



There is an opportunity for bold thinking and a new framework to position Dublin as a dynamic and leading City of the Future – and enhance its resilience and competitiveness.

Context

The challenges facing all cities, including Dublin, in the post Covid world are complex and inter-related¹. Some of these challenges were existent pre-Covid and have been expedited or exposed by it – others are consequential of it. In terms of thematic focus, the impacts of all appear to centre on (1) Environmental quality (2) Socio-Economic impacts (3) Management and Governance and (4) New transportation and design principles.

Each challenge has a relative economic impact or indeed a potential upside but there is lack of clarity in relation to the extent now and in the future. The relativity is important as Local Authorities have multiple priorities but limited budgets and need a more data driven optic on return of investment for discretionary programmes.

Through the pandemic, Local Authorities have been the main agents of policy implementation set at a national level and whilst the situation remains somewhat fluid, there is recognition that now is a better time to start building for the future – this is more than just recovery. Overall, existing knowledge within cities such as Dublin shows that Covid-19 entails a generational opportunity for planners and policy makers to take transformative actions towards creating cities that are more just, resilient, and sustainable.

¹ The COVID-19 pandemic: Impacts on cities and major lessons for urban planning, design, and management.

Changing the city....



Migration to multi-functional from retail



Green space in higher demand



Pedestrianisation



Congestion reduction and integrated transport



Focus on Health & Wellbeing



Reduction in commercial real estate footprint



Demand for experiences from residents and visitors



Authenticity & home-grown orientation

The narrative against cities has been unhelpful and unrealistic. Cities are home to most of the world's population and are centres of economic growth and innovation. They are and will remain core economic hubs but there is no doubt, this is a seminal point to pivot to a new Vision and framework for Dublin to support the transformation from a retail, car dominated and business centric hot spot to a more sustainable and balanced hub focussed on the need of residents. Many eminent urbanists including Jacobs and Gehl argue this is central for long term success. This is imperative because the high concentration of people and activities in cities make them vulnerable to various stressors.

The Vision and actions required are distinct from the current raft of Recovery strategies and plans. In the main, these plans are looking at tactical interventions to help cities return to the pre-Covid starting point along discrete lines, but this is not really desirable or conducive to a future proof foundation for economic and social prosperity.

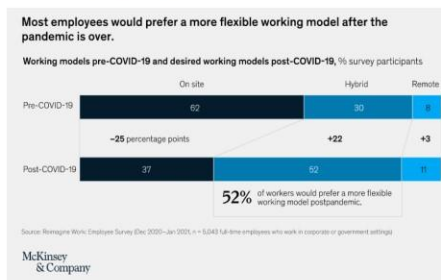
Dublin City Council has engaged OCO and eutopia to work on developing a new vision for Dublin. OCO Global is a leading economic development advisory firm with 120 consultants worldwide across a network of international cities including Dublin, Belfast, London, Paris, Frankfurt, New York, Dubai and Tokyo. OCO has successfully delivered more than 1000 significant advisory projects in economic development and is retained as an advisor to key Government departments at a national and state level in all major economies in relation to Trade and Investment and place issues. eutopia is an OCO spin out, established in 2020 and focused on place-based issues ranging from place management through to regeneration (High Street) and place marketing.

In recognition of the complexity and the level of interconnectedness involved in managing a city like Dublin a series of consultations and workshops are being arranged which will have input from internal and external stakeholders including city officials and the Lord Mayor and Party Leaders.

The new framework has the potential to have a transformative influence on urban recovery – ensuring that Dublin can position itself as a leading European capital as well as a great place to live, work, study, invest and visit. The Invest and Work pillars are important as we know there will be impacts of the changing patterns of working driven by both employers and employees.

This is a risk factor for Dublin even if the current predictions are overstated with less footfall coming into the city and a likely contraction in commercial office space.

Investor requirements, particularly in those sectors with remote workers, have changed and so governments will need to adapt their offer and services accordingly



- Post-pandemic, most employees want to work from home three days a week.
- More than 25% said that they would consider switching employers if their organization returns to fully on-site work.
- Mental health and work-life balance are rising priority factors.

A key theme of the new framework will be that Dublin needs to transform as a City based around the need of all of its residents. Even though it is currently a successful city by many measures, this will not make it future proof. Taking a resident centric approach is important as they have more autonomy and flexibility in terms of work patterns and remote working options and a much greater choice in procurement of goods and services through online channels. The key issues in this discussion will centre on:

1. Improving urban data
2. Developing flexible and inclusive strategies
3. Understanding the city density and structural conditions
4. Enhancing social protection and income support
5. Strategies for a green and blue recovery
6. Recognising enterprise engagement

The approach will involve a series of consultations and workshops designed to define the opportunities and challenges and to co-create a roadmap to achieve the Vision and Strategy.

It is envisaged that the work will be completed at the end of October where an outcomes report can be provided to the next SPC meeting scheduled for November 2021.

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