

Dublin City Position Paper

Perspectives on a vibrant
post-covid city



index

1. →

p. 4

2. →

p. 5

3. →

pp. 6-9

4. →

p. 10

5. →

p. 11

Starting point

Status quo

Future scenarios. What are the opportunities for Dublin?

Next steps. Moving forward together

Annex



Dublin City - Position Paper
Perspectives on a vibrant post-covid city.

APRIL 2021

A PRODUCT OF BLOSSITY
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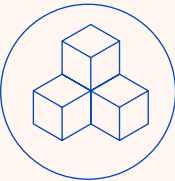
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1

Starting Point

Despite dramatic statements, there is no evidence of a large-scale urban exodus. In fact, we see that people want to go back to the vibrancy of inner cities more than ever before. Cities remain preferred places of entertainment and social connection, magnets of talent and trade, and the most sustainable way to accommodate our growing global population.

What Covid does is accelerating changes that were already underway. Trends one expected to play out in 7 to 10 years suddenly became a reality in 7-10 months. Think of more experience-driven retail, preference for local and artisanal food, working from so-called third spaces, more attention to wellbeing and a greater climate consciousness. Many cities are grappling with these issues now and assessing how they remain relevant now, given the changes accelerated by Covid.



With the Dublin Development Plan (2022-2028) and the Dublin Town renewal plan in the making our timeline is crystal clear. What kind of city do we want Dublin to become in the next 6-years?

Dublin has the chance of positioning itself as an innovative global leader by establishing the right city balance. This is the moment to rethink the positioning of Dublin City and formulate a new authentic narrative. A narrative that builds on Dublin's rich history and helps shaping a liveable, resilient city. An enhanced Dublin. The purpose of this white paper is to define the building stones for a new Dublin City narrative – not to top down decide upon the positioning. Smart governments are leveraging the “wisdom of the crowd” by creating open, transparent platforms for input on ways to improve the local quality of life. This white paper is intended to articulate key themes, inspire with international case studies and build momentum.

2

Status Quo

DUBLIN IN THE NEWS

[“Places have a reputation, and we have an opinion about them, first or second hand”](#)

The eight best city for vegans

[National Geographic 2021]

15th most liveable city in the world

[ECA International 2021]

The 10 Most Expensive Cities For A Post-Pandemic Vacation Rental

[Forbes 2021]

Trinity College Dublin = 155 in Times World University Ranking 2021. 32% int stdnt.

University College Dublin = 251-300. 30% int stdnt.

The third top city in Europe for tech and innovation investment

[FDI /TNW 2020]

The Irish economy grew by 3% in 2020 and is projected to come in at 3.4% growth in 2021, according to the European Commission's Winter 2021 Economic Forecast^[1]. It said that this was largely driven by the IT and pharma industries. The national economy relies on Dublin city with 60% of international tourists to Ireland visit Dublin city and roughly half of taxes raised in Ireland are raised in Dublin. Foreign Direct Investment is increasingly reliant on quality-of-life, and Dublin city is a major contributor to that. Dublin had one of the heaviest lockdowns in the EU, both deep and long. The latest Dublin Economic Monitor shows that although the Dublin economy remains severely impacted by Covid-19 restrictions, it is prepared for recovery once conditions permit. Report highlights^[2]:

- Business activity in Dublin fell in Q4 2020 due to declining employment levels and tightening new orders, particularly in the services sector.
- Retail spending fell last quarter but rose by 1% YoY in Q4 2020, largely due to rising expenditure levels on eCommerce platforms.
- House completions reached a new peak of over 2,400 in Q4 2020 but the recovery in commencements stalled.
- Hotel occupancy fell to 16% in January 2021 as the average daily rate for a room declined to €88.
- Highstreet footfall within Dublin City was down by 75% compared by 2019.

Pre-Covid pre 5pm footfall was falling and post 5pm footfall was rising, pointing to a growing evening and night-time economy driven by city works choosing to spend time after work in the city dining and socialising. Pre-Covid research also suggested that large floor plate retailers, which operate as part of chains were most vulnerable to changes in spending patterns. Early evidence emerging suggests that there will be less large international chains in our cities post Covid, mainly exacerbated by Brexit.

^[1] European Commission (2021) Winter 2021 Economic Forecast. Available at: ec.europa.eu

^[2] Dublin Economic Monitor (2021). Available at: <https://www.dublineconomy.ie>

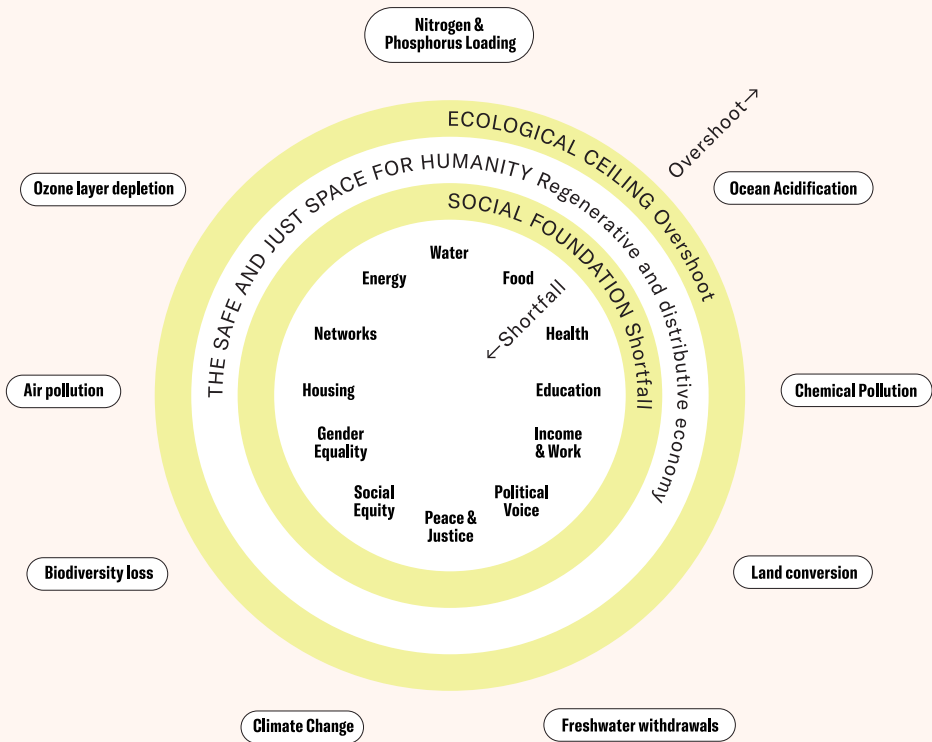
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Future scenarios. What are the opportunities for Dublin?

- 1 Emerging Economies
- 2 Talent attraction & Retention
- 3 Blending Spaces
- 4 Cultural Uses
- 5 Mobility
- 6 Holistic health
- 7 Safety

PROJECT SPOT

The Amsterdam City Doughnut^[3] → As Amsterdam plans for its post-coronavirus recovery, it's also rethinking what economic success looks like. The model, developed by U.K. economist Kate Raworth, is a simple way to illustrate a complex goal. The inner ring of the doughnut represents minimum standards of living, based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. This entails the basic essentials everyone needs to thrive, from food and clean water to gender equality and adequate housing. According to the model, no one should fall into the hole in the centre of the doughnut, which would mean they don't have enough to afford basic needs. The outer ring of the doughnut represents the ecological limits of the planet, from biodiversity loss and air pollution to climate breakdown. The complex goal? Amsterdam wants to stay between the inner and outer rings.



^[3] Doughnut Economics Action Lab (2020) The Amsterdam City Doughnut Available at: amsterdam.nl/en/policy/sustainability/circular-economy/

Rather than charting a course back to the restoration of the previous status quo, these 7 strategic themes are rightly aimed toward building a more innovative, inclusive, and sustainable future.

1 Emerging Economies

With an attractive corporate tax rate and the youngest workforce in the EU, Ireland continues to be a popular destination for Foreign Direct Investment. Indeed, Dublin is an incredible competitive city in sectors like the life sciences, technology, and financial services. Following Brexit, the UK will also be a major target for Ireland as British companies look to establish an EU base. This is an opportunity for Dublin.

Growth in the pharma space is particularly strong due to the Irish government's investment in the National Institute for Bioprocessing Research & Training (NIBRT), based at University College Dublin. It is now one of the world's leading institutes for training programs to support complex biomanufacturing processes.

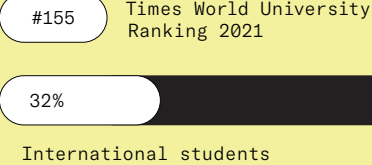
2 Talent attraction & Retention

Talent is what fuels thriving economies and communities. Dublin has already established itself as a magnet for international talent, with well positioned colleges. Following Brexit, Dublin becomes even more attractive to foreign students seeking English Taught Programmes. Two immediate topics arise when rethinking international talent attraction and retention.

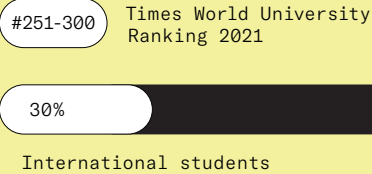
Dublin Summer School Program → The summer is typically down time for university cities, with very little vibrancy on campus. A city-wide summer school program is a great way of driving a more sustainable kind of tourism and developing the city brand through engagement with the thought leaders of the future. A summer school program offers students and young professionals to have a meaningful experience, boost their CV and explore all things Dublin. Ideally such summer school is a joint effort of academic institutions and the private sector, so that attendees also get a taste of life after university.

Fasttrack (student)housing → With or without a summer school program, an immediate point of attention is the creation of more, better quality homes for young professionals and starters. The science is clear, access to the housing market is the most important factor when it comes to retaining talent. This is a combined approach, aimed at creating a diverse housing supply. Here it is fundamental to build enough social housing, but that can't be disconnected from creating more mid-market supply, to assure that people can up the property ladder.

Trinity College Dublin



University College Dublin

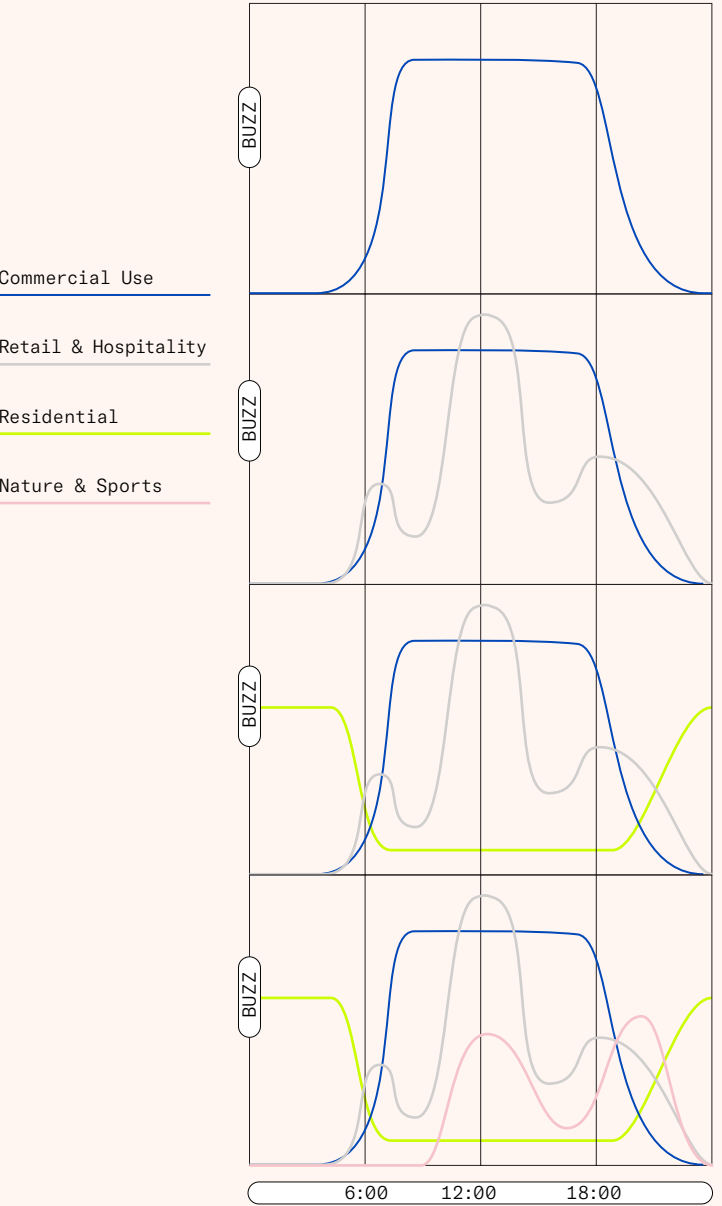


3 Blending Retail, Workplace & Residential

Modern urbanism promoted a ‘functional’ city with profound separation of functions like working, living and recreation. Today we face the consequences of that fatal separation, starting with a mobility crisis but extending to a lack of density and loss of vibrant public space. These days we see again how vulnerable this model is to economic volatility.

We believe in blended buildings, where multiple uses are not only mixed together, but interact with each other and enrich each other. There is a market now to convert office buildings into residential use. There is also vast potential to convert vacant retail into local co-working hubs. Overall people will again want access to the amenities that cities afford, and diversifying the downtown population is fundamental to footfall growth.

Here’s how blending commercial use with residential, retail, hospitality, and activated streetscapes drives vibrancy and a 24/7 buzz:



[Greening Dublin City](#) → Greening the city centre is win-win-win. With the world become more and more urbanised and our climate more extreme, greenery helps mitigating urban heat islands and helps to better store (rain)water. Greenery also supports biodiversity as it makes the city centre more attractive for wild bees, butterflies and birds. Finally, there is overwhelming evidence on how greenery helps us humans with better mental health.

[The power of play](#) → Slowly play is becoming a priority again for parks and recreation departments in towns and cities of all sizes. That’s not just good news for kids. Inclusive play serves people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, and is an incredibly powerful driver of social connection and civic engagement. Bringing play back to town is also a great way of driving footfall and retention.

7 Safety

What comes through from the suggestions for improving Dublin City is no surprise; safety is the main concern. Here it should be noted that the sense of safety is differently perceived between south and north city centre. RedC^[5] research highlights how Greater Dublin residents are much more likely to recommend the Southside than the Northside. This comes down to cleanliness and security. More Garda presence would improve satisfaction ratings and generally feeling safer in the city.

The typical reflex here would be to increase police presence on the streets, and whilst that for specific parts of Dublin City might be the best first step there are more ways to nudge safety. A sense of safety is strongly related to cleanliness, as we know how people unconsciously link dirty and dark streets to environments that are more conducive to crime. Pop-up events programming and enlivenment strategies are another way to drive a sense of belonging on the streets and signal safety.

[4] Boston Consulting Group (2020). Available at: bcg.com/publications/2020/how-marketers-can-win-with-gen-z-millennials-post-covid

[5] RedC for DublinTown (2020) Dublin Town Visitation Research

PROJECT SPOT

[Copenhagen // Superkilen](#) → In 2008, the Copenhagen City Council joined forces with an association of real-estate businesses engaged in a non-profit-making project of transforming built-up areas and they managed to raise a sum of almost eight million euros to transform the space into a park that was to be named “Superkilen” (Big Wedge). Today it is an award-winning public space, promoting integration across lines of ethnicity, religion and culture. A meeting place for residents of Denmark’s most ethnically diverse neighbourhood and an attraction for the rest of the city.

[Montreal Centre Ville bike stations](#) → In response to changing behaviours in pandemic, the City of Montreal opened 4 bike stations, both free and accessible to all. Each of them can accommodate 50 bikes, feature cleaning facilities and offer free charging for electric bikes. All stations are supervised between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. and remain accessible overnight. The pop-up bike stations are an initiative of Destination Centre-Ville BID.

[Stockholm Skates park](#) → Part of the Gallerian shopping mall, PUSH is 1200 m² filled with interesting pop-ups, a first-class skateboard bowl and really just a living room to Stockholm. It’s a good example of so called third places (in between home and work) that are accessible freely and inside. A place where you are allowed to be and feel a sense of belonging, without necessarily having to buy anything.

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Next steps. Moving forward together

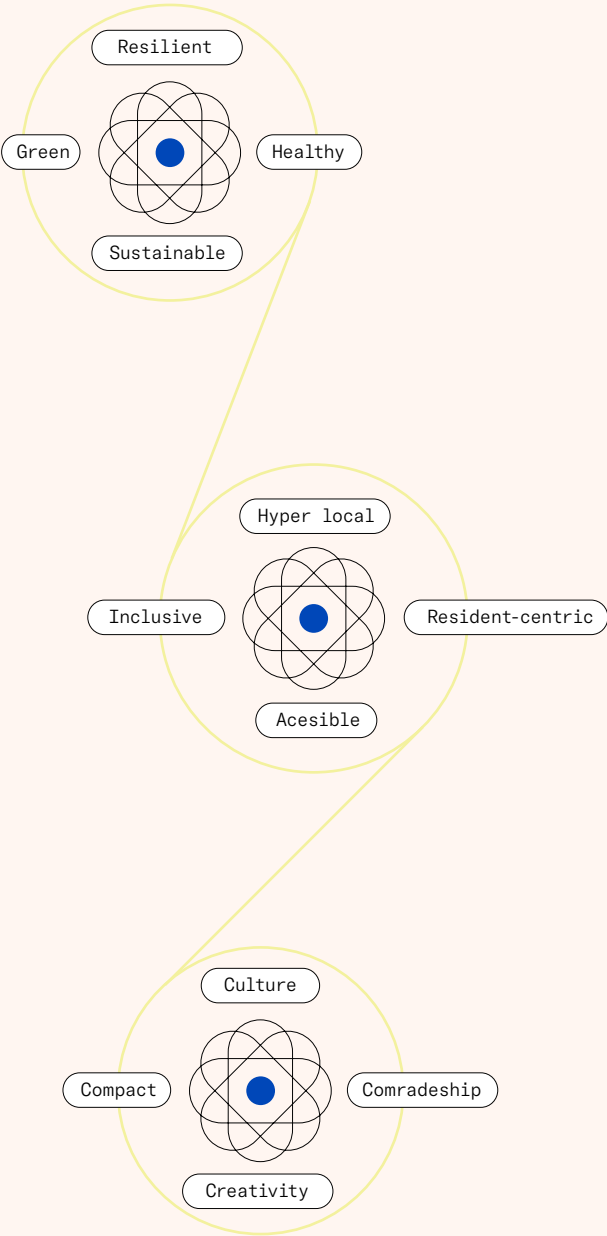
Frameworks

[Looking at the 7 key-themes outlined on the previous pages, we can distil the following 3 frameworks for future storytelling:](#)

We cannot solve the positioning of Dublin City in this paper; and we shouldn't. Rethinking the wider positioning is about dialogue, developing a coalition of the willing and building (financial) partnerships that support the entire ecosystem of changemakers in our city centres. It's about making choices.

Destination branding will be less about landmarks and more about (safe) experiences. The brand is about a sense of community, a sense of belonging, and how that creates identity. At this point in time there is a unique opportunity to shift away from a top down, rigidly defined 'brand' towards a much more open and evolving story / narrative. Out of the cloud back to the street, for a more sustainable city positioning.

City brands are co-produced in a network of actors, dependent on stakeholder input. Together, Dublin Town and Dublin City Council are in the perfect position to build a diverse brand coalition. Beyond governmental bodies this coalition should consist out of private organizations, societal organizations, residents and visitors.



5

Annex

