Dublin City Council

Enabling Ireland's policy makers to implement well-informed, evidence-based and effective housing strategies

Challenge

With its bustling city centre, excellent amenities and varied employment opportunities, Dublin is a very popular place to live. Consequently, there is heavy demand for housing, and rental prices are among the highest in Ireland. Dublin City Council wanted to give public sector bodies better access to accurate, up-to-date data about the housing market, so that policy makers could make evidence-based decisions and implement new strategies to make Dublin an affordable and sustainable place to live.

With this aim in mind, the council formed a research unit called the Dublin Housing Observatory and began working with the All Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO) to develop a proof of concept for an online geospatial data sharing solution. The Dublin Housing Observatory established data sharing agreements with a range of partners including the Central Statistics Office, Residential Tenancy Board, Private Property Register and Department of Housing among others. However, it still needed a robust and versatile technical infrastructure capable of hosting the solution and making the data accessible to a wide range of different audiences, in a format that was easy to use.

Solution

The timing was perfect. Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) had just developed a new data sharing platform called GeoHive that met the technical requirements of the city's ambitious project. All of the data collected was transferred under agreement to GeoHive and the Dublin Housing Observatory's Data Navigator came to life. "We were delighted to get in at the early stage of GeoHive's development," says Dr Dáithí Downey, who is Senior Executive Officer at Dublin City Council and leads the Dublin Housing Observatory. "GeoHive met the technical requirements of our project straight away, giving everyone easy access to the large amount of data that we had assembled."

Now, anyone can use GeoHive to access authoritative, up-to-date information on all aspects of the housing market, from house prices and rentals to planned new housing developments. Users simply click on the data sets that they are interested in and the information is displayed visually in an interactive map that they can zoom into, interrogate and easily understand. "OSi brought expertise and accompanying good will to our project," Downey says. "From the outset, there was a real energy and excitement around the use of the GeoHive platform."

Benefits

Key benefits of the Dublin Housing Observatory Data Navigator include:

Easy access to accurate, authoritative data

Through the use of OSi's GeoHive platform, Dublin City Council is making accurate, up-to-date and authoritative data about Dublin's housing market accessible to policy makers across local and central government and to the public generally. For the first time, key evidence that teams might need to inform their decisions and develop new housing strategies is in one place, where it can be easily analysed using the data navigator and digital mapping interface. The Dublin Housing Observatory Data Navigator has reach and is used by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, ESRI and others to inform research on changes in Dublin's residential property market.

A fuller picture of housing demand and supply

The interactive nature of the GeoHive platform allows users to zoom into maps and explore the Dublin Housing Observatory data at a granular level. Consequently, users can see not just the average rent value for a neighbourhood area or the actual prices for individual property sales but specific values for exact streets and locations within neighbourhoods. Users can also see the population structure, social economic data and other contextual information to help them build up a much fuller picture of housing demand and supply. Dublin City Council used the solution during the production of its new city development plan to help produce a new Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) for the whole city including sub-city analysis of different parts of the city with different housing profiles.
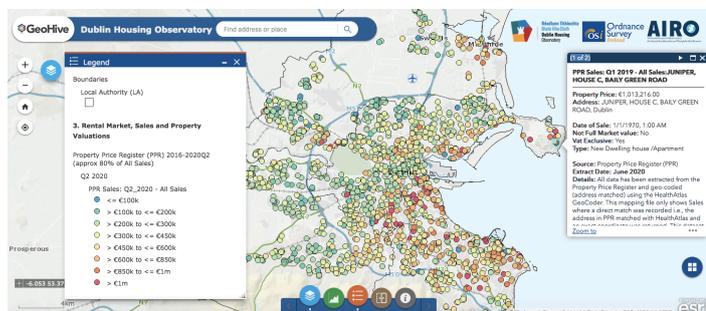
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>
> Dr Dáthí Downey, Dublin City Council

Improved awareness of housing issues

To help support the Dublin City Development Plan 2022-2018 and its Housing Strategy, the Dublin Housing Observatory will be streaming live data from GeoHive into a series of story maps, called the Dublin Housing Atlas, to help highlight key housing issues to a wider audience. In addition, local councillors can use GeoHive to find out exactly what is happening in specific neighbourhoods and have better informed dialogues with their constituents. "The data in GeoHive helps us address questions on what is going on in local housing markets and what we are going to do about housing issues facing communities," Downey explains.

Successful public sector collaboration

Downey believes that the Dublin Housing Observatory Data Navigator is a great example of successful public sector collaboration and a clear illustration of the government's Public Sector Data Strategy in action. The project takes data that is collected and maintained by other public organisations, geocodes it and makes it accessible for public use generally as well as for research and strategy. "Stitching the data together to better reveal the geography of Dublin's housing is the exciting bit," he says. "We have really benefited from OSi's remarkable competencies in this area, over many years. Working with OSi is an engaging, creative and collaborative venture."