‘Pilot’
Town Centre Health Check

Key Findings and Lessons Learned from Monaghan
Dr. Luke Kelleher (UCD)
Máire Cullinan (Monaghan County Council)
Introduction

Context
• **GIS Planning Project Module** - 2nd year undergraduates
• 12 week - 5 credit module designed for students with little or no previous GIS experience
• Great opportunity offered by **The Heritage Council/RGDATA** to incorporate Monaghan Town Centre Health Check into the curriculum
• Final Module Assessment designed to satisfy both Module learning objectives and **Monaghan County Council**’s requirements
UCD Working in Partnership with Monaghan County Council and Heritage Council

Integrated Approach

• Identify/Gather relevant GIS OSI materials through Monaghan County Council GIS Department
• Town Centre Health Check Workshop Naas, 29th September
• October 6th Meeting between UCD and Monaghan County Council - generated a mutually agreed Action Plan
• October 26th 2016 Monaghan County Council and The Heritage Council lecture at UCD- generated interest amongst students
• November 5th UCD Planning Students fieldtrip to Monaghan – working along with Monaghan County Council Staff
UCD Field trip to Monaghan Town Centre – Saturday 5th November 2016

Town Centre Divided into 6 Survey Zones

Working along with Monaghan County Council Staff
Field trip - Methodology

OS Map, Record Sheet, GOAD Classification
Field trip – Student Engagement
6 Groups of 4 Students
GIS Planning Project Module

Student Project Outputs

6 Group Projects
- Socio - Economic Profile of the Town
- Land Use Survey
- Vacancy Rate Survey
- Footfall Survey
Group Project Final Output
Land Use Survey Key Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Buildings (Ground Floor only)</th>
<th>Number of Buildings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Business Services</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Medical Services</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Services</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Transport Facility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Service</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Other</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Residential</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Group Project Final Output**

**Vacancy Survey Key Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail Vacancy Rate</th>
<th>Number of Buildings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Service</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Retail</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail Only</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residential Vacancy Rate</th>
<th>Number of Buildings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Residential</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Residential only</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Co-operation between Council and 3rd Level Institution
• Requirement for OSI data agreement

Requirement of Accurate Data Collection in the Field
• GOAD Classification Issues
• Creation of an Irish Town Centre Health Check Landuse Classification – GIS requirements
• Necessary to be close to assigned town for QA purposes
• Data Cleaning Process

Surveying Landuse/Vacancy Rates above Ground Floor
• Resource and time intensive

Multi-Disciplinary Research Approach Required
• GIS and Planning
• Students’ engagement-positive feedback
This semester the same students are undertaking preparation of a local development plan for Monaghan Town:

- **Scoping exercise** of the local context

- **Physical analysis** of Monaghan Town Centre, applying principles of urban analysis of the physical urban form, townscape analysis and land-use and urban character surveys. *Field trip: Saturday 25th February.*

- **A SWOT** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) **analysis** of Monaghan and a vision for future development.

Students will develop site-specific proposals and priorities for the future development of Monaghan Town Centre. *Due for completion May 2017.*
‘Pilot’
Town Centre Health Check

Key findings and lessons learned from Monaghan
Máire Cullinan (Monaghan County Council)
County Monaghan – background issues

Dispersed rural population between 5 towns, villages and countryside

County pop. 60,483
Monaghan Town & environs pop. 7,452 (Census 2011)

Tradition of small farm holdings and diversification into agri-food and engineering (employment is dispersed)

Challenge of building critical mass in our towns (population and employment base)

Resilient Border communities - currency differential resulted in cautious business investments

BREXIT - unprecedented uncertainty – 600+ pieces of legislation for UK to look at competitive advantage

Local Authority has a role in making our towns attractive to live in and to entice investment
Role and function of our Town

Monaghan: employment/retail/administrative

What’s good? - Historical character, urban form, strategic location between Belfast, Dublin and the NW, quality and choice of secondary schools, quality of life, variety of non-branded retail outlets, car parking, amenity, friendly, night life

What’s missing? – youth population, highly skilled graduate job opportunities, health care, third level education, large scale private investment, range of services, bed night space, connectivity

Need to grow to sustain services
Regeneration in our Towns

Vacancy levels: 2016 Census figure for vacant dwellings 20.6% (Monaghan Urban)

TCHC findings - 20% vacant residential, 23% vacant retail

Urban Regeneration – to breathe life back into the towns (existing infrastructure, roads, water, heritage, amenities, shopping, services and communities)

IT MAKES SENSE - ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL and there is CAPACITY IN OUR TOWNS

Renewal – change in use patterns of town centres – less traditional retail, more social activity?

Consolidate/redefine our town centres to incorporate more living:
- investigate models for this (back lands, narrow plot)
- accommodate ageing population / families
- look at incentivising supports to property owners
- look at supports to Councils for land assembly and funding mechanisms
- review the thresholds for vacant site levy (0.05 ha)
Need for effective baseline data

A limited in-house vacancy survey carried out in November 2013 (identified 83 vacant commercial premises in Monaghan Town centre)
-not prepared in the context of overall land use survey or as a percentage of overall commercial premises

UCD has provided a quantitative land use survey that can be incorporated into Council’s GIS and;
✓ provides a database that can be reviewed annually
✓ allows for analysis of land use activity
✓ inform the review of the county development plan
✓ focus on areas for renewal
✓ evidence-based approach to regeneration

‘Pilot’ warmly welcomed by Monaghan, opportunity for collaborative approach and to deliver baseline of data

Monaghan Town Team and residents had a warm welcome for and were delighted to see students taking an interest in their town
Using the data

Benefit of rollout of the TCHC programme in a number of towns: compare and contrast data

An opportunity to benchmark against similar sized towns: are there types of retail businesses and services in other towns that Monaghan should reasonably expect for their own town? (Opportunity for Town Team to follow up)

Dublin Street regeneration plan: data currently being used by consultants to inform their report
Continuing the cooperation with UCD

2nd semester (Spring 2017) students project – addressing urban form and public realm

• Analysing their primary land use data along with other primary data collected through other Monaghan County Council projects e.g. traffic and parking surveys
• Looking in more detail at specific town centre areas
• Good to have other perspectives on our Town and an opportunity for students to apply their planning knowledge
Lessons Learned

Good relationship with UCD to deliver land use survey and on-going public realm

Importance of effective GIS resource in Local Authorities (worked well in Monaghan)

Constraints of project – resource-laden: no budget within Council to deliver shopper surveys (€15,000+) and retailer surveys (not delivered by UCD due to time and distance constraints)

Data unavailable at local town level e.g. retail rental yields, that is available to larger urban centres

Examine ways of delivering on the constraints: technology, central resource base, particularly for smaller towns with ineffective budgets

Benefits of collective approach of ten pilots: learning and benchmarking

Opportunity to work together again with Third level would be warmly welcomed
And finally....

A word of appreciation to Ali in the Heritage Council and Tara in RGDATA for their leadership in the ‘pilot’ programme

Bringing together the four pillars:

✓ Local Authorities
✓ Third Level
✓ Town Teams/Chambers
✓ Local civic groups e.g. Tidy Towns

Highlight the need for effective town centre management to achieve revitalisation

Effective town centre management can only be achieved through collaboration, and, a good evidence based baseline of data is essential
Thank you

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