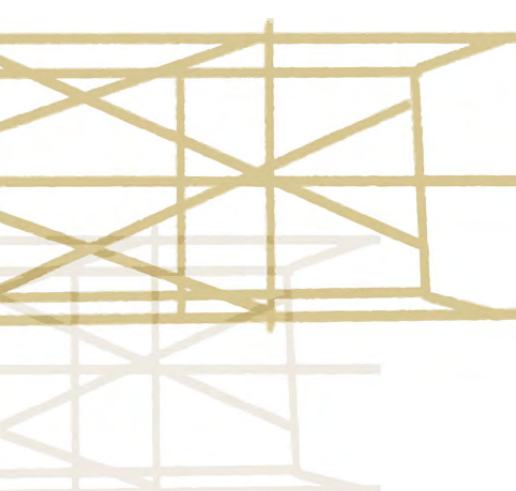
4. Isolated

5. Out of Reach

Trying to reach out to Families in Crisis.

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We already work with over 100 families in the area, and we were thinking of how we could work with them more effectively, and meet the needs of more families - and it's like there's a blocked path between Doras Bui and the families within Belmayne and Clongriffin. There's limited accessibility for people even in terms of transport - there's no direct transport. I know it appears that we might not be that far away, but really people need that link into us in order to get here. We have the space here to bring people in - but the distance seems to be a huge thing for people, especially people who are already feeling vulnerable or isolated - it's another block in the way of them getting to us, so it's frustrating that we can't get into the area to see them. If we could have access to some space, to have a presence that would be great. The lack of community space all feeds into people feeling isolated, no support, lonely - and we feel like people in Belmayne and Clongriffin are out of reach. Even though we're up here in Coolock, it just seems like a barrier, a block. That's why we'd love to have that space to get in there and support people.

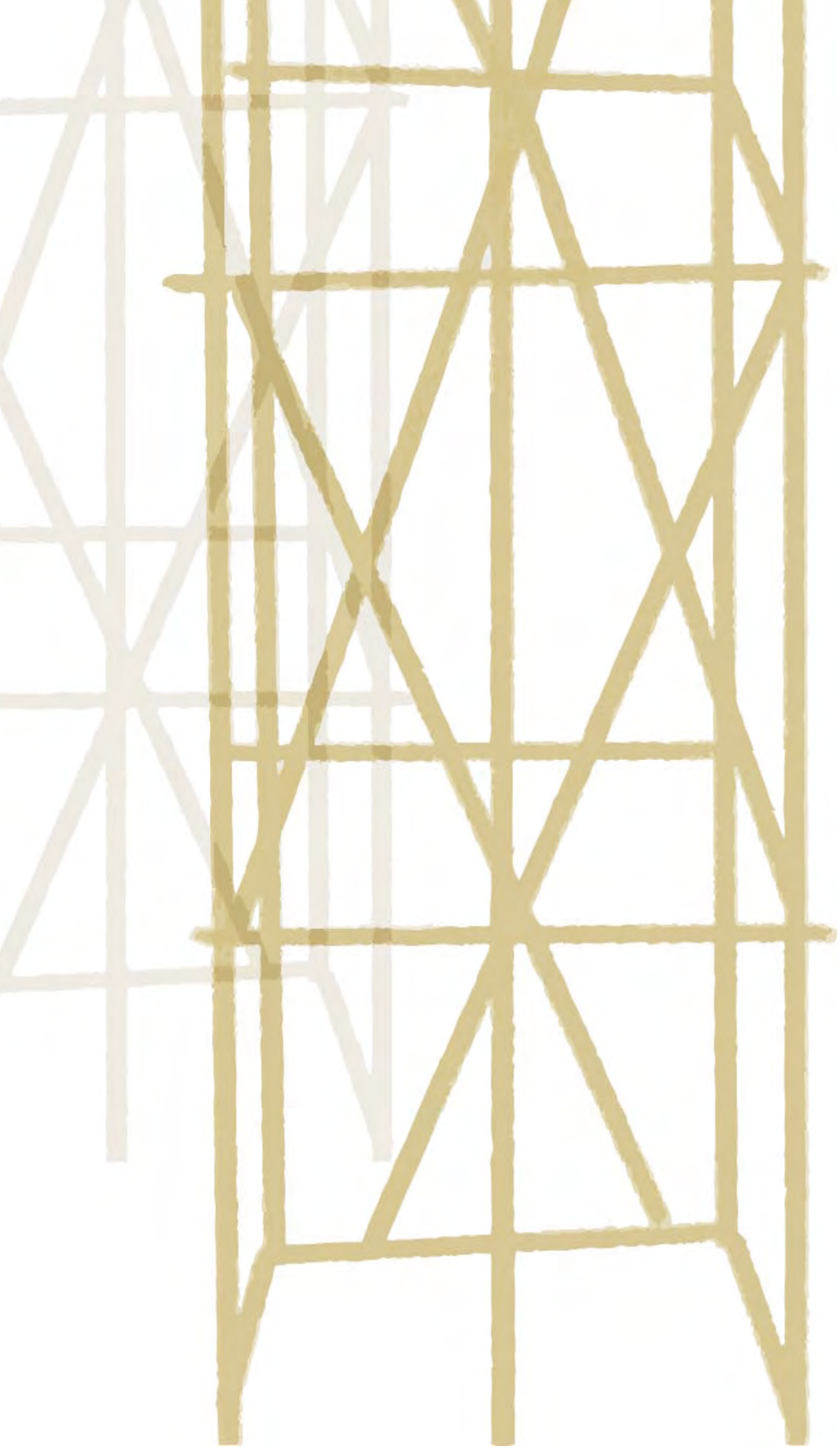




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It's like you have a community on one side who are all willing to do something, a large group of people who want to make a community and then on the other side of the bridge you've got all of us service providers who want to provide supports and to be in the area, but for some reason we can't meet and there is that gap...so you've got two sets of people who really want to work together but the opportunity hasn't always been there, so we're trying to bridge that gap. It's clear that access to space and premises in the area is one of the major barriers we have to bridging that gap as quickly as we'd like to.

“In our job we are working with people who are the most marginalised and socially excluded and to me, Belmayne symbolises the inequities that exist within our structures.”



“When I first bought my house in Belmayne 13 years ago it was such a lovely development with great potential. It was a happy bright place to be and now I feel it’s been abandoned and forgotten.”



“Apartments are being built so quickly and at such a dense rate that it feels like we are being closed in on. Everywhere you look there is high rise building... But no facilities to match the rate of growth of buildings.”

“It’s the hidden voices we don’t know about, that we don’t hear. The voices I hear at night-time – I don’t want to frighten you but it can be quite frightening because you don’t know what’s happening. There can be very distressing noises coming from people’s homes. To listen to that while you’re watching TV at night can be very scary. So this represents to me the hidden mental health issues that some families are dealing with, the isolation.”

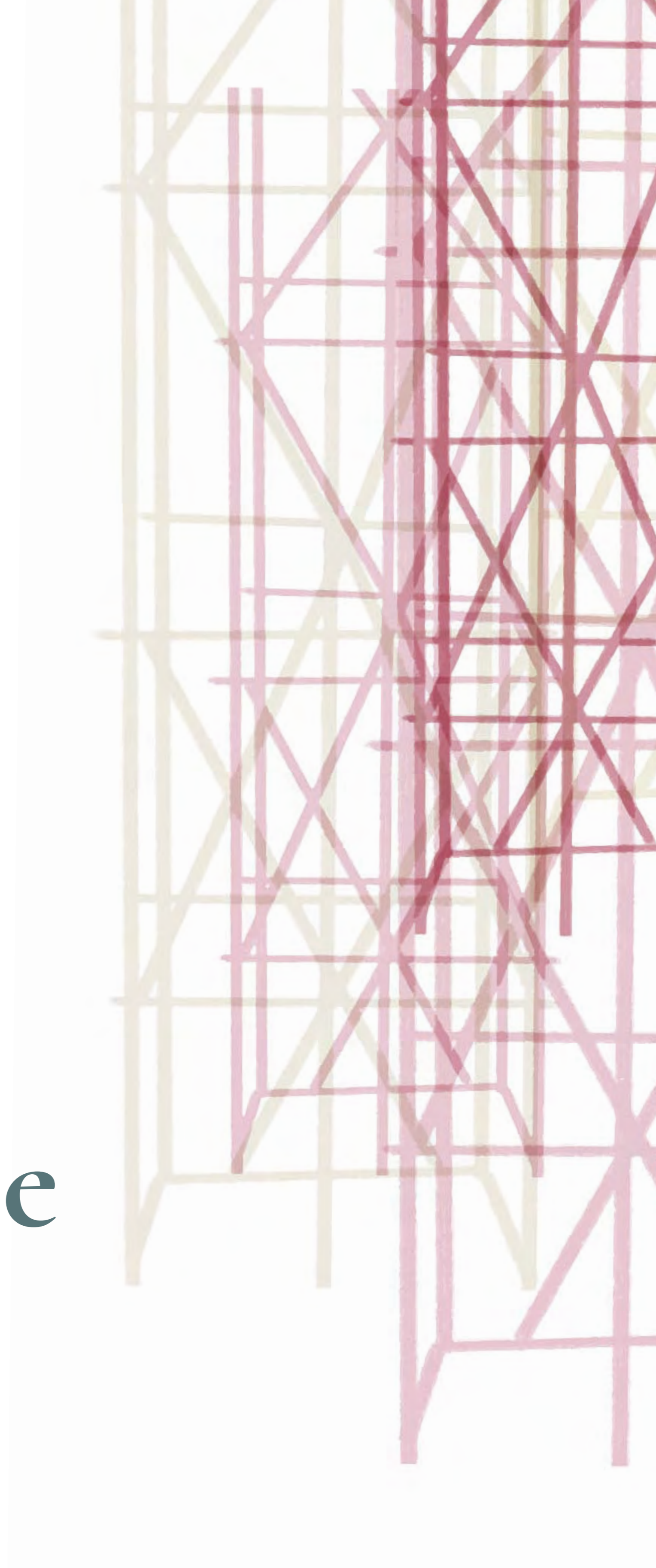




Voices of Adults

Voices of the Service Providers





Voices of Young People



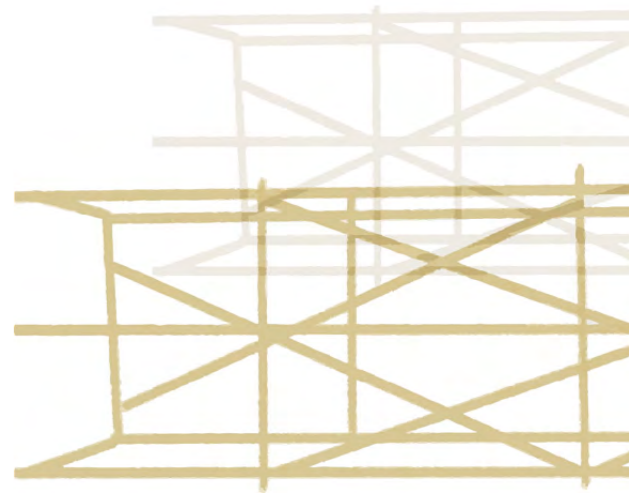


MANY HEARTS, NO HOMES

You walk in there and it's big and who are you here to see and what's your name and how many kids have you got, what those are you or... I haven't got a house I had to come in here to look for... and who did you look in for... so you the 10 residential that doesn't work out at all... because that's going on the day before you're to go remember that person's name and I don't know if you had to go in there and we'll see if you can be followed by someone else. Sure I'm also telling the secretary all the information and have to go to have to give all my information to someone else - nothing's changed!

All the travelling that you have to do when you're homeless. Between school you have to see your family and the waiting the length of time in the bus line and what this photograph reminds me of you know buses coming and going and the bus and waiting people to see everyone else moving and in the bus just waiting patiently to go.









I wanted to include something positive also regarding the community, and the sense of community spirit that exists. This was the result of a recent donation drive for recently arrived Afghan refugees.

None of us (including myself) knew these refugees and yet I am blown away by the generosity to help these families in such a short time. Over 14 families received clothes, shoes, jackets, toys (even two donated bicycles!) but also basic necessities such as toiletries, new underwear, socks, PJs as well as notebooks & pens and buggies for 3 families. We received such a massive response that in total 6 trips to Mosney were needed and twice even with two cars! I feel blessed to be part of such a caring neighbourhood.

