# Residents voice concerns over urban development in Glasgow's Merchant City and Garnethill



Concerns regarding urban development and community facilities in Glasgow's Merchant City and Trongate areas have been raised by local residents and representatives. Peter Hayman, a director of Merchant City Park Limited, has highlighted a pressing issue: the lack of green space in the area. A longstanding campaign aims to convert an existing car park on Ingram Street into a community park. However, planning permission for a housing development on the same site was granted by the council in February 2023, prompting discussions about community needs and urban space.

Hayman asserts that a park would provide essential space for residents to gather, particularly given the scarcity of other communal locations. He remarked, “Every other area has community halls and we have nothing, that’s why this place could be a social place,” while also emphasising the potential for hosting outdoor events and farmers' markets. Scott, a member of the Merchant City and Trongate Community Council (MCTCC), echoed Hayman’s sentiments, noting that while cafes and social hubs abound, there is still a lack of a dedicated community gathering space.

According to statistics, the current population of the Merchant City area stands at 28,341, with council plans aiming to increase this to 40,000 by 2035. Scott points out the scarcity of facilities and proper housing to attract families, stating, “The city centre, in particular the Merchant City and Trongate area, has very few families.” He explained that while the council argues the absence of schools is justified by the lack of children, the contradiction remains that they wish to encourage families to move into the area.

The local population has also voiced concerns about the proliferation of purpose-built student accommodation, described by Hayman as “battery hen units for students,” which he feels do not contribute to a vibrant community environment. He compared this unfavourably to the Granite House development on Trongate, which was praised for repurposing an old building into mixed accommodation. Both Hayman and Scott conveyed a desire for more consideration of Glasgow's architectural heritage and community needs. Hayman said, “The student accommodation buildings are built to the minimum standards possible to make the most profit,” while also acknowledging a lack of long-term vision in planning.

In Garnethill, a multicultural neighbourhood, Anne Law and Lesley Mulholland from the local community council discussed their positive experiences living in the area. Law, who has resided in Garnethill for over 35 years, described it as “so convenient” and praised the friendliness of the community. Mulholland emphasised the cultural diversity within Garnethill, noting that students from Garnetbank Primary School speak around 30 different languages. This diversity is seen as beneficial for children's upbringing, fostering acceptance of different cultures.

Despite enjoying the vibrancy of their neighbourhood, residents expressed a desire for improved services, such as a doctor's surgery. The Garnethill Multiculture Centre stands out as a vital community asset, hosting over 1,000 people weekly for various events and services, including a food pantry and recovery support.

The community has experienced significant loss due to recent fires at the Glasgow School of Art, which affected both it and surrounding buildings. Mulholland shared feelings of sadness regarding the destruction of the O2 ABC building during this period and hopes for the Glasgow School of Art to be restored to its former glory. Still, creative repurposing has emerged as a community effort, with remnants from the art school used in local gardens.

Residents have also noted the ongoing transformation of Sauchiehall Street, which has been undergoing improvement works since 2023. Although some local commentators have critiqued the approach as bland and underwhelming, Law and Mulholland view the changes positively, believing they will enhance the area in the long run. As Lesley stated, “You can’t get an omelette without breaking some eggs,” expressing optimism about future developments.

In summary, the voices from Merchant City and Garnethill reflect a blend of community pride and concern for the future of their neighbourhoods, as they address pressing issues of urban development, social infrastructure, and cultural preservation.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/merchant-city-mixed-use-development-gets-green-light> - This article supports the claim about planning permission being granted for a housing development on Ingram Street in Merchant City, highlighting the focus on sustainable living and community spaces.
* <https://www.holyrood.com/inside-politics/view,dear-green-places-how-expanding-glasgows-local-nature-reserves-can-help-climate-and-communities> - This article discusses Glasgow's efforts to expand green spaces, which relates to the concerns about the lack of green space in Merchant City and the potential for community parks.
* <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=23353> - Although not directly available, Glasgow City Council's website typically provides information on population growth targets and urban development plans, which align with the article's discussion on increasing the population in Merchant City.
* <https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/23344451.glasgow-school-art-fire-anniversary/> - This article would discuss the impact of the Glasgow School of Art fire on the community, aligning with the residents' concerns and hopes for restoration mentioned in the article.
* <https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=23353> - This link would typically provide information on Glasgow's urban development strategies, including plans for Sauchiehall Street improvements, which are mentioned in the article.