

Nottingham Urban Room

Location:

38 Carrington Street, Nottingham.

Run by:

Urban Room Steering Group.

Commissioned by:

Urban Room Partnership: Nottingham City Council; Historic England; Urban Design Group; RIBA; NDSA; University of Nottingham; Nottingham Trent University.

Date:

2018-2020.

Timing:

Temporary shop lease 2018-2020, then as a pop-up. Due to reopen in March 2024 as a permanent UR.

Space:

Renovated former shop in a historic building within a city centre regeneration area.

Description:

The Urban Room was located in a high street shop renovated through a Townscape Heritage Scheme. The premises offered ground floor space for exhibitions and events and a basement available to hire for workshops, meetings and events. The Urban Room was a fundamental vehicle for the delivery of the Co-PLACE programme: a neutral space with an inspirational and creative atmosphere that helped people relax and gave them the confidence to participate in activities, given the friendly and welcoming environment. In the wake of the 2020 Pandemic Crisis, during the first lock-down, the Urban Room evolved into a virtual platform to continue to serve the community and provide ongoing opportunities for the delivery of Co-PLACE.



Image and Credit:

Nottingham Urban Room

Aims of the UR:

The Urban Room is a space for everyone with an interest in making Nottingham a better place and creating safe and exciting spaces in the city. We all have a role to play in making Nottingham a welcoming and supporting place where people want to live. Together, we can build a city that we are proud of, one that future generations love and treasure. The priorities of the UR align with the United Nations sustainable development goals:

- Climate change
- Social inclusion
- Public health
- Place democracy
- Economic recovery
- Education and skills

How was the UR funded and resourced?

Lottery Fund Heritage Action Zone; in kind and donations from partners.

Activities of the UR:

The Nottingham UR employed various methods including drawing and printing workshops, photography exhibitions, architectural trails, presentations and conversations. During the Design Quality Framework engagement project we used 'social eating', where event participants prepare and share a meal together, as a tool to collect data and to generate and strengthen social networks. Local growing networks provided the produce and catered for informal meals that helped to generate a relaxed and communal atmosphere where participants felt confident and at ease to discuss potentially sensitive issues.



Image and Credit:
Nottingham Urban Room

Impact of the UR:

On placemaking:

The Urban Room was regularly used for engagement and conversations on pretty much every development being consulted in Nottingham, as well as a base office for the Heritage Panel and other place-based organisations. Engagement regarding the co-production of design guidance and policy in the city also happened at the urban room, as well as training for officers, planning committee, industry and community groups.

On participants:

Visitors who have participated in the Urban Room events and activities have been empowered through gaining interpersonal skills (socialising, forming new partnerships, finding ways to achieve their goals through collaboration, cross age engagement, etc.) as well as furthering their knowledge of their environment. Visitor feedback generally praised the relaxed, neutral atmosphere and the fact that participants did not feel like they were at an institution with a pre-loaded agenda. Feedback from the Social Eating sessions repeatedly reflected the success of this communal approach. Participants said that sharing a table with food was a powerful way to bring people together.



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On the host organisation:

The UR was a fundamental vehicle for the partners - to disseminate their expertise, find volunteering action, reach out to people, develop skills through collaboration and action research, etc. Our Social Eating events were critically important to showcase how existing social assets and tools can be integrated successfully in planning processes.

What was the primary challenge for your UR and how did you tackle it?

Funding to support a physical space - we had Lottery Funds for 5 years but once that time lapsed we lost the shop. Now we are negotiating some rent relief from a city council building to re-open in another location.

What advice would you give someone setting up an Urban Room?

It can be incredibly rewarding and exciting for participants and the public. It requires a lot of work and volunteering input. Be prepared to work hard and think outside the box to make it happen.

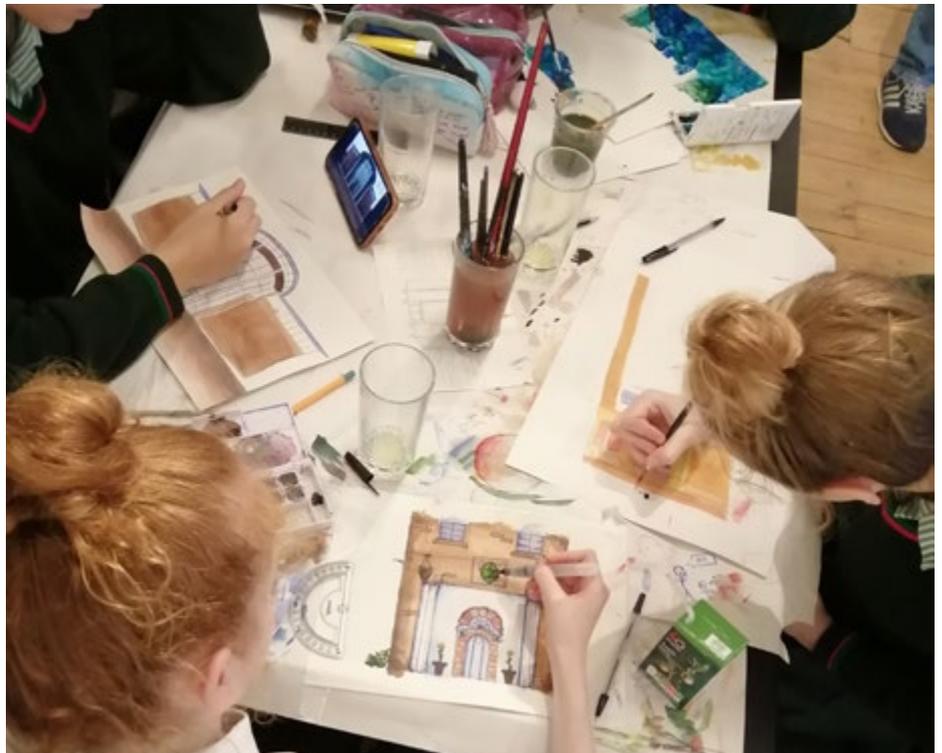


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More information:
www.urbanroomsnetwork.org/network/
www.38carringtonstreet.org.uk
www.mynottinghamnews.co.uk/nottinghams-urban-room-officially-opens-on-carrington-street/

Acknowledgements:

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Graphic design by [Jon Cannon](#)
Website design by [Ross Bennett](#)

The Urban Rooms Toolkit is a public resource to be used, downloaded and shared by anyone interested in situated creative community engagement in placemaking. If you have any ideas or experience you would like to share and potentially contribute to the Toolkit please join the [Urban Rooms Network](#)!

This document is a downloadable, printer friendly version of the Urban Rooms Toolkit which can be found at urbanroomstoolkit.org

