
Cork City Centre Strategy

FEBRUARY 2014

COLLIERS INTERNATIONAL
WITH
BRADY SHIPMAN MARTIN
BJERKNE & CO

CORK CITY COUNCIL

COLLIERS INTERNATIONAL

Company registered in Ireland no. 20138
 Registered office
 Hambleden House, 19 – 26 Lower Pembroke Street
 Dublin 2
 Tel: +353 (0) 1 633 3700
www.colliers.com

CONTACT

Roger Hobkinson
 Director | Destination Consulting
 T: +353 (0) 1 633 3759
 M: +355 (0) 87131 6764
 E: roger.hobkinson@colliers.com

David Geddes
 Principal Consultant | Destination Consulting
 T: +44 (0) 20 7344 6582
 M: +44 (0) 7801 654 709
 E: david.geddes@colliers.com

Version Control	
Status	FINAL UPDATE
Project ID	13977
Filename/Document ID	1397720CorkCCStrategy UPDATE 210214.docx
Last Saved	13 March 2014
Owner	Roger Hobkinson & David Geddes
Director	Roger Hobkinson
Approved by	Roger Hobkinson
Date Approved	FEBRUARY 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 HEADLINES	4
2 A FRESH VISION	8
2.1 A HEALTHY HEART FOR THE CORK REGION	8
2.2 CITIES DRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	9
3 THE BIG PICTURE	11
3.1 REBALANCING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	11
3.2 THE CORK CITY CONTEXT	12
3.3 KEY ISSUES	17
4 RECOMMENDED STRATEGY	19
4.1 A HEALTHY HEART STRATEGY	19
4.2 CHARACTER AREAS	20
4.3 OFFICE	27
4.4 RETAIL	29
4.5 VISITOR ECONOMY	33
4.6 RESIDENTIAL	34
5 ACTION PLAN	37
5.1 READY FOR ACTION	37
5.2 IMPROVEMENT	37
5.3 MARKETING	46
5.4 MANAGEMENT	49
5.5 PRACTICAL INITIATIVES	51
6 CONCLUSIONS	56
6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS	56
6.2 DELIVERY	57

1 HEADLINES

SITUATION

The ambition of this Cork City Centre Strategy is to help deliver a **healthy heart** for the Cork Region and the south of Ireland that helps grow the Irish economy.

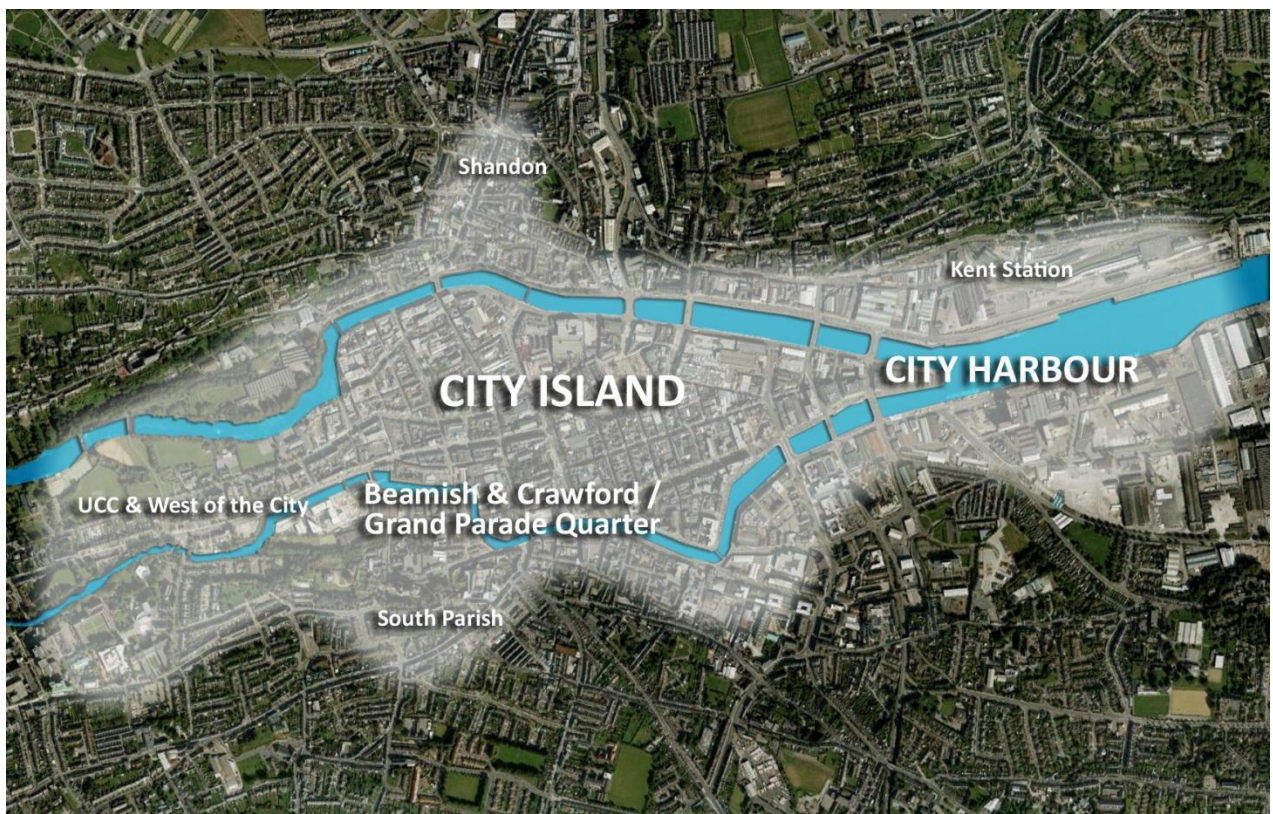
Cork City Centre needs a better portfolio of products and services that an ambitious European City Region should offer the domestic and global market.

Without further modernisation and with continued dispersed development on the City periphery, Cork City Centre area will decline further.

Cork City Centre is where **sustainable** economic development, growth, jobs and wealth can be achieved in the short, medium and long term. In particular, it should be the focus for large scale office development to **accommodate the jobs** the Cork Region will attract in the coming years. This will also support the City Centre retail, leisure and hospitality sectors.

Cork City Centre is lagging behind other comparable “core second cities” in Europe such as Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Swansea, Gothenburg, Malmö, Lille, Lyon and Barcelona in its urban revitalisation.

Figure 1: A River and Harbour front City Centre



An enlarged Cork City Centre that reflects its nature as a river and harbour front city. This is where much of the future growth discussed at the Cork Global Economic Forum in October 2013 can and should be accommodated.

Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

ACTIONS

A genuine partnership approach between Cork stakeholders should deliver a **rebalancing** of economic activity towards the City Centre. This should be facilitated by a flexible, non-prescriptive and certain planning policy for the City Centre.

The City Council is progressing **strong and integrated** City Centre focused strategies, initiatives and projects. The County Council are also aware of the need to strengthen the City Centre as the hub and showcase of the Cork and South West Regions, indeed the south of the island of Ireland. Paralleling the Joint City County Retail Strategy, a **Joint Employment Strategy** should be developed to co-ordinate policy in relation to employment locations and thus support the revitalisation of the City Centre.

A significant amount of large vacant and underused land and property assets owned or controlled by State Agencies and large corporate businesses exist in and around the City Centre. This is an **amazing** opportunity for the State to help deliver a step change in the **economic performance** of the City Centre, Cork and South West Region.

CIE, Port of Cork, NAMA, Cork City Council

DELIVERY, DELIVERY, DELIVERY

At this stage of the economic and property cycle, State agencies, through genuine partnership working, championing and funding are encouraged to **unlock** the significant land (public and private) assets, resources and capacity that exist in the City Centre and its immediate fringe.

Projects that have lower costs of entry, can work off existing assets and energy plus underused land and property, are likely to be a priority. State support and funding will be required.

Progress on transformational, catalyst and practical initiative projects should start as soon as possible. A fast speed to market is required in combination with an integrated approach to unlocking assets.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

A **modern office district**, with large floorplate offices; an **Events** centre; **Food and Technology** sector hubs; a tourist and cultural **attraction**; good quality **urban housing**; all within a **better presented** urban environment with improved road network that is pedestrian and cycle friendly.

FRESH STRUCTURES ARE NEEDED

For delivery Cork City Council and its partners must resource and give 100% support to the creation of the following.

- 1 A **City Centre Partnership Team**, to broker relationships, support the better presentation, organisation and operation of the City Centre
- 2 A **City Centre Liaison**, to broker relationships, deal with day to day business and operational issues, plus animate the City Centre. They would operate similar to a best in class regional shopping centre manager.

- A **fresh vision** for Cork City to be seen as the capital of the south of the island of Ireland and the place to accommodate much of the future growth
- The need for a flexible and non-prescriptive approach to **planning** that gives certainty and supports high quality, integrated urban development
- Fresh **structures** that include delivery and management partnerships to provide further confidence to the private sector.

As the Irish economy moves into **recovery and growth** phases over the next 18 months, this strategy supports the increasingly strong investment story for Ireland and Cork. In an increasingly competitive and collaborative era of city regions this strategy will help Cork grow the Irish economy to deliver **sustainable economic growth** for the future.

2 A FRESH VISION

2.1 A HEALTHY HEART FOR THE CORK REGION



The driving idea in this report is that, in the Cork Region, there must be a **rebalancing** of economic activity into Cork City Centre. The Cork Region needs a much healthier heart. This means an increased critical mass of activity and vibrancy in Cork City Centre. A renaissance of the City Centre of the second city of the State and the major urban centre in the south of the island of Ireland should be urgently pursued. Cork is, by some way, the second city of the State. Cork City Centre is where **sustainable economic development, jobs and wealth** can be created in the short, medium and longer term to help grow the Irish economy.

This means a strategic or “holistic” approach is taken to strengthening the products, services, the offer, experience and reputation of the City Centre. There must be improvements in property, infrastructure, services, management and marketing of the City Centre.

2.1.1 CORE PRINCIPLE

The principal objective is more **people** working in, living in, shopping in, spending leisure time in, and visiting the city centre. However the significant achievements in the City Centre over the past 20 years should also be acknowledged, specifically the increasing residential population, upgrading of the public realm, new shopping districts and improved public transport and non-car transport modes. This objective going forward requires:

- Development of modern business workplaces;
- The infrastructure for high quality city living, working and visiting e.g. transport, cycling, schools, quality public spaces;
- Development of places for people to live;
- Keeping the retail, leisure and cultural offer fresh and appealing.

RECOVERY AND GROWTH

As the country slowly moves into recovery mode, this report identifies three strategies to deliver revitalisation of the City Centre:

- 1 Improvement and Development
- 2 Marketing
- 3 Management

Cork City Council and its partners should pursue these strategies with a determination that the City Centre will enjoy the best years in its history in the

Cork City Council commissioned the **Destination Consulting team of Colliers International** with the assistance of **Brady Shipman Martin** to advise them what they should do to ensure the long term success of Cork City Centre.

Bjerkne & Co provided their practical experience of leading an urban renaissance in Gothenburg City Centre in the early 1990's.

years to come. Within each, there are different types of projects to help revitalise the City Centre. Some are more practical, designed to deliver early wins or the “**low hanging fruit**” for City Centre businesses.

It is important that City Centre business continue to consider what they can do to improve the City Centre attractiveness to their target markets.

For example

- Ensure customer service is as good as possible and delivered consistently;
- Present shop units with quality inside and out;
- Opening hours respond to emerging demand trends;
- Best practice from around the world is understood and applied in the Cork context;
- Organise, manage and brand themselves as a collective to achieve more.

Others are larger complex projects, with the aim of delivering an economic step change for Cork in the medium and long term.

The upcoming centenary of many **milestones** in Irish and Cork history provides a timeline to help frame the revitalisation of Cork City Centre.

2.2 CITIES DRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Competition and collaboration between City Regions around the world is intensifying. In this ever more competitive environment to attract and retain investment, visitors, students and people, Cork must **up the performance** of its City Centre, ensuring it has the modern property products, services and experience to offer the market place, which are crucial for the future success of Cork and Ireland.

2.2.1 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

To achieve this fresh ambition, buy-in from stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors is required; if the status quo remains, this will mean an uncertain future for Cork and more costly actions will be needed in the future. This requires active support from Cork County Council, Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, the Vintners’ Federation and the Irish Hotels Federation.

As resources are scarce and the private sector risk averse, Cork needs fresh **creative partnerships and more integrated actions** to deliver a much stronger City Centre.

2.2.2 CITY CENTRES HAVE BEEN THE FOCUS OF ACTIONS

This is an approach adopted in many more urban countries over the last twenty five years. Cities, often with a major industrial heritage, as they sought to reposition and deliver improved economic performance, focused first on improving their City Centre – delivering a **healthy heart** for a healthier region.

In many cities across Britain, Continental Europe and North America, major successes and lessons have been accumulated in the revitalisation of their City Centres. For example: Bristol, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Cardiff, Glasgow, Lille, Gothenburg, Barcelona, Hamburg, Pittsburgh and Baltimore.

These cities have gone through a process of re-evaluation of their structures, their offer to the market and their people so as to be seen as a great place to live, visit and invest.

Around the world a multitude of vehicles, organisations, and structures have been tested. In nearly all cases cities have been given support by national Governments to help them take more control of their destiny. There have been many lessons, so the strategies and approaches for Cork City Centre are out there.

Figure 3: Revitalised City Centres at the heart of City Regions



Sheffield



Pittsburgh



Lille

2.2.3 THIS REPORT

The recommendations in this report are aimed at making sure that Cork aligns to this world-wide trend towards a renaissance of City Centres and to become much more integrated in its **City Region operations** - a smart city.

The recommendations in this report are aimed at providing an action plan that can make a big difference immediately, a big difference in the medium term, and a transformational step change in the economic strength of the Cork Region in the long term.

The recommendations follow from detailed research and consultation.

3 THE BIG PICTURE

3.1 REBALANCING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

"We need to stop seeing our cities as the problem and start seeing them as the solution. Because strong cities are the building blocks of strong regions, and strong regions are essential for a strong America." President Barack Obama, 2008.

In Ireland, there has been significant **dispersed** development over the last twenty years. Cork has been no exception, with dispersed residential, retail and business space development.

Recognition of the need for a high quality central business district (CBD), that offers good quality modern office space in an attractive urban environment is required. This type of location reflects the nature of business activities and jobs that Ireland now and will continue to attract. It also reflects the urban location preferences of the generation that is starting to increasingly dominate the workforce and which businesses are targeting. This is the demographic group known as *Generation Y*. In Ireland and other mature economies, a clear trend is business and employee preferences for an **attractive City Centre experience to work, live and socialise in**.

In Ireland there needs to be a rebalancing of economic activity towards the cities and larger towns. Cork should take leadership in delivery of this national agenda.

3.1.1 A STRONG POLICY CONTEXT

In Europe, a report by ESPON (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion) in June 2012 provides further advocacy for national Governments to support their second tier cities, such as Cork.

The main recommendation is that investment needs to be made in national second tier cities. It argues that, although individual countries face different circumstances:

*"Cities play a vital role in creating growth and jobs. They are economic centres and motors of growth both for the wider region and for the country as a whole. In fact, I would go so far as to say a region can only be successful if its cities are successful."*¹

European, national, regional and city regional leaders should exploit the policy levers, tools and resources they have to encourage more higher performing second tier cities if they want higher performing national and European economies.

*They cumulatively demonstrate that policy makers should take these issues more seriously in future and systematically examine how their decisions affect second tier cities.*²

¹ Danuta Hubner, former European Commissioner responsible for regional policy.

² Second Tier Cities in Territorial Development in Europe: Performance, Policies and Prospects, ESPON, June 2012

As part of its economic recovery agenda, the UK Government, in its “Catapult Initiative”, has created a Research & Development hub to consolidate Smart City Economic Development best practice. Glasgow is the pilot project.
www.catapult.org.uk

This is increasingly recognised by Government. State Agencies such as Forfás, Department of Environment, Communities and Local Government are seeking to ensure **joined up actions** across Governmental to support Ireland’s cities and larger towns.

The European Union, European Investment Bank and many other public, third and private sector organisations are all working towards a stronger more integrated City Region agenda. Corporate businesses such as IBM and Siemens are rolling out major “Smart City” service lines. In Cork, the recent initiative to explore the Smart City concept with local stakeholders and cities such as Cologne (a sister city of Cork) is welcomed.

3.2 THE CORK CITY CONTEXT

Cork has had its ups and downs over the centuries, generally corresponding to political, economic and technological circumstances in the wider world. It currently faces, as it has done on many occasions in the past, a particularly challenging set of Irish and world conditions. Cork has almost always been agile and adapted to this change.

3.2.1 A GROWING REGION

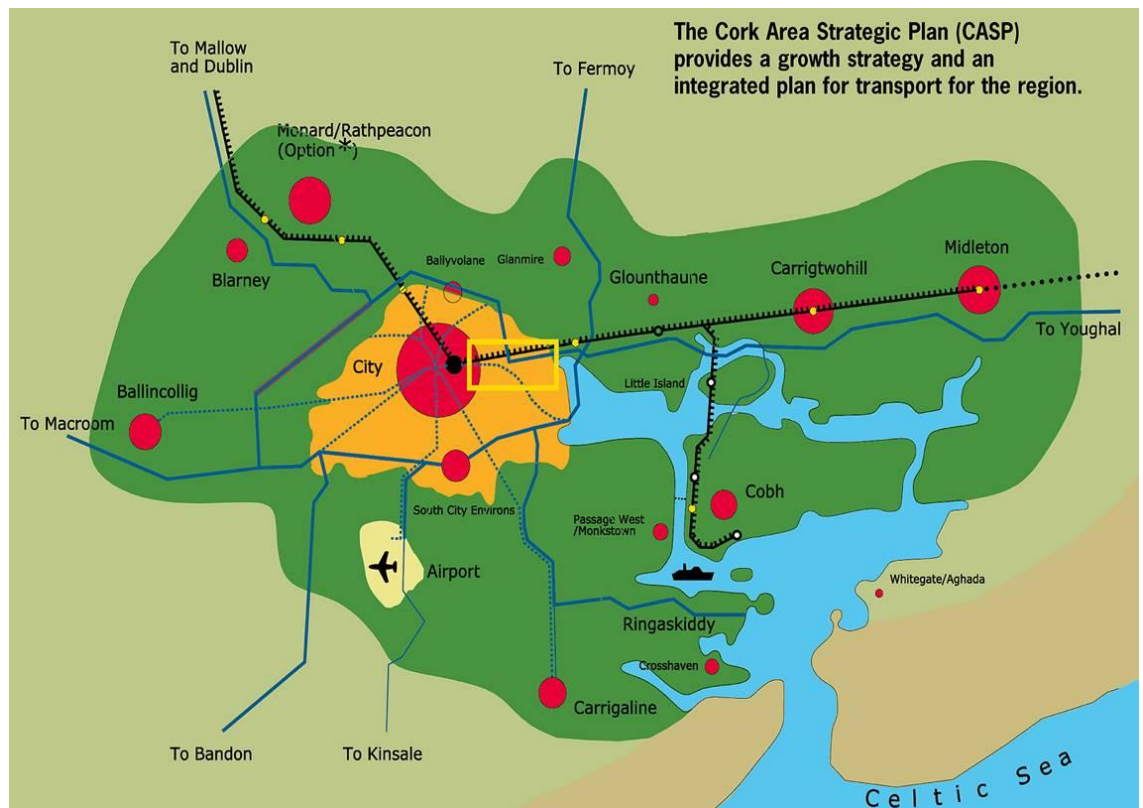
The “sizing” of Cork is an important message to tell international business, Cork needs to consistently show a large Cork City Region population. This shows a large labour and consumer market that starts at **half a million people**.

The City Centre is at the heart of a large, growing, young, well-educated and relatively affluent population. Despite the recession and emigration at a 30 year high, the Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) area population grew by 8% between 2006 and 2011 to nearly 410,000 people. Cork has a high quality environment, strong culture and sporting traditions, plus a large existing base of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and indigenous businesses and offers an attractive quality of life for existing residents and new comers to the City Region. In particular the City Centre population is growing as it becomes increasingly attractive to live in, especially with younger and international people, many of whom work for Cork’s impressive range of global businesses such as Apple, EMC and Starwood.

The longer term population growth forecast produced prior to the economic crisis suggested the south west region might grow by 157,000 (25%) from 619,000 (2006) to 776,000 (2026). It is reasonable to assume that this growth will moderate; however, Cork, as the dominant city in the region, should capture a high proportion of this future growth. This should be largely focused on Cork City. This is where sustainable economic development can best be delivered.

Cork City Centre serves a City Region of **more than half a million people**. The wider catchment as defined by Cork Airport extends to over 1.5 million people.

Figure 4: The Cork Metropolitan and CASP regions



The Cork Area Strategic Plan (CASP) region and Metropolitan Cork

Source: Cork City Council

3.2.2 OTHER ADVANTAGES INCLUDE

- **35,000 students** and a R&D poles of excellence such as The Tyndall National Institute, University College Cork and Cork Institute of Technology;
- A City Region that is home to **major global corporate** businesses with high value business activities, especially in the technology sector, including: Apple, EMC, VM Ware, Boston Scientific, Dell and McAfee. Plus Biopharma/Life Sciences, Agri-Business, Cleantech and Tourism;
- Excellent road and rail accessibility to Dublin and the rest of the country. Cork Airport serves approximately **50 European cities** with regular scheduled flights to London, Paris and Amsterdam;
- An excellent **independent retail, food and beverage** offer and strong national and international chain offer;
- A very highly regard **agri-business** sector, reflected in an excellent food offer, showcased by the English Market;

A Metro City Region twinned with global hub cities such as San Francisco, Cologne, Chicago and Shanghai. Strong links with California's Silicon Valley, New York and London.

- A City Centre **townscape** that is pleasant and has excellent ingredients, if invested in, of what people expect of an attractive and historic European City Centre;
- Major **events and activities** programme across sports, music, entertainment and culture;
- Very strong **heritage, and authentic stories** stretching back centuries;
- A number of good quality **hotels**;
- Lots of land and property owned or controlled by State agencies or major corporates. This provides the **space to accommodate** much more development and economic activity.

3.2.3 THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The City Centre has the classic symptoms of a place that has not given enough attention to some basics over the years. This has been a result of a combination of wider regional factors and city specific factors:

- Significant **out of town** development in the retail, office and visitor attraction sectors has impacted the City Centre;
- Vacancy and **dereliction** is increasingly noticeable. Many buildings look untidy whilst some have weeds growing out of them in prime areas of the City Centre. In many cases, property owners have not taken control of their buildings and ensured they meet modern business requirements;
- The City Centre needs greater diversity in its economic and employment offer. It especially needs **more jobs** in the City Centre. There must be “more suits on the street”, this is office based jobs in the City Centre.
 - The office product is especially weak for the second city of the State. This has seen businesses vacate the City Centre to out of town competition. A compelling office *property ladder* is needed urgently for the City Centre;
- Other **international cities**, towns and locations have been modernising and improving their city centres much more effectively than Cork;
- The City Centre is missing a **liaison** person or group to deal with day to day management and marketing issues of businesses and organisations;
- **Parking** is raised by many stakeholders as a big issue impacting on location options in the retail and office sectors. A strategy is needed to ensure existing and new parking assets are managed to the optimum benefit of the City Centre and this must be achieved in a co-ordinated manner that recognises that a properly functioning city requires significant turnover of spaces and a choice of parking offers;

- Apart from the major street furniture and urban design improvements on St. Patrick Street, Grand Parade, Cornmarket Street and Oliver Plunkett Street, the **public realm** in the City Centre needs greater attention;
- The implementation of the City Centre Movement Strategy should enhance the experience for the **pedestrian and cyclist**, particularly address the many one way streets;
- The City Centre has a **major waterfront** in the River Lee but connection to it is poor;
- The **visitor economy product** for leisure or business visitors is weak and needs more depth, to add to good recent additions in the hotel, conference and meeting sector.

Figure 5 provides a summary of some of the gaps in the City Centre product that need to be addressed as part of this strategy.

Figure 5: Gaps in the City Centre's portfolio of property products include:

<i>Gap in City Centre product</i>	<i>Market</i>
Office and Business Space	
Large floor plate office space (1,000 to c.2,000 sqm (per floor)	National and international corporates (FDI): Technology; Agri-business; Cleantech; Shared Services; Business Process Outsourcing; Business & Financial Services
Flexible shared office space	Market entrants, Start-up and incubator: Technology; Agri-business; Cleantech; Shared Services; Creative
Smaller scale managed office facilities	Grow on companies: Technology; Agri-business; Cleantech; Shared Services; Business & Financial Services; Creative
Retail	
Large modern "showcase" retail units (400 sqm +)	National and international retail groups such as: Arnotts, Clerys; Avoca; Zara; Apple; Nike; Banana Republic; House of Fraser
Residential	
Mid market apartments to rent and buy	Indigenous and overseas workers (younger, singles & couples); Corporates
Town houses	Indigenous and overseas workers (couples, families)
Student accommodation	Tertiary sector students (domestic and increasingly overseas)
Serviced Accommodation	
Serviced apartments	Corporate project teams; contractors servicing corporates; Visiting lecturers; PHD students
International branded budget and 4/5 star hotel; high quality boutique hotel	Corporates; European city break tourists –especially GB, FR & GER; Longer stay US visitors
Visitor, Leisure, Civic & Cultural	
Event centre/arena (planned)	Regional and domestic market plus international visitors
A visitor attraction(s) – food/Cork story/tech/Diaspora all have potential	International visitors (coach tours and fully independent travellers), regional & national population
Modern library and civic space	Local and regional population, 2 nd and 3 rd tier education
Arts and Crafts retail	Local, regional population, domestic and international visitors
Branded leisure (cinema, bowling, health & fitness etc); branded restaurants	Local, regional population, domestic and international visitors
Parks, playgrounds and outdoor "green" space	Local, regional population, domestic and international visitors

3.3 KEY ISSUES

Below we set out core requisites as part of this recommended strategy to deliver a strong Cork City Centre at the heart of a stronger Cork Region.

3.3.1 AN INCREASINGLY URBAN WORLD

Evidence worldwide shows that, while historic City Centres are under constant threat from modern development on their outskirts, they retain a continuing allure.

Only a City Centre, such as Cork's, can provide the diverse **mix of experiences**, heritage, contemporary and the people that enrich life. This diversity comes in many forms. It includes diversity of sensory; cultural, shopping, and leisure experience, and diversity of employment and residential types.

This is, fundamentally, because there is something in the human psyche that likes to feel a connection to the past, and likes the variety that is generated by centuries of change and adaptation.

There is no reason why Cork, and its City Centre, cannot have a successful future. At the beginning of the 21st century, cities that **blend heritage with the contemporary** in an attractive urban environment, that offers a good quality of life to residents, workers, tourists and attracts and retains investment are increasingly favoured. This means in an ever more competitive (and collaborative) environment between City Regions, Cork needs to up its game.

3.3.2 PARTNERSHIP WORKING

STATE OWNED OR CONTROLLED LAND AND PROPERTY

There are large areas of prime State or corporately owned or controlled land and property assets that are vacant, underused, and derelict in and around the City Centre. This is where sustainable development, economic growth, jobs and wealth can be achieved to support a much stronger Cork City Centre and Cork Region in the short, medium and long term.

There must be recognition of the critical importance of a vibrant and successful Cork City Centre. With their vacant, underused or non-operational land and property ownerships, State Agencies must be directed by Government to bring them forward for the development the City Centre requires.

Cork is the **second city** of the State by some way. Cork City Council will need assistance from Government to unlock these assets and kick start development at this stage of the economic and development cycle.

3.3.3 CORK CITY AND COUNTY

Government has tasked Cork City and County Councils to reach agreement by autumn 2017 on a new boundary that better reflects the urban realities of Cork and

STATE AGENCIES INCLUDE
Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Department of Environment, Communities and Local Government, South West Region Authority and State Agencies including: IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, National Transport Authority, National Asset Management Agency, Forfás, Waterways Ireland, CIE, Port of Cork, Office of Public Works and Fáilte Ireland.

what will best serve the Cork Region and its people in the future. The evidence base produced at a national and European level illustrates the need to strengthen cities as the engines of economic growth for successful regions.

Therefore, as the development cycle slowly starts, **agreement** within the Cork Region should be targeted much sooner than autumn 2017. This will have the aim of reducing the risk to the investor, developer and occupier community that will be needed to revitalise the City Centre. As the boundary currently stands, there is the **risk** of the competitive planning and further dispersed development and occupation that has impacted on Cork, and on other Irish cities and towns in the past, continuing.

In Cork, the regional and national stakeholders should all acknowledge that the next decade requires a **rebalancing** of development towards Cork City Centre. This must be backed up by convergent actions by all Cork Region stakeholders. The status quo will mean a very uncertain future for Cork City Centre. The Joint Retail Strategy provides a template to address employment locations and deliver this rebalancing towards the City Centre.

4 RECOMMENDED STRATEGY

4.1 A HEALTHY HEART STRATEGY

Cork City Council, Cork County Council and State Agencies should recognise the **critical** importance of a vibrant and successful City Centre to the quality of life of people who live in the city region, and to the future prosperity of the Cork Region.

The regional actors should agree a rebalancing of priorities towards the City Centre from out of town areas. This could be called the “**Healthy Heart Policy**”. Frequent use of expressions like “we are working to ensure that our region continues to have a healthy heart” could help to keep the overall strategy top of mind.

4.1.1 SET HIGH ASPIRATIONS

There is no reason why Cork, and its City Centre, cannot have a successful future. The zeitgeist at the beginning of the 21st century favours historic yet contemporary cities that offer well-educated, creative people and a good quality of life. Cork does that but must do much better in its own colourful and spirited manner.

This report clearly identifies projects that have potential to make **transformational** impact for the City Centre, and others that can catalyse major change. Cork City Council should pursue these projects with a determination that the City Centre will enjoy the best years in its history in the years to come.

As the second city of the State, Cork City Council needs to be effectively supported by stakeholders to help it deliver this strategy. This will also help Cork elevate itself so as to compete domestically and internationally.

4.1.2 MOVE INTO ACTION MODE

Many businesses in the City Centre are struggling and developments are stuck on the drawing board or are in administration.

Now is a time when a **can do** determination to make things happen, and a positive outlook, is needed.

Cork City Council should continue to be proactive in unlocking opportunities and, especially, improving business conditions.

It needs organisations and individuals in the City Centre to work with it in a positive and constructive way. It cannot, and should not, do everything itself. Its main role is facilitator. This means retailers, traders, food and hospitality businesses should continue to be even more proactive in the things that **they can control**. For example, how they manage and market themselves more cohesively. There are strong initiatives emerging on MacCurtain Street and Oliver Plunkett Street.



This report contains recommendations for fresh organisational arrangements such as a City Centre Partnership and a Business Liaison Person to deliver new partnership between Cork City Council and City Centre businesses that can create momentum.

Our consultations found individuals in the private and third sectors that have a **positive** outlook and want to invest time and money in the improvement of their businesses and the City Centre.

Cork City Council should seek people with that positive mentality to work with, and engage with them in a proactive way.

4.1.3 **PRIORITY IS TO ATTRACT MORE FOOTFALL TO THE CITY CENTRE**

Many businesses in the City Centre are fragile because of the combined effects of the recession and competition from out of town shopping/leisure, the internet and financial pressures and significantly reduced consumer spending.

It is important, especially in the short-medium term, that Cork City Council, working closely with its partners, concentrates on things that can be done **quickly** to attract people into the City Centre for reasons that encourage them to spend money in City Centre businesses, building on its cultural events, the Gathering and Winter Festival.

Getting people to spend more money in local businesses is the critical factor in this and should be the top short term priority.

Recommendations in this report include projects that, with determination, can make a difference quickly.

4.2 **CHARACTER AREAS**

This section sets out an approach to the spatial “**layout**” of the City Centre, breaking it down into more “bite size pieces”.

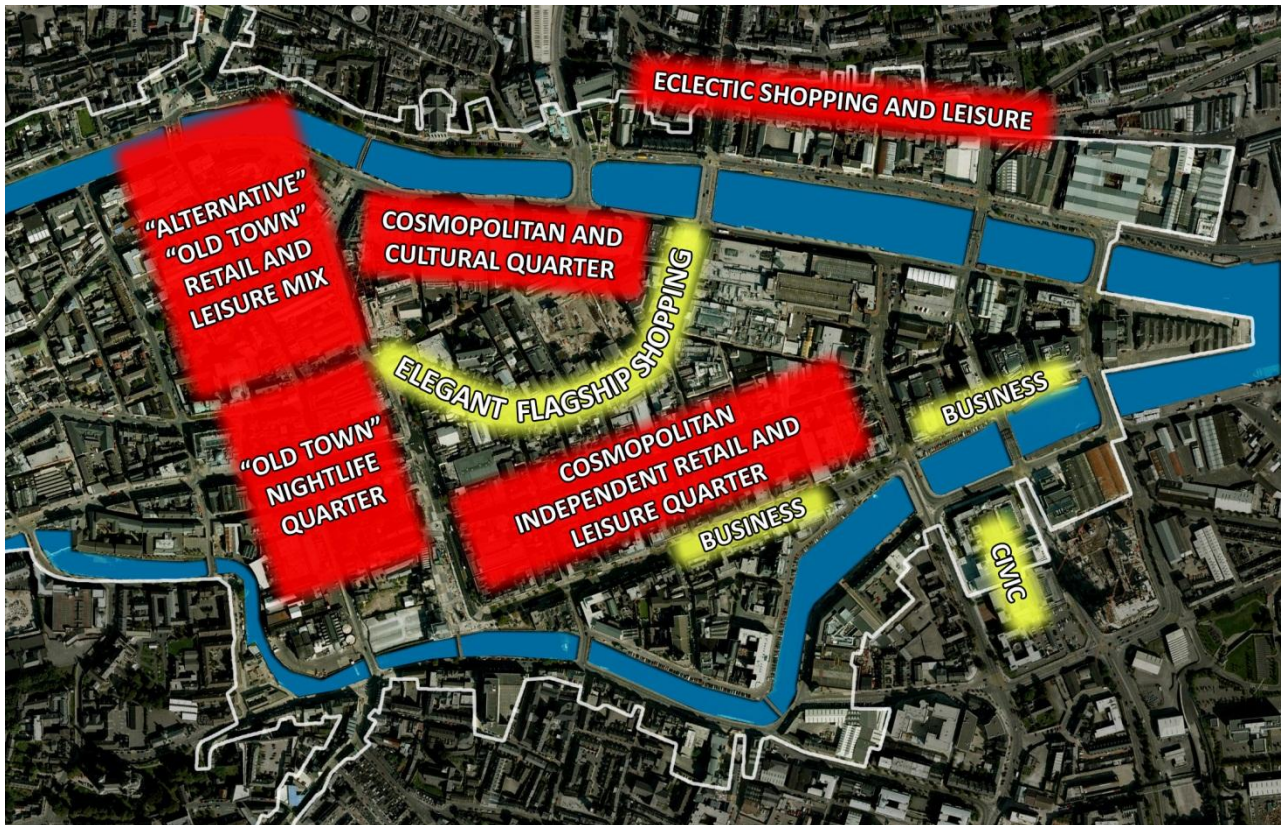
4.2.1 **A UNIQUE SELLING POINT – INDEPENDENT RETAIL AND LEISURE**

Cork’s history has shaped this pattern in an unusual manner. The main streets that are now dominated by large organisations – St. Patrick’s Street, Grand Parade and South Mall – were originally canals, lined by quays with merchant’s houses.

Cork, as a result of the way in which the City Centre has evolved, mixes this pattern in an interesting way. St. Patrick’s Street forms the clear “Main/High Street” spine. Oliver Plunkett Street and Paul-Castle Street, running roughly parallel to it on either side, connected to it by short, attractive, side streets, provide almost optimal conditions for **independent** shops and places to eat and drink. The overall effect is shown in Figure 6. This results in an **excellent mix** of the two types of offer – “Main/High Street” and Independent - in close proximity. The main offer is a

very strong and appealing intimate mix of independent retail and leisure either side of St. Patrick's Street that is primarily brand orientated retail and leisure.

Figure 6: Main areas of the City Centre



Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

4.2.2 DELIVER A GREAT RETAIL AND LEISURE EXPERIENCE

Shopping, eating and drinking are the activities that dominate the centres of all cities. The health of the businesses operating in those sectors is key to the economic and social vitality of the City Centre.

“Functional” shopping for necessities and certain types of goods is increasingly being done on-line and in out of town locations. People are still likely to want to shop for other items, like clothing, in future, but will think of that shopping as being a part of their leisure time. The strategy must, therefore, be to make the City Centre retail area an **excellent leisure experience** – a fusion of shopping, leisure and entertainment – in a safe yet stimulating urban environment.

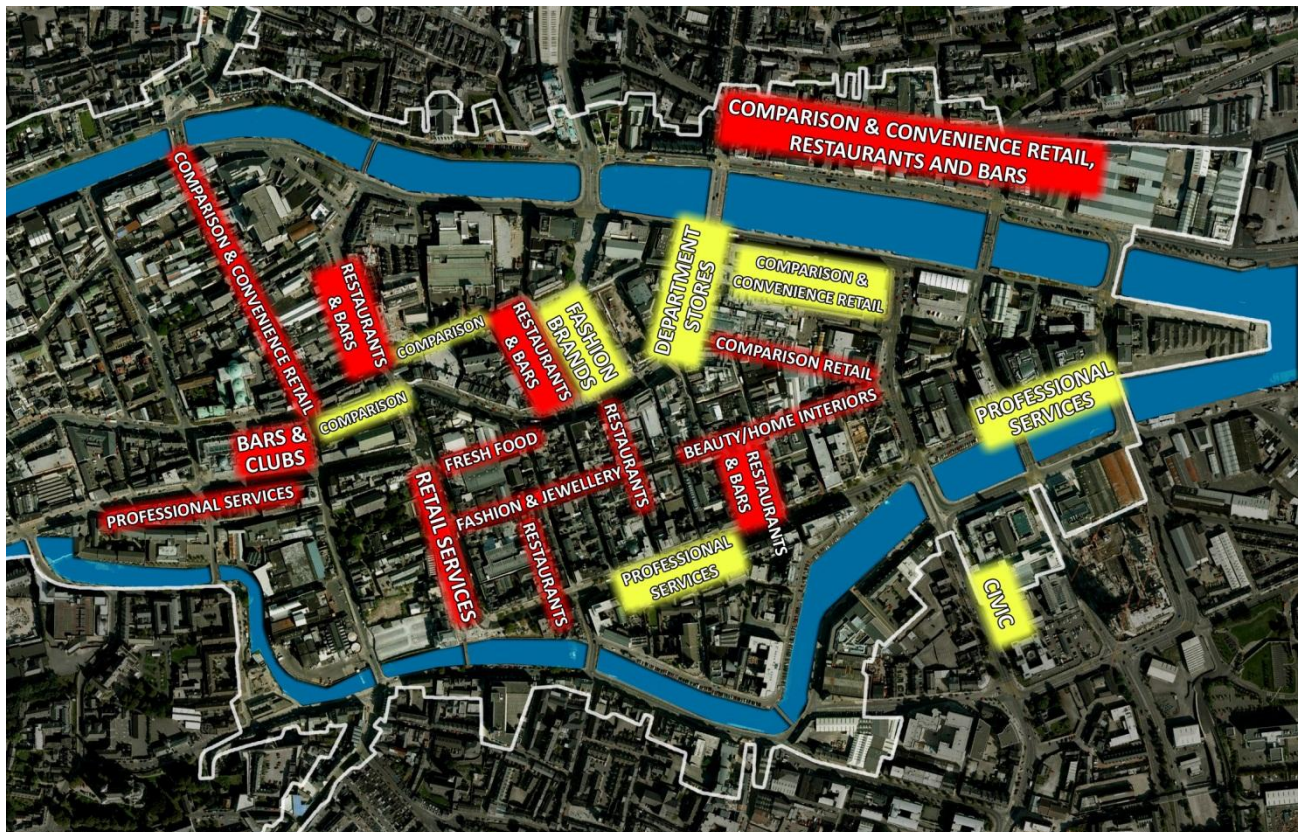
Retail is going through a fundamental **change**. This needs to be understood by Cork City Council and its partners and be reflected in planning and City Centre development, marketing and management. In the short term, this means continued initiatives such as events and activities and strong place brand and marketing of identified areas of the City Centre.

It is unlikely that, in the medium term at least, there is likely to be the need for a large expansion in the overall amount of retail floor space in Cork City Centre. There will, however, be the need for the modernisation of the retail space, and it is important to keep attracting fresh occupiers. The strategy should be to make sure that St. Patrick's Street and the immediate area in its vicinity is the location of choice in the south of Ireland for national and international flagship retailers.

NURTURE AND STRENGTHEN

Businesses of similar type tend to gravitate together in Cork as everywhere else. This is for a number of reasons but it is predominantly so that they can benefit from the critical mass of being close to other businesses of similar ilk and serving similar customers. This is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Business clusters in the City Centre



Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

Some of these groupings are functional in nature, and there are many of them dotted around the City Centre: four department stores standing side by side at the north end of St. Patrick Street; modern branded fashion shops grouped together on Opera Lane; restaurants grouped together in places like Princes Street and the Huguenot Quarter; bars and clubs grouped together on South Main Street and Washington Street; financial and business services grouped together on South Mall.

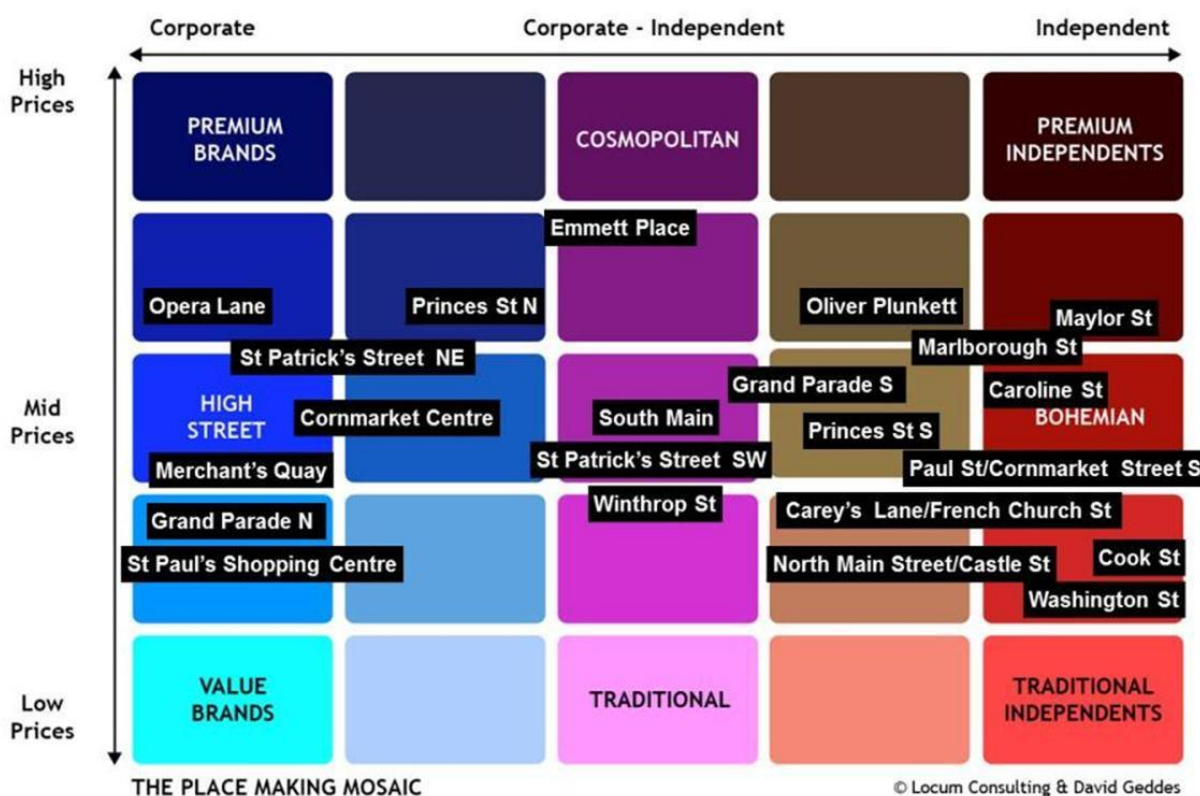
DIVIDE BETWEEN MULTIPLES AND INDEPENDENTS

In Cork, as in all cities in Western Europe, there is a divide in the use of buildings between areas that are dominated by branded businesses and those that are dominated by independent businesses. The property in the areas dominated by branded businesses is invariably owned by large property companies and financial institutions. The shop units are typically larger and more modern.

The property in areas dominated by independent businesses tends to be owned by individuals and smaller companies and the shop units tend to be smaller. Businesses also tend to group together in accordance with whether they compete most on quality or most on price.

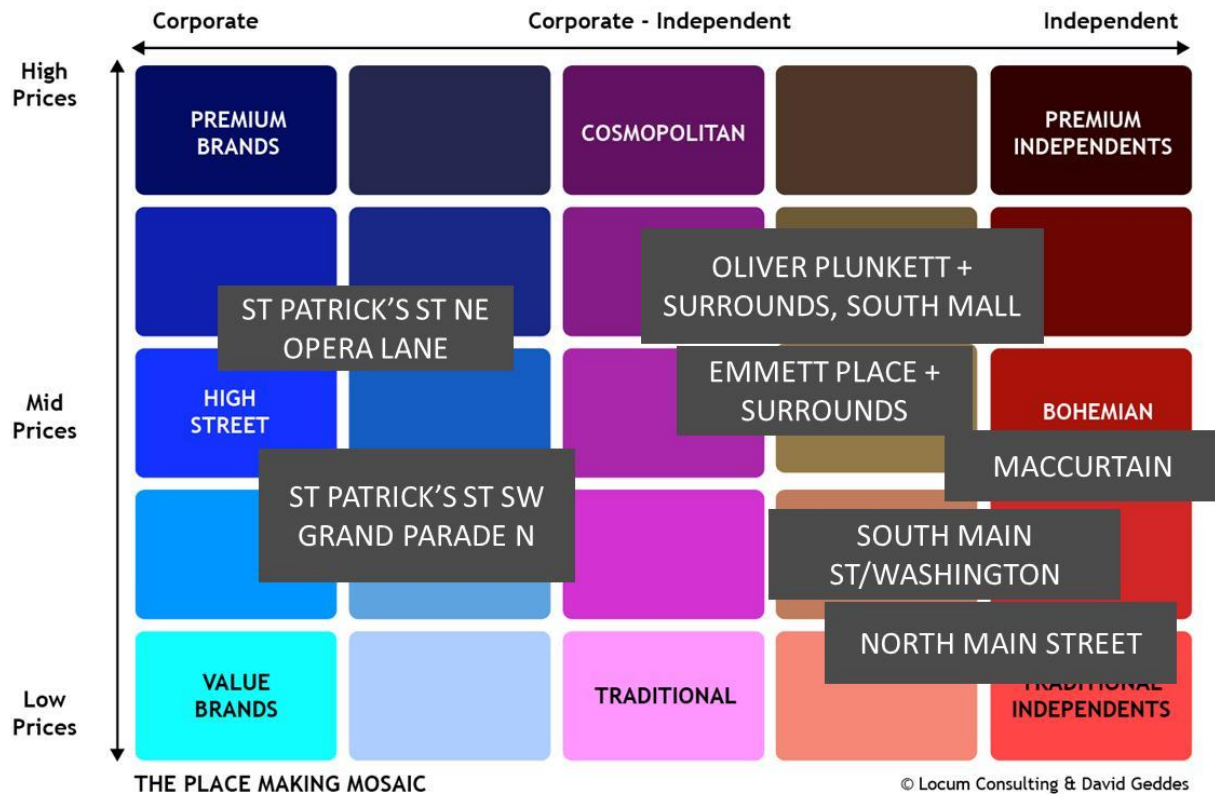
Colliers has a model for representing this called the **Place Making Mosaic** as set out in Figure 8. Areas to the left side of the model are dominated by large companies, both in terms of ownership of the property and the businesses operating there. Areas to the right hand side are dominated by small and medium sized enterprises and sole proprietors. Areas to the bottom of the model are dominated by businesses that compete most on price and those to the top of the model are dominated by those that compete most on quality. Figure 9 shows how these streets group into clear **character zones** and where, roughly, they currently fit on the Place Making Mosaic.

Figure 8: Mosaic Pattern and Cork City Centre



Source: Colliers International

Figure 9: “Centre of Gravity” of different sections of the City Centre



Source: Colliers International

USING THIS APPROACH

This should form a key part of the public spaces and marketing strategy for the City Centre. This involves breaking down the City Centre into these character areas and developing an integrated place branding and marketing strategy for each. Overall, we have broken down the City Centre into the following individual character areas:

- St. Patrick's Street & Opera Lane;
- Emmett Place and Surrounds;
- Oliver Plunkett Street & Side Streets;
- North Main Street, Castle Street, South Main Street;
- Grand Parade;
- South Mall;
- MacCurtain Street/Bridge Street;
- South Parish;

- Shandon;
- City Harbour;
- The Quays.

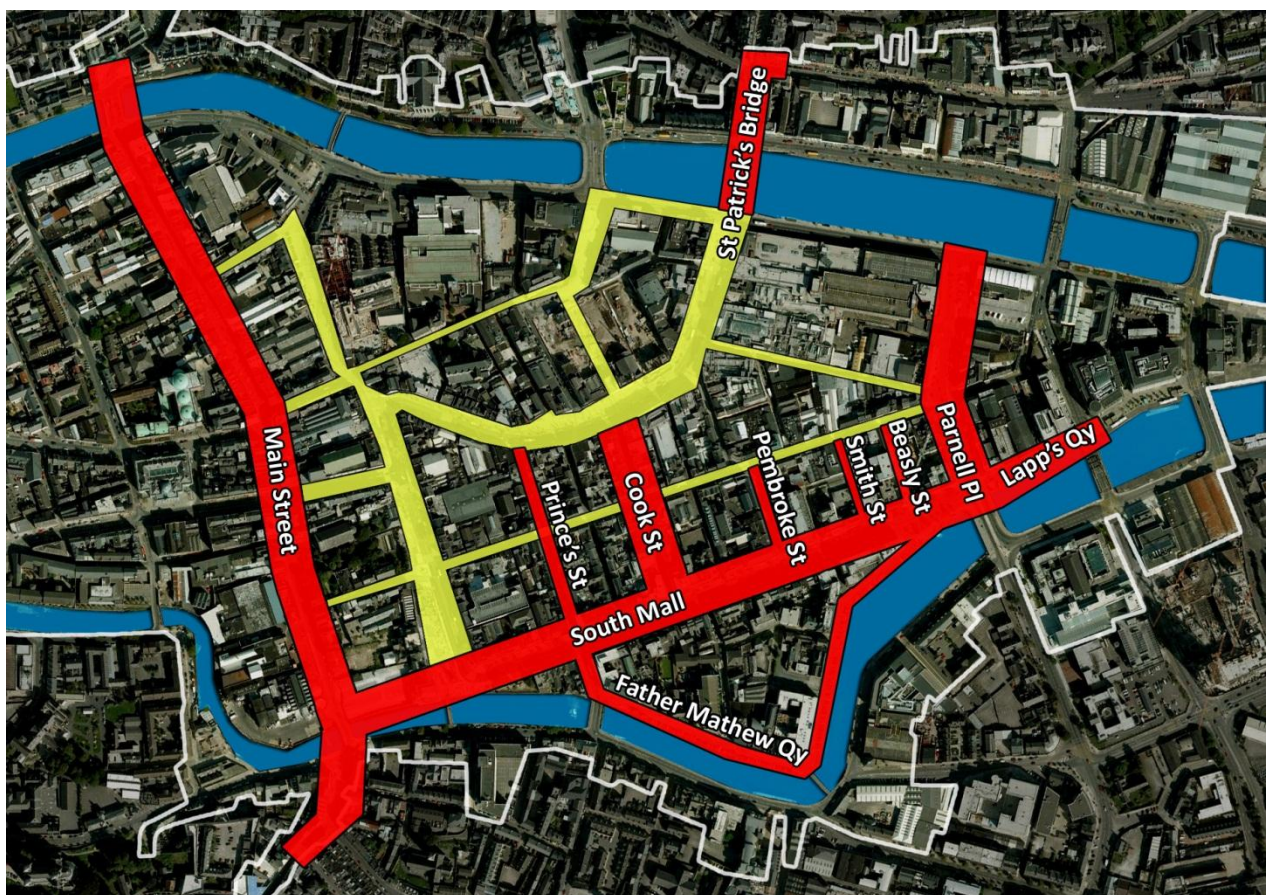
Below we outline three important elements that flow from this analysis.


4.2.1 AIM TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SPACES

STRENGTHEN THE “TRELLIS” THAT FORMS THE CORE OF THE CITY

The commercial heart of the city can be thought of as forming a **trellis**, as shown in Figure 10. Many of the recommendations for projects are about making this trellis stronger and more attractive as a place for people to visit, whether as tourists or for day to day shopping and leisure. This should be reflected in planning and development policy.

Figure 10: City Centre Trellis with suggested priority streetscape improvements



-  Existing Streetscape Improvements
-  Priority Street Improvements

Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

OPEN UP THE QUAYSIDES

Cork City Centre is rare in being on an **island in a river**, but signally fails to use that advantage. Human beings like to be by water but Cork provides little opportunity for them to spend leisure time by its waterfronts.

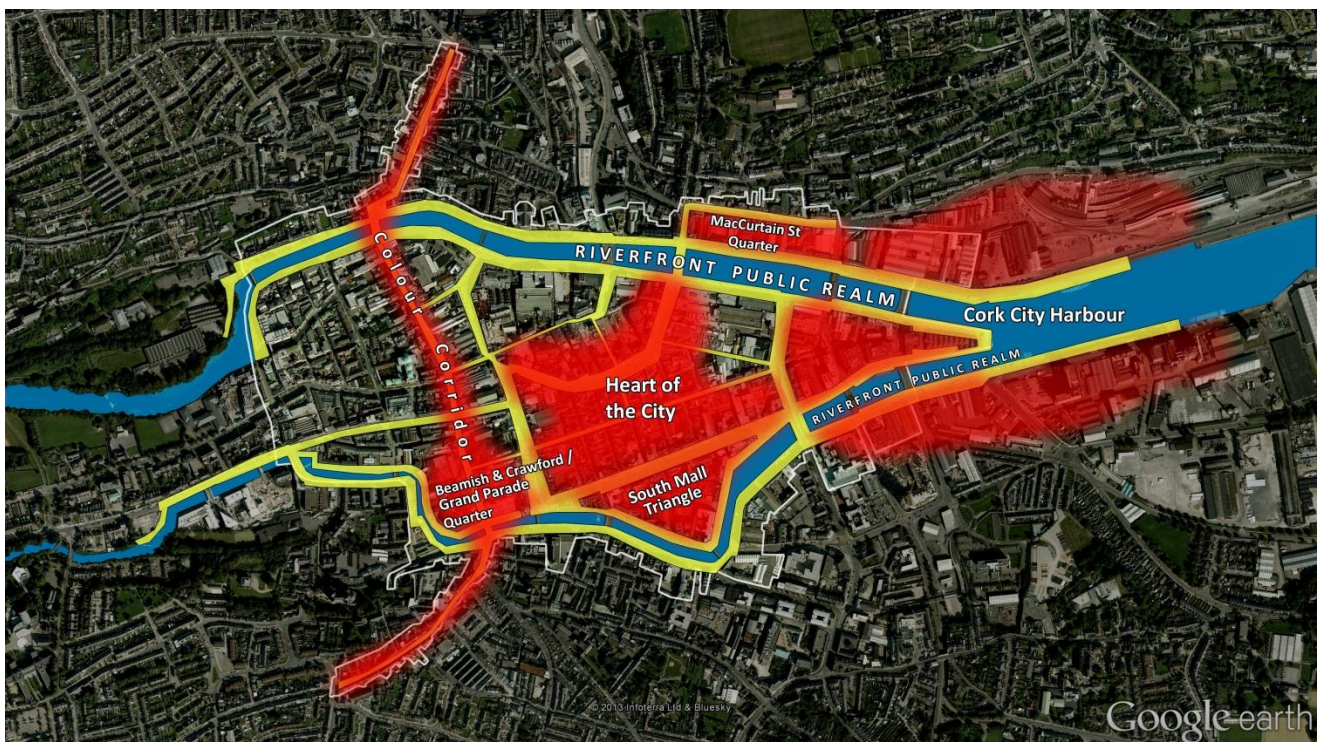
There are major development/improvement opportunities overlooking the river and the strategy should be to convert the quaysides to more public space; creating a much stronger blue edge. That, in turn, should be used to increase the financial attractiveness of waterfront development opportunities.

STREETSCAPES TO STIMULATE INVESTMENT

The City Centre Movement Strategy will result in investment in important streets, notably Parnell Place, MacCurtain Street and South Mall. Cork City Centre should work, in each case, with property owners and main occupiers in each case to encourage associated investment that lifts both the street and the adjoining neighbourhood. The strategy should be, in particular, to make the MacCurtain Street, Beamish & Crawford/Grand Parade, City Harbour and the South Mall “triangle” areas thriving mixed use “city villages”.

Overall the focus of the City Centre for the core retail, leisure and destination experience should be as illustrated in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Overall City Centre Spatial Recommendations



Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

4.3 OFFICE

People working in offices in the City Centre are the **lifeblood** of the economy. The immediate post-industrial trend, as has been evident in Cork, was for offices to move out of City Centres. That has changed. Many businesses, and the people they employ, now prefer to be in City Centres with all the facilities that only City Centres can provide.

4.3.1 CITY HARBOUR – A NEW CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

Cork needs to respond to this by providing space that suits the needs of businesses. This includes modern, large floor plate offices, but also attractive low cost space with character that suits start up and grow on businesses. Cork City Centre must offer a **high quality property ladder** for businesses, whatever stage of their lifecycle they are at.

What we are calling City Harbour, the western end of which should be seen as part of the City Centre, is the location to provide modern large office space (floor plates of c 1,000 to 2,000 sqm plus). This is the place for large scale FDI and domestic corporate businesses to locate and grow in the Cork and Southern Region.

The strategy should be to encourage a new Central Business District (CBD) for Cork. Depending on office worker densities, a 5,000 sqm (net) office building with 1,000 sqm per floor might accommodate 500 workers. In just a few years' time, the development of a new CBD for the Cork Region would add significantly to the **vitality** of the City Centre.

The opportunity is for the State, through various agencies, to help bring forward development. The State controls or influences large areas of prime real-estate in the City Harbour area of the City Centre that is pivotal to positioning a competitive offer that IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, developers, investors and their property advisors can work with. This potential will never be realised without concerted pan-Government action.

4.3.2 CITY CENTRES FOR SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS, JOBS AND WEALTH



Brindley Place, Birmingham

Generating employment (whether FDI-based or Irish owned), in the growth sectors that the Government's job strategy pinpoints, is going to need more and more locations meeting specific business requirements. This demand from business is increasingly for office products located in dynamic, attractive city centre type areas with an excellent urban environment plus high quality accessibility.

For Cork these **jobs** are likely to be in International Traded Service business functions and activities (Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Manu-Services) and in the sectors where the Cork Region has strong education and R&D poles of excellence that can deliver advantages for businesses in ICT, Health and Life Sciences, Agri-Business, Energy and Cleantech.

The need for a high quality City Centre type location reflects the nature of business activities and jobs Ireland is now, and should continue, to attract. It also reflects the **urban location** preferences of the generation that is starting to increasingly dominate the workforce and which businesses are targeting. This is the demographic group known as **Generation Y**.

It has also been identified that, of Ireland's regional cities, Cork, probably most immediately, has major potential to strengthen Ireland's offer internationally, complementing Dublin.

In what is now known as the *City Harbour* area of the City Centre, a forecast undertaken in 2012 estimated that up to 7,000 new additional jobs could be catered for within ten years. However, this can only be achieved if the right conditions are met; this includes priming by Government.

The view of IDA Ireland and the consultant team is that right now, Cork City Centre does not offer the type of real estate (site, buildings and context) options to attract and accommodate current and emerging demand. This is new 'smart workplace' investment. Cork must continue to modernise and develop a stronger City business offer and experience. Cork City Centre needs an **on-going programme of product development and refreshment** to build upon recent successes at St. Patrick Street and Lapps Quay.

4.3.3 REFRESH SOUTH MALL



This is Cork's traditional prime office location. It was where, in the past, Cork's famous "merchant princes" lived and worked. It has, for many years, been the home of professional service firms (accountants, lawyers and property advisors), finance institutions, banks and marketing professionals.

The buildings are a mix of distinguished classical buildings and more recent development from the 1960s and 1970s. There has been little development on the street since then. A problem appears to be that much of the property appears tired and inappropriate for modern business requirements, especially as businesses grow. We think that South Mall is capable of remaining a premium business address in the City Centre but it will require a **package of interventions** to do so. This includes:

- Streetscape improvements;
- Building painting and decoration;
- Place branding and marketing through a South Mall Improvement group;
- Internal building modernisation and change of use with planning and heritage flexibility.

Some of the office accommodation on the street is, however, unlikely to be fit for purpose for office occupiers. There is probably no advantage in resisting

conversion of office space in South Mall to residential (or associated uses, such as hotel or serviced accommodation) if that is more viable for owners, although the priority should be premium uses that has synergy with a professional office quarter.

Flexibility of approach should be encouraged in the City Development Plan. There should be a focused review of the combination of financial, planning and marketing strategies that can be undertaken to breathe fresh life into South Mall.

The strategy should be to ensure that the South Mall regains its lustre as a premium quality office district. This will probably be for smaller and medium enterprise (SME's) office requirements, probably for businesses in the business and financial services sectors. We also believe there is potential for the South Mall as "grow on" space for businesses emerging in the technology, agri-business and cleantech sectors.

4.4 RETAIL

4.4.1 ATTRACTING MORE FOOTFALL TO THE CITY CENTRE

Retail is going through a **fundamental change**. Many businesses in the City Centre are fragile because of the combined effects of the recession and competition from out of town shopping/leisure, the internet and financial pressures alongside significantly reduced consumer spending.

This needs to be fully understood by Cork City Council and its partners and be reflected in planning policy across the Cork Region. The Cork Metropolitan Retail Study has helped to provide an understanding of the issues at play and what it means in terms of retail policy. Understanding retail demand and channels to market and what it means to retailers is crucial so that the policy response is appropriate.

It is important, especially in the short-medium term, that Cork City Council, working closely with traders and other organisations with a stake in the City Centre to concentrate on things that can be done quickly to attract people into the City Centre. More people need more reasons to come into the City Centre and to encourage them to spend money in City Centre businesses. This is the critical factor and should be the top short term priority.

Recommendations in this report include projects – such as the Colour Corridor and spend generating events - that, with determination, can make a difference **quickly**.

4.4.2 STRENGTH AND OPPORTUNITY - INDEPENDENTS

Colliers recently did a study of the number of retail and leisure occupiers in the centres of a large selection of towns and cities in Britain³. Figure 12 compares Cork with them.

³ The purpose of the study was to examine uses that took part in listed historic

Figure 12: Cork compared to UK towns and cities

% of Shops that are Independent			% of Places to Eat & Drink that are Independent	
1	Glasgow	78%	Perth	91%
2	Edinburgh	76%	Derby	89%
3	Cork	72%	Cork	89%
4	Derby	67%	Doncaster	89%
5	Norwich	67%	Carlisle	88%
6	Leicester	67%	Lancaster	88%
7	Brighton	66%	Hull	88%
8	Dundee	66%	Bristol Central	87%
9	Aberdeen	66%	Shrewsbury	85%
10	Shrewsbury	66%	Bradford	85%
11	Perth	65%	Norwich	85%
12	Lancaster	65%	Newcastle	82%
13	York	60%	Canterbury	82%
14	Doncaster	60%	York	82%
15	Inverness	59%	Sheffield	81%
16	Average	59%	Inverness	81%
17	Bradford	58%	Average	80%
18	Bristol Central	56%	Liverpool CBD	80%
19	Swansea	56%	Swansea	80%
20	Newcastle	56%	Brighton	79%
21	Nottingham	56%	Exeter	77%
22	Exeter	56%	Leicester	77%
23	Carlisle	55%	Winchester	76%
24	Canterbury	55%	Nottingham	74%
25	Winchester	51%	Cardiff	72%
26	Sheffield	48%	Aberdeen	72%
27	Leeds	48%	Dundee	71%
28	Hull	47%	Leeds	71%
29	Liverpool CBD	47%	Edinburgh	67%
30	Cardiff	46%	Glasgow	64%

Source: Colliers International

There are differences in population between places and differences in circumstance between Britain and Ireland which mean that precise comparisons are impossible. It does show, however, a notable difference. Cork City Centre has a substantially lower number of branded shops and restaurants than most

| buildings and how that compared with other buildings.

equivalent cities in Britain. That means Cork City Centre has a much higher proportion of retail and leisure businesses that are **independents**.

The diversity of the retail and leisure offer in the City Centre, notably by contrast to the main competition at Mahon Point, should be a main feature of the way that the City Centre is improved and promoted. The independent shops, restaurants, cafes and retail services are a major part of the City Centre story.

The City Centre is not much different in the way that activities group together to a North African Souk, and there is some merit in thinking of it that way and what implications that has for the way that it might be treated and promoted. The strategy should be to “**accentuate the differences**” between different parts of the City Centre, aiming to achieve an attractively distinctive character in each. Businesses and property owners in each character area should be encouraged to work together and with the city council to achieve this.

4.4.3 MODERNISING THE ST. PATRICK’S STREET AND SURROUNDING RETAIL OFFER

The strategy should be to attract as much as possible of the region’s requirements for national and international multiples and flagship stores into the St. Patrick’s Street area. The focus should be on **modernising and enhancing the quality** of the space in and adjacent to the street and refreshing the offer. This should embrace new retail requirements such as click and collect; customers purchasing on line but coming into the city centre to collect as opposed to waiting around at an An Post sorting office.

- Shopping and **eating/drinking** are the activities that dominate the centres of all cities. The health of the businesses operating in those sectors is fundamental to the economic and social vitality of the City Centre;
- “Functional” shopping for necessities and certain types of goods is increasingly being done on-line and in out-of-town retail parks. People are still likely to want to shop for other items, like clothing, in future, but will think of that shopping as being a part of their leisure time. The strategy must, therefore, be to make the City Centre retail area an **excellent leisure experience**;
- It is unlikely that, in the medium term at least, there is likely to be the need for a large expansion in the overall amount of retail floor space in Cork City Centre. There will, however, be need for expansion in the amount of **modern space**, and it is important to keep attracting fresh occupiers. This should include ensuring the City Centre, especially in and around the core St. Patrick’s Street area, can attract and retain Ireland’s and the world’s leading retail groups.

RETAIL-LED REVITALISATION

Elsewhere, large scale retail-led mixed use projects, often with a mix of leisure and residential uses have really helped strengthen City Centres. Opera Lane has been

ZARA

One of the most successful retailers in Europe of recent times is the Spanish group Zara (Inditex). They are not in Cork City Centre.

a good project for the City Centre. However, as the economy and property market moves into recovery and growth mode, Cork City Centre needs further large scale retail led modernisation to be considered.

Cork can learn from projects such as Liverpool 1, the Bullring in Birmingham, Princeshay in Exeter, Westfield Derby and the Oracle Centre Reading. They are indicative of the type of project that might be delivered in Cork in time. In Northern Ireland, Victoria Square has helped to modernise Belfast's retail offer and experience.

So a modernisation strategy, over the medium to longer term, should aim to make sure that St. Patrick's Street and the area in its vicinity is the location of choice in the south of Ireland for national and international retailers. We think the following locations have potential for significant asset management or development:

- Merchants Quay;
- Academy Street, French Church Street, Cook and Marlborough Street blocks;
- Paul Street and Cornmarket Street area;
- Capitol Cinema and south western end of St. Patrick Street.

These locations should all be considered and clear planning policy guidance provided in the City Development Plan or dedicated development briefs.

4.4.4 IN ADVANCE OF MODERNISING RETAIL SPACE, WHAT CAN WE DO?

The focus will need to be more on **practical initiatives**. This will need traders in the City Centre to start to focus energy and scarce resources on what they can control. This is primarily how they organise and market themselves. Three character areas should be given particular focus for how they organise and market themselves as a collective:

- 1 **St. Patrick's Street**, including **Opera Lane and immediate surrounds**. St. Patrick's Street is the showcase for primarily major domestic and international retail groups, supported by lots of independent shops, cafes, restaurants and bars in the streets that run off it.
- 2 **Oliver Plunkett Street and immediate surrounds**. Should remain a place dominated by quality orientated independent retailers and restaurants, with the English Market as the centrepiece.
 - It might be thought of as Cork's "Really Useful Main Street", perhaps promoted as something like "The Market Town in the City". It might be called simply Plunkett.
- 3 **Main Street**, including **Castle Street and Washington Street**. Main Street, which was the original high street in medieval times, should be nurtured into a

vibrant district which, over time, develops a more eclectic nature, probably at a more value market positioning.

Grand Parade and the western end of St. Patrick's Street have become blighted in part due to stalled projects. This has contributed to increased vacancy. There needs to be a focused review on how these stalled projects, or indeed others, can help to breathe fresh life into this very important part of the City Centre.

4.5 VISITOR ECONOMY

Cork City Centre does not really punch its weight as a European City break destination for leisure or business visitors. Cork can start to become a more successful **city break destination**. The Cork Convention Bureau is starting to prove successful in delivering more "bed nights" from the business sector. For both business and leisure tourists, but especially leisure visitors, there is the need for both **product and experience development** in the City Centre.

However, it is acknowledged that Cork City Council has developed a Tourism Strategy and established TEAM, a unit with responsibility for tourism, events, arts and marketing. Fáilte Ireland has developed an interpretive framework for Cork. Visitors are one of the targets of a joint City/County high level marketing and branding strategy currently being formulated. Cork City Council has also assumed control of Elizabeth Fort and has secured significant Government support for an Events Centre.

Cork City Centre must be seen as a much stronger destination experience for the visitor. There is **great potential**. St. Patrick's Street and the surrounding lanes, the blend of branded and independent businesses, presents a **compelling offer**. We think it is the best Main/High Street on the island of Ireland and, potentially, one of the best in the whole of Britain and Ireland. The City Centre has the potential to be seen as one of the best in Europe. More should be done to drive visits from local, regional, domestic and international markets; especially from local and regional to stop the leakage to the out of town destinations.

4.5.1 PRODUCT AND EXPERIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The medium to long term goal should be to make the City Centre the flagship visitor destination in the south of the island of Ireland, the hub of a major holidaying area. This can be achieved by placing emphasis on the action plan projects as they contain attraction elements that will make a **step change** to the city's quality as a tourist destination.

As important as the "product development" elements are, developing the stories and themes of Cork into a strong and compelling **experience master plan** for the City Centre is vital. Initiatives such as the Viking Triangle in Waterford and the Medieval Mile in Kilkenny are proving successful and Cork City Centre, given its

scale and assets, has the potential to achieve even more. Figure 13 summarises the product and experience development projects that can help deliver on this goal.

Figure 13: Visitor Economy development

Product Development	
Event Centre (est 5/6k capacity)	Complements the Odyssey Arena, Belfast and the O2 Dublin. Attract more visitors - domestic and international - into Cork.
Pairc Uí Chaoimh	Modernisation into the leading Gaelic sports stadium in the south of Ireland, and a location for major events to help attract more visitors to Cork.
Marina Park	Modernisation as planned into a high quality urban park that in time should extend along the river front into the City Centre at Albert Quay. This can add to the offer and experience of Cork as a River front city and host a range of events and activities to help attract more visitors to Cork.
Visitor attractions in the heart of the City	To be progressed but likely to be drawn from Food, Tech' Irish diaspora, Elizabeth Fort, Shandon, military/mercantile, a modern City museum and library/cultural Centre.
Bonded Warehouses (point of City Island)	Opened up perhaps with a maritime theme, comprising arts and crafts, cafes, restaurants, cultural, visitor attraction, flexible meeting place and a good quality hostel.
Quays and walkways	Continue the success of the boardwalks at Lapps Quay and junction of South Mall and Grand Parade to improve the interface with the River Lee and encouragement of much more activity on it at weekends and in the peak summer season.
Accommodation	International hotel and serviced accommodation brands plus high quality boutique hotel(s), hostels and rest area for caravans and touring vehicles.
Destination Experience Masterplans	
Character Areas	Definition of the Character Areas with effective place branding and marketing to help breakdown the City Centre into more legible areas. In time a Business Improvement District to manage and market should be considered.
City and Harbour Interpretive Framework	Integration of the various themes that have been identified by the "City and Harbour Interpretive Framework" study. Two areas of focus include: 1) This is the historic north and south axis from Shandon, along Main Street to Elizabeth Fort in South Parish – called the Colour Corridor. 2) An east to west axis through the City Centre that reflects the rich maritime and mercantile heritage of Cork and a positioning as leading European river and harbour front city. Continued interventions in attractive areas of the City Centre such as Shandon and South Parish, especially where the City Council is strong.
Wild Atlantic Way and other National Strategies	Ensuring the City Centre benefits from high profile destination experience projects such as the planned Wild Atlantic Way that is to be launched in 2014. Positioned as the world's longest dedicated coastal touring route between Kinsale and Malin Head. Cork is likely to be a major gateway via sea and airports.

4.6 RESIDENTIAL

4.6.1 MORE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE CITY CENTRE

Many post-industrial City Centres in Britain, Continental Europe and North America witnessed a reduction in the number of people living in the City Centre in the 1960s-1980s, but have now reversed the situation. Cork has seen the early signs of this.

Vibrant City Centres have particular appeal to **young people** (students, pre-family singles and couples), empty nesters and increasingly seniors. There are increasing numbers of people, especially **overseas**, living in and around the City Centre.

An important element of the population that Cork currently and is likely to continue to attract is the pool of talented workers, domestic and international, that over the coming years will increasingly dominate the workforce.

In Europe, *Generation's Y and Z* will be increasingly **mobile across borders**. Cork is seeing this now. There are a high proportion of international workers in many of the existing major corporates (Apple, Logitech, Starwood, EMC etc) in the Cork City Region. So ensuring Cork markets and presents itself as an open and inclusive city, offering an attractive lifestyle that it is an “easy to use” city for new people, whether from Ireland or overseas, will be increasingly important. This group of people are increasingly favouring a high quality urban environment in which to live, work and socialise. We expect this trend to continue.

4.6.2 GROWING THE POPULATION OF CORK CITY CENTRE

There are many sites in the City Centre that are suited to development of apartments and town houses. More dense settlement of the City Centre and its vicinity would provide day to day customers for many businesses. The City Council should continue to focus on potential residential capacity from the development sites in and around the City Centre.

The South West Region is forecast to have a growing population, the City Centre and its fringe locations should be the target for much of this growth. A capacity analysis should be undertaken.

A CITY LIVING INITIATIVE

Large scale sites

As land and property is vacated and brought forward for development, there are three main locations in the City Centre or its fringes that can almost certainly support large scale residential led development to strengthen the City Centre in the medium to longer term.

- 1 Beamish & Crawford/Grand Parade, a high density city village;
- 2 City Harbour. The north (Irish Rail) and south banks (Port of Cork, ESB and various private sector land owners) of the River Lee for a mix of higher and medium density residential development;
- 3 Port of Cork land at Tivoli, a low density residential district that benefits from the existing Tivoli address, south facing river front, easy road (cycle, walk and drive) and rail access into the City Centre.

Smaller scale and Conversion

Elsewhere, there are other locations such as Kyril's Quay and smaller infill sites which might be well suited to residential development. The reuse of heritage buildings and redundant office space should also be considered. In particular, the potential of:

- Large "Continental" style horizontal apartments in areas such as South Mall, Main Street and Grenville Place should be investigated. Many continental European cities have them, from Gothenburg in the North to Barcelona in the South. They are emerging in the UK, in locations such as the residential development around the 2012 Olympic Park and Greenwich Peninsula in London plus in Manchester in the Beetham Tower. In the UK, there are private sector developers bringing forward good quality branded, highly managed and serviced apartments of this type (for example: Fizzy Living). This is learning from and blending the approach seen in North America and Continental Europe. Target markets are the 20 and 30 something age groups who do not or cannot afford to buy and are happy to rent.
- Continued initiatives to deliver the potential of the inner city residential neighbourhoods of Shandon and South Parish.

Priming of the residential context is likely to be required through City Council leadership by supporting easier planning, perhaps including creation of larger residential units, subsidies for refurbishment and fiscal incentive schemes such as those piloted in Limerick and Waterford, and recently extended to Cork.

5 ACTION PLAN

5.1 READY FOR ACTION

Many businesses in the City Centre are struggling and developments are stuck on the drawing board or are in administration. Now is a time when a “can do” determination to make things happen, and a positive outlook, is needed.

Corkonians need their Council to continue to be proactive in working hard to unlock opportunities and, especially, to help improve business conditions. The Council should spearhead and facilitate this transition. Businesses themselves must continually consider what they can do themselves, how they organise and market themselves as a Cork Collective to achieve more in the things they can control and influence.

However there needs to be fresh structures that learn from past mistakes and successes in Ireland and overseas to implement the required change.

As the second city of the State, Cork City Council needs to effectively supported, through a Government strategy to help it deliver on the actions identified in this document.

The Action Plan to **revitalise** Cork City Centre comprises of three strategies.

5.2 IMPROVEMENT

Targeted improvement and development projects are critical to **regenerate** the City Centre. This will require significant leadership, championing and buy-in from traders, land owners and others with an interest in the town centre.

There are significant under used or vacant land and property assets in the City Centre and its fringe areas that have excellent accessibility and are often owned or controlled by State Agencies or large corporate businesses. These locations should be the focus of the development that will be required to accommodate future growth in the Cork Region of the next ten to twenty years.

These are development projects that are expected to have a **transformational and catalyst** impact on the City Centre over the medium to longer term. Cork City Council should seek the support of the State and its agencies in delivering them. Priming of the context is needed to reduce risk and attract private sector investment to bring forward development now.

5.2.1 IMPLEMENTATION

Below we outline two transformational projects and a range of catalyst projects designed to bring about a **step change in the performance** of the City Centre and the wider Cork Region in the medium to longer term.

TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECTS

Beamish and Crawford/ Grand Parade



Description	The combination of the Beamish and Crawford site and the development sites between Grand Parade and South Main Street provide the most obvious opportunity for large scale development that can have a transformational impact on City Island.
Use	Enhanced residential, leisure, cultural, civic facilities and public space and to transform its status as a tourist destination. It should be seen as creating a new civic and cultural heart for the city and a new residential City Village.
Concept	Extension of Bishop Lucey Park into the site so that there is a more prominent park on City Island. Enhancement of the library, enabling it to look out onto the green space, and perhaps including a winter garden. Consideration of developing new visitor attraction and cultural product, perhaps in time part enabled by large scale residential development. A new City Centre Museum in the historic Beamish and Crawford buildings that tells the story of Cork City, similar to how the M Shed tells the story of Bristol.
Like	Aker Brygge, Oslo; Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth; The Forum, Norwich, Bristol Harbour; Darling Harbour, Sydney; Nyhaven, Copenhagen, South Yarra Riverfront, Melbourne.
Comment	If this proves to be the preferred location for the events centre it should be progressed quickly. If not an event centre, this area should therefore be largely residential led – which almost certainly would be a higher value use. This is a large and therefore critical area of the City Centre capable of adding much value to its overall offer and experience. Cork City Council should therefore encourage the formation of a development framework between Heineken/BAM, NAMA and itself to deliver a new high quality mixed use piece of city.

City Harbour



Description	At the western end of City Harbour, this will create a top quality modern office-led district, a new Central Business District for the Cork Region and south of the island of Ireland given its accessibility. It should contain large floorplate office buildings in a good quality urban environment.
Use	Large floor plate office buildings, between 1,000 to 2,000 sqm plus. With residential accommodation, ancillary retail and leisure, perhaps a visitor attraction and if selected the event centre. Opening up of the Bonded Warehouses should be targeted as an arts, crafts, cafes, bars and restaurants – “festival shopping” – tourist destination that links City Harbour to leisure and heritage experience of Lower Harbour and the harbour towns such as Cobh and Crosshaven.
Concept	City Harbour should be seen and known as part of the City Centre. It is envisaged as starting on the North Docks at the western end of Kent Station and forming a crescent through City Island, including City Hall, Albert Quay, and the Elysian and onto the western end of the South Docks.
Like	Dublin Docklands, Spinningfields. Manchester; Brindley Place Birmingham; Glasgow’s Clyde Waterfront, Bristol Harbour, Cardiff Bay.
Comment	Assist IDA Ireland make a stronger case for Cork through an improved property ladder for businesses, at whatever stage of the business life stage they are at. This could require public sector support: land being put in at zero cost, a rental guarantee and financial return taken in the longer term, to new financing structures such as “income strips” and tax incremental financing to be considered in the event of continued market failure. Partnership with NAMA, State Agencies (CIE/Irish Rail, Port of Cork, Fáilte Ireland and National Transport Authority) and experienced and credible private sector development partners would be the preferred option. This may need to be fast tracked if projects fail to commence.

CATALYST PROJECTS

The Colour Corridor



Description	Establish a project to make the corridor between South Parish and Shandon, via North Main Street and South Main Street, a more alternative tourist attraction. It should include adjacent streets such as Cornmarket Street, Castle Street, and Kyle Street. The main feature that would make it a destination is colourful decoration of the buildings and high quality street art. Perhaps reflecting the stories uncovered in the City and Harbour Interpretive Framework.
Use	Include attractions such as an “alternative” market and Elizabeth Fort. Cork Vision Centre could be the hub for the project and an enhanced attraction. An event that should ideally have a street art and street festival dimension. Be seen as a major initiative to promote civic pride, and should encourage individuals and businesses in other parts of the city to smarten up.
Concept	It should be seen as the main short term addition to the city’s cultural offer and a focus for enhancing the image of the city as a cultural destination. This is more of spontaneous district, where artistic and cultural events can take place on an ad hoc basis – the ‘pop-up concept’. This will attract people to the city centre to explore the city.
Like	Affleck’s Palace in Manchester; Camden High Road, London; Cathedral Quarter, Belfast.
Comment	Cork City Council should establish a partnership with arts organisations and other interested stakeholders to deliver. Priority for funding applications to Fáilte Ireland and the Arts Council.

Food Innovation Hub



Description	Leverage the very strong Cork Region food and agri-business offer. Working for business, education and consumers. Showcase, demonstration, hot and cold food hall, education, R&D, food production (bakery, coffee roasting) meeting and visitor elements. Potentially at either one or split locations.
Use	Artisan Food Court Venue, using the heritage structures, perhaps the former Oyster Tavern. The development could also include other speciality stores that have synergy with the English Market.
Concept	Development of a project or projects that really help to capture Cork's superb food offering. This should ideally extend the English Market after hours.
Like	Pike Place, Seattle; Borough Market, London; Saluhall Briggen, Gothenburg; A Cork "Avoca".
Comment	Progressed in full recognition of the role the English Market plays in the City - its core role as a high quality outlet for daily shopping for Cork people. It supports the English Market.

Ex Revenue Commissioners Building







Description	The building measures 100,000 sqft (10,000 sqm) with approximately 15,000 sqft (1,500 sqm) per floor. Two refurbishment options and of course a demolition and rebuild option. Refurbishment options.
Use	<p>1. "Centre of creativity", leverage existing studio space for small businesses. Perhaps an anchor for the evolution of South Parish into a trendy inner city area where creativity is to the fore and, encourage similar businesses over time</p> <p>2. Investigation of the building being given a cosmetic makeover inside and out as a modernised office space. The building is substantial but currently poor quality but offers large floorplates.</p>
Concept	Attract new business that are looking to set up in Cork but also to help the City Centre retaining businesses that are growing out of their current accommodation and waiting for higher quality office product that does not currently exist in the City Centre.
Like	Fumbally Exchange, Dublin; Tech City/Silicon Roundabout, London; Tobacco Factory, Bristol; Custard Factory, Birmingham.
Comment	Work with the owners, BAM, to see if this can be made financially viable for them. It is too big an asset to remain largely out of productive use.

Event Centre



Description	A small sized arena to host a range of events and activities, especially music, shows, productions and conventions.
Use	A proven track record to deliver more visitors and crucially more overnight stays into a city centre. We understand there is strong operator demand for a Cork events centre/arena to complement others in Belfast and Dublin.
Concept	Capacity c 5,000 to 7,000 part of mixed use development zones.
Like	Odyssey Belfast, O2 Dublin, First Direct Leeds Arena, Motorpoint Arena Cardiff.
Comment	Cork City Council should work to ensure the early delivery of an events centre. They are a proven “footfall driver” and role and value creator for cities. Both potential locations are strong.

Heart of the City – Retail and Leisure modernisation

	
	
Description	Seek to provide the modern retail space and environment for consumers that domestic and international retail groups require. Cook Street or Princess Street could become top quality restaurant streets with extensive all weather outdoor eating space.
Use	Retail and leisure led, potentially some cultural and civic spaces
Concept	A stronger retail axis in the City Centre. Merchants Quay, Cook Street, Marlborough Street, Academy Street, French Church Street, Grand Parade areas and along with Opera lane and St. Patrick Street.
Like	Kingly Court, Heddon Street, St Christopher's Place in London; Victoria Square, Belfast; Bullring Birmingham; Powerscourt Centre Dublin.
Comment	Larger retail led project would be complex and is most likely a medium to longer term target. Shorter term funding and improvement of various streets should start.

OTHER CATALYST PROJECTS INCLUDE

MacCurtain Street City Village

The aim is to use the opportunity, identified in the City Centre Movement Strategy, to reduce the impact of traffic on MacCurtain Street and improve the public realm, to reinvigorate the street and make it the centrepiece of a **city village** that extends to the River Lee and up the hill behind MacCurtain Street. Cork City Council should work with property owners and key occupiers in the area to plan the streetscape improvements so that they have maximum impact in nurturing the **eclectic** range of shops, combined with places to eat and drink including pavement seating areas.

It should also work with them to encourage residential development that uses upper floors, space behind the street fronts and, in particular, sites on St. Patrick's Quay that face south across the City Centre.

South Mall Triangle



Cork City Council should encourage a partnership of main property owners and occupiers on South Mall and between South Mall and Morrison's Quay, to seek to stimulate substantial investment in that area. The opportunity, identified in the Cork City Movement Strategy, of changing the traffic pattern on South Mall should be used to help to enhance the street's cachet as a **premium office location**. It should ideally include good quality "convenience" street parking that can be charged at a premium to help pay for improvements.

Planning policy should allow conversion of buildings to residential or related uses (such as serviced accommodation and hotels plus food and beverage) where that is more viable than retaining them for offices. The Tea Building in London's Shoreditch is a good example to consider for the South Mall Triangle.

There should be focus on residential development in the area between South Mall and the quaysides, including making the quaysides available for recreational use, and creating a pocket park featuring a children's play area.



Kyrl's Quay

This development site is likely to be important in invigorating the north-west side of the City Centre commercial offer. So, to a lesser extent, are the nearby Munster Furniture Store site on North Main Street and Portney's Lane site on Cornmarket Street.

Cork City Council should actively work to encourage development of those sites, probably featuring residential with commercial activity at ground floors. The Kyrl's Quay site warrants development, ideally including a use, such as a hotel, that has a destination dimension.



Visitor Attraction(s)

The World Centre for Irish Heritage and a Cultural, Library & Tech' Centre

An option includes a potentially nationally and globally significant visitor attraction that tells the story of the Irish diaspora and the impact that it has had on the world. The aim is to provide tourists visiting the region a "must visit" reason to go to the City Centre, addressing the conspicuous lack in the city of any standout tourist attractions. There are a variety of locations in which this might be accommodated that all have merit. A new Civic and Cultural Quarter at the South Channel end of Grand Parade and including Beamish and Crawford/Grand Parade. This could comprise a modern library, science centre (perhaps linked in to the technology and bio-pharma and energy sectors in Cork) and a City museum.



5.3 MARKETING

Cities such as London, Manchester, Portland, Melbourne and Sydney have been leading actions to breakdown cities into understandable districts and neighbourhoods with clear **market positioning** and a well thought out place brand and marketing strategy.

There is a need to promote Cork City Centre to potential visitors, investors, Cork people and the Irish population. This also includes the planned transformational and catalyst projects outlined in this report. This means a stronger place brand and marketing strategy will be required to help in the effective delivery, leasing and operations of these projects.

- This should involve all organisations that have a stake in Cork;
- This strategy provides the approach of breaking down the City Centre into more legible pieces of City to help in marketing – Character Areas;
- It also encourages businesses across the City Centre to focus on what they can control and influence; this is how they manage and market themselves, to work as a stronger collective to add to the overall “noise” the City Centre can generate.

The place brand and marketing strategy for the City Centre needs to be cognisant of the wider and complex place brand architecture and hierarchy in the Cork Region. Plus of course the national/international marketing agencies such as IDA Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, Tourism Ireland and many others undertake.

This will mean there will need to be **consistency** within an overall place brand strategy framework. We think the gatekeeper for the choreography of the various place branding and marketing strategies should be the City Centre Partnership.

CORK NETWORKS

Cork should **visit** cities of similar nature in Britain and Continental Europe that have done this. Derby is a good model and a combined visit to see Derby Marketing and the Derby Business Improvement Districts would be sensible. Manchester and Birmingham are other excellent examples that are both further along their respective City Centre development journeys. Belfast is also advancing plans for a BID, whilst Dublin has one up and running.

Cork should continue the relationships it has established with Cologne, Bordeaux and Nantes. It should also utilise the learning from and connections with other locations.

Importantly Cork should also develop stronger links with **London**. There are many historic cultural, economic and political connections. In particular, Cork should be seeking to tap into the global centre of capital, creativity and technology. All cities are endeavouring to strengthen networks, especially to the existing and fast

MIPIM, the world's largest real estate and city marketing exhibition and conference shows the intensity of global city competition, sophistication of city region place branding and marketing and many development projects aimed at helping other city centres make a step change in economic performance.



growing global hubs. Cork has London on its doorstep. It should promote itself there.

5.3.2 CITY CENTRE PLACE BRAND AND MARKETING STRATEGY

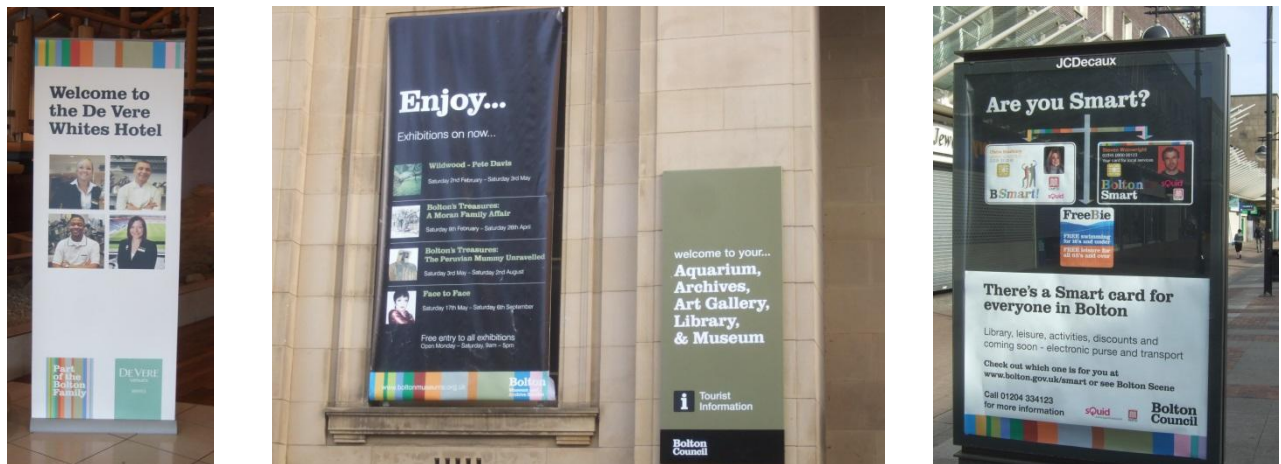
It is recommended that key elements in the project should be:

- A fresh **place brand and marketing strategy** delivered for the City Centre and Character Areas. This must be cognisant of the wider Cork Region place branding and marketing strategy that is being developed.
- An early idea for consideration for the City Centre is “Colourful Cork” as a proposition and perhaps a strapline for the City Centre. The word “colourful” encapsulates the free-spirited, independent nature of the Cork tradition in addition to the idea of it literally being a bright and cheerful city centre. It works as a description of different elements of the city offer, e.g. Colourful Culture, Colourful Shopping. This is a strong proposition and needs to be tested further.



EXAMPLES OF ON THE GROUND STRATEGIES INCLUDE

Figure 14: Illustration of use of a design identity on many aspects of city activity



Through a place brand and marketing strategy, guidelines in how the area will be presented should be established and a roll out of a consistent design identity progressed in key areas.

Figure 15: Illustration of Wayfinding and Cultural Promotion



A map orientated **way-finding** system. It should be used to accentuate the different character areas in the City Centre. Poster sites specifically for the **promotion of cultural** activities and festivals should be created in partnership with the cultural organisations in the city. This should include an events listing. It should have a branding such as “Culture City” to emphasise the extent of Cork’s commitment to culture and the strength of its offer.

CHARACTER AREA ACCENTUATION

Initiatives, introduced with support of traders in the areas concerned, to “bring out” the **identity** of different parts of the City Centre where there is special character. We recommend particular focus in the short term on the Oliver Plunkett Street area and restaurant clusters.

Figure 16: Illustration of how to promote restaurant streets/quarters



Regent Street and the immediate surrounds of the Crown Estate in London has developed very strong identity that works within the wider brand established by the New West End Company, the Business Improvement District for London’s West End. In this case promotion of a restaurant street and quarter.



The Seven Dials place brand and marketing strategy has evolved close to the Covent Garden area, to help bring to life a discrete and formerly hidden area of London into a differentiated and strong character area.



The Pearl District in Portland has proved a very successful North American Character Area.

5.4 MANAGEMENT



Delivery of the short and longer term initiatives outlined in this report requires stronger partnership working between City Centre traders, businesses and council officials and members. Above all, Cork City Centre needs a refreshed approach to City Centre or “downtown” management. In addition to the City Centre Partnership, we recommend further structures to help nurture the City Centre.

5.4.1 IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING

CITY CENTRE PARTNERSHIP

Establish a City Centre Partnership, a group representative of large and small retailers, hospitality, visitor, corporate business and transport sectors along with senior City and County officials and an elected representative.

The need for **stronger partnership working** and the need for a positive attitude is clear. The City Centre Partnership should initially meet weekly. On a quarterly basis it might bring in some external people to discuss achievements, barriers and other issues where coordinated help is needed. Such external people might include an official from the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, a business leader and an expert on city centre revitalisation. perhaps someone from the US, UK or Continental Europe.

The City Centre Partnership would initially focus on the priority actions identified in this strategy.

CITY CENTRE LIAISON

Second is the idea that the City Centre needs a person to liaise with businesses and organisations - a "City Centre Liaison". This is a go to person, to help broker relationships, provide an interface between the City Council and the business sector and help solve day to day problems, and delivers parts of the events and marketing strategy. They would be like a **best in class** manager of a large shopping centre manager.

5.4.2 A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT?

The City Centre Partnership and the Liaison in conjunction with the local authority should begin to tackle the practical initiatives or "footfall generating" projects, that follow in the next section, with a sense of urgency.

This should entail investigating the benefits that a Business Improvement District (BID) might bring and how it might be organised. They should visit cities of similar nature in Britain – like Derby and Bristol – plus in the US and Canada to see how BIDs work there. It might also include consideration of a Tourism Business Improvement (TBID). Cities such as Bristol are in the process of creating these focused tourist areas.

This should be considered through a due diligence process for **what is right for Cork**. A BID or indeed BIDs with a clear and agreed business plan is likely to be part of the City Centre revitalisation plan.



Fáilte Ireland might have a role to support a BID(s) as a BID structure is all about creating a stronger City Centre experience.

Belfast is going through a process of whether or not to establish a Belfast City Centre BIDs.

- We understand Fáilte Ireland is now increasingly focusing on creating strong destination experiences or “experience masterplans” for places and destinations to appeal to domestic and primarily overseas tourists. For example the work they have led in the Viking Triangle, Waterford; Dublin, Dublin; Medieval Mile, Kilkenny. In Cork, Fáilte Ireland has been undertaking a *City and Harbour Interpretive Framework*;
- In the current environment with many retailers struggling, an additional charge for additional services over and above what the City Council provides might be difficult at this time. So, State support through “seed funding” to help get a BID type structure up and running could be part of the funding mix.

5.5 PRACTICAL INITIATIVES

These are shorter term **footfall projects**, to be delivered in partnership with City Centre businesses and local community. Their aim is to attract more people into the City Centre, get them to come in more often, stay for longer and spend more money. These are the “low hanging fruit” that should be progressed in 2014 and on an on-going basis.

5.5.1 SET UP THE PARTNERSHIP AND LIAISON SERVICE

This should be a very early initiative. It is a small lean team from existing resources and people who have the motivation, positivism and experience to help generate momentum and build relationships.



5.5.2 MEET RETAIL EXCELLENCE IRELAND (REI)

The City Centre Management Team should meet with Retail Excellence Ireland (REI). REI are helping to set the pace of change in Ireland’s town and city centres by cascading best practice from lessons learnt in Ireland and internationally.

BROKER RELATIONSHIPS

Meeting REI should emphasise the need for strong partnership working and the need for a positive attitude. The City Centre Partnership Team and Liaison should initially meet weekly. On a quarterly basis they might bring in some external people to discuss achievements, barriers and other issues where coordinated help is needed.

5.5.3 CITY CENTRE PLACE BRANDING AND MARKETING STRATEGY

Cork City Council, the City Centre Partnership and the Liaison Service should work with key business representative groups, such as Cork Chamber and the Cork

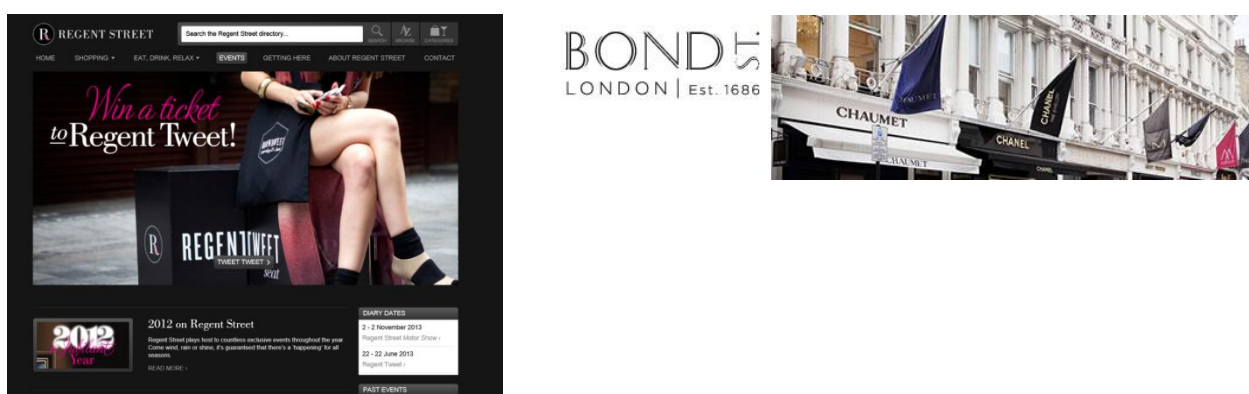
Business Association, and public sector stakeholders such as Fáilte Ireland to develop a plan for promoting the shopping, leisure and business heart of the City Centre. This will be captured in a place brand strategy book for the City Centre. This should align with:

- The Character Areas identified, potentially refined, in this report;
- The Cork City and Harbour Interpretive framework;
- The Place Brand Strategy underway for the Cork Region.

The two year marketing strategy should be tendered and this will:

- Set out the agreed experience, offer and reputation the City Centre wishes to work towards, containing a manifesto that all can broadly support and for example, target retailers/occupiers across the City Centre;
- Accentuate the different character areas within the City Centre;
- Set out graphic and design components for the City Centre and its Character Areas, including logos, straplines, colour palate, urban design and street furniture;
- Consolidate and improve the City Centre internet presence;
- Describe the type of events and activities that are “on brand” for the City Centre and its Character Areas;
- Set out a PR and social media plan;
- An agreed approach as to how to monitor progress, for example a destination tracker newsletter, probably produced on a quarterly basis.

Figure 17: Illustration of how to promote a shopping area



5.5.4 UNDERSTAND YOUR ASSETS

The City Centre Partnership and the Liaison Service should act like a stock market analyst to really **understand what it has to work with** to deliver more value for Cork.

How much retail and leisure space is there in the City Centre, what is its quality, what are the issues with conversion to meet modern multiple retailer and independent needs, pricing, vacancy, business rates/rateable value and options appraisals and unlocking strategies on key sites or projects.

5.5.5 FUNDING AND FINANCE

This will need to come from a variety of sources, ones to be investigated include:

- Cork City and County Councils (local initiatives such as rates, levies, parking etc), NAMA, National Transport Authority, Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland, Government budgets, EU and European Investment Bank;
- Major national and international retailers are used to providing some funding for City and Town Centre projects;
- Linked finance/Crowd funding models for smaller identified projects where net benefits can be seen;
- Investigate new forms of financing such as income strips, sale and leasebacks and perhaps, in the future, tax incremental financing (TIFs) to deliver a capital receipt to support improvement and development projects.

5.5.6 PRESENTATION: CLEAN AND SAFE

Ensure basic measures are undertaken to help ensure the City Centre remains a clean and safe place. It currently meets recognised European standards. Agreement should be reached on buildings that would benefit from a lick of paint, graffiti removal and which buildings could be effectively illuminated. The Garda Síochána has an important role through its routine presence on the street and successful initiatives such as the Cork Public Order Policing Model.

5.5.7 SPEND GENERATING EVENTS

Cork City Centre must be established as a “must visit” destination throughout the year for all people in the Cork Region. In our consultations, comment was made that Cork people visit the City Centre less than in the past. We believe that this trend can be reversed and that the City Centre can start to attract more people, get them to stay for longer, make more repeat visits and spend more money.

City Centre retailers and the hospitality sector need to organise some special events that are aimed specifically at attracting large numbers of people to the City Centre for the purpose of shopping and/or eating. Cork City Council will support these actions. These could include events that make St. Patrick’s Street traffic free only for the day of that event and which include activities and promotions put on by the shops and restaurants.

They should ideally also include events designed to attract people over a longer period, such as an enhanced Christmas Festival and a Spring Festival.

Figure 18: Illustrations of what can be done to make a City Centre special at spring and Christmas



5.5.8 CITY CENTRE BUSINESS PLAN

Informed by the place brand strategy book, a business plan for the marketing of the City Centre should be prepared. This will include:

- Costs of the events and activities and the targets to be achieved;
- A loyalty, discount or special offers card and competitions to target audiences that is on brand. For example targeting the major employers in the City Centre and indeed the vast majority who are located out of the City Centre, so for example Apple in Hollyhill, EMC at Ovens, the businesses at Airport Business Park and Mahon Point office parks;
- Are all the consumer target market segments being reached, whether students, tourists, local residents. Businesses need to understand what different groups look for in a City Centre experience and meet their requirements.

5.5.9 PARKING AND SIGNAGE REVIEW

Recent analysis by Colliers International as part of a review for UK Government on distressed retail property in a sample of England's city and town centres has shown a flexible parking pricing policy can result in notable increase in footfall. A town in Essex significantly reduced parking costs after 3pm and saw an increase in footfall of 30%.

Parking charges in the City Centre are perhaps the primary cause of **concern** to traders. There is on-going discussion with City Centre businesses. However, it is seen as a major barrier by businesses in the retail, leisure and office sectors and the development community to the success of the City Centre.

We recommend there should be detailed review on how to optimise the use of both public and private parking assets in the City Centre with the overall aim of supporting more people visiting for retail and leisure purposes and for more office space, in conjunction with the future development of infrastructure associated with the City Centre Movement Strategy.

This review would be part of the work of the City Centre Partnership Team. In the short term, identification of some initiatives, such as free parking at certain times or free parking to accompany special events, is important, which should be trialled to test their impact. Other elements to review and act upon will include making sure

signs are clear and consistent and whether the park and ride system should be extended.

5.5.10 MEETING PLACES - POCKET PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Introduce signature meeting place projects. With local community groups, open up temporary or, ideally, permanent pocket parks, plus a playground (s) or play areas for different age groups in the City Centre. Meeting places for conversation i.e. branded benches that allow people to sit and take a break, enjoy the surrounds, read a book, newspaper and perhaps start a conversation. This is about addressing the needs of the **local people** – a core market. This should give **more reasons for people of all ages to come into the City Centre**.

5.5.11 RIVER LEE ACTIVITY

Liaise with Waterways Ireland, sailing and boating clubs and other water users to **make the most of the channels of the River Lee** for a range of events and activities. How about wildlife tours, model boats, narrow boats, row boats, pedalos, sailing lessons and open water swimming?

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

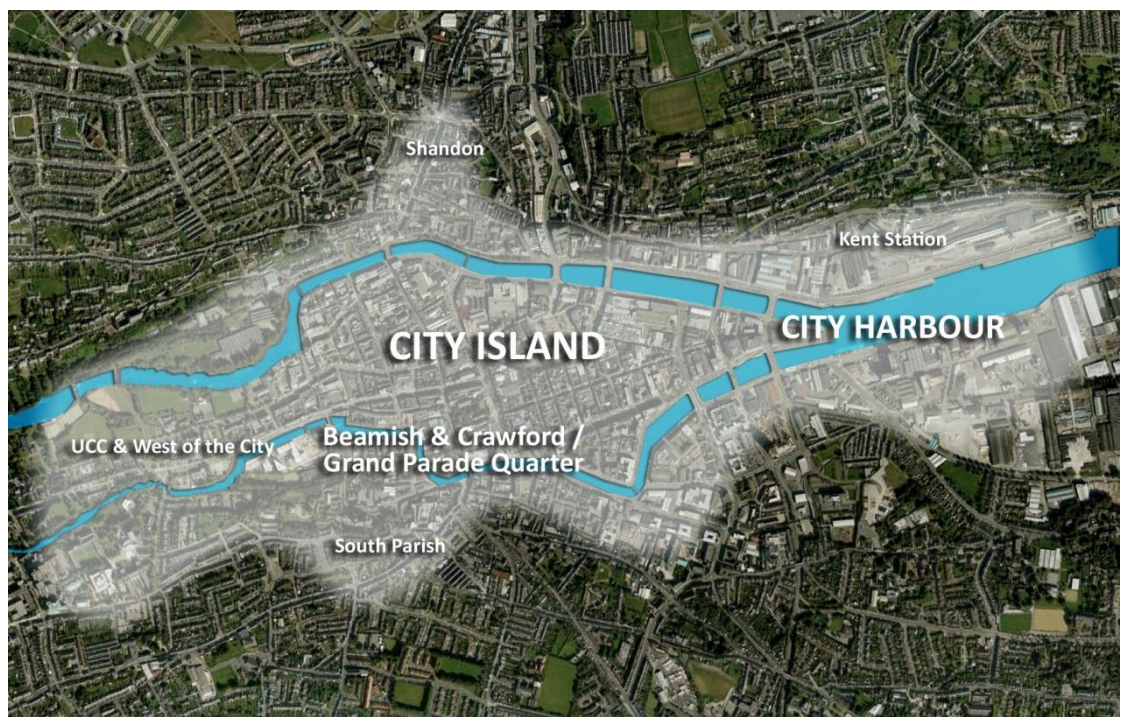
6.1.1 CORK CITY CENTRE IS VERY SPECIAL

Cork is, by some way, the **second largest city** in Ireland. The City and Region has a long and proud domestic and shared global story that continues to this day. The City Centre lies at the heart of the second largest City region in terms of population and economic contribution. The City Centre is the heart of the south of the island of Ireland. In the long term trend of “City Regions”, it is therefore **too important** for Ireland not to have local, regional and national government support.

Cork City Centre needs to be nurtured more effectively than it has been to date. Other comparable City Centres in Britain, Continental Europe and North America have been supported by their national governments much more effectively over the last twenty years.

AN ENLARGED CITY CENTRE

The City Island, its immediate quayside surrounds, plus a westwards and eastwards extension along the River Lee presents an **enlarged sizing** of the City Centre. This is reflective of the location of University College Cork, Kent Station, Port of Cork and major development sites. Plus the essence of the City - its River and Harbour.



Source: Colliers International and Brady Shipman Martin

6.1.2 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Colliers' experience is that most successful large scale City Centre revitalisation strategies need to have the following in place.

- A credible, sellable, understandable and deliverable **vision, brand and marketing strategy**;
- **Certainty** and speed in planning;
- Clear **procedures and strong governance**, with an executive team to act and help the private sector deliver.

With these in place this will help to attract the quality developer, investor and occupier/operator groups from home and overseas that Cork City Centre requires and deserves.

PRIMED BY CORK AND GOVERNMENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

Research, analysis and policy, at a national, European and global level all points to strategies that improve City Centres to help **economic growth**. Cork City Centre has the potential to deliver long term sustainable economic development to grow the Irish economy. The context needs to be improved by Cork itself. This is underway. It also needs priming by Government. This means funding and support for more effective local powers. This has been the case of many of the most successful City Centre revitalisation projects around the world over the last twenty years.

6.2 DELIVERY

Cork City Council and its regional and national stakeholders should ensure the following structures are in place to work with the existing systems:

- **A City Centre Partnership**
 - Charged with improving the presentation of the City Centre, brokering relationships and a conduit of best practice in City Centre management. Existing resources from the public, private and third sectors
- **A City Centre Liaison**
 - Charged with helping City Centre businesses with their day to day issues, brokering relationships and delivery of the City Centre events and activities programme. They should act like a best in class major shopping centre manager, using existing resources in the public or from the private sector.

This strategy provides a major step in the refreshed development journey that Cork City Centre must go on as Ireland slowly enters recovery and growth mode. This

development journey must have commitment, championing, brokering of relationships and strong partnership working from all regional and national leaders to realise its successful implementation. This should include an early resolution as to the City and County boundary issue. Now is the time for action to revitalise Cork City Centre and position the Cork Region and Ireland for a successful future.

Cork City Centre strengthening Cork and Ireland as a great place to



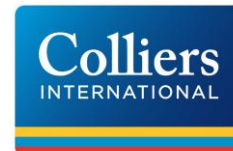
Live



Visit



Invest



CONTACT DETAILS

Colliers International
Hambleton House
19 – 26 Lower Pembroke Street
Dublin 2
Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 1 633 3700

All information, analysis and recommendations made for clients by Colliers International are made in good faith and represent Colliers International's professional judgement on the basis of information obtained from the client and elsewhere during the course of the assignment. However, since the achievement of recommendations, forecasts and valuations depends on factors outside Colliers International's control, no statement made by Colliers International may be deemed in any circumstances to be a representation, undertaking or warranty, and Colliers International cannot accept any liability should such statements prove to be inaccurate or based on incorrect premises. In particular, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing, any projections, financial and otherwise, in this report are intended only to illustrate particular points of argument and do not constitute forecasts of actual performance.