

BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

THURSDAY 4 DECEMBER 2008

INNOVATION CENTRE, QUEENS ROAD

1. What makes your area unique?

- Capital City
- Emerging city with potential to rebuild and rebrand – phoenix factor
- City composed of villages with distinctive identity
- History – political (depicted in murals) and industrial – Can turn negative history and perspective into a positive
- Tourism
- Airport situated within the area
- Titanic Branding
- People – warm and welcoming
- Architecture-older style and potential to develop a new style
- Location – scenic setting surrounded by hills and close to rural hinterland
- Compact city centre
- High level of deprivation in key pockets
- Economic and political centre
- Cultural/heritage assets – artists, musicians, film makers etc
- Links with USA – commercial historical political and artistic
- Regional health specialist centres

2. How can this be developed to give a competitive edge to your area?

- Promote tourism and develop better facilities eg hotels, infrastructure, berthing for ships, develop river potential
- Build on the attractiveness of the city.
- Agree a tourism strategy which encourages collaboration between venues within Belfast and with other areas and considers niche markets
- Develop a Public/Private partnership with city stakeholders and agree and prioritise a “shopping list” for the next 25 years
- Promote skills and strong education base of the area and Region
- Encourage and develop medical research
- Encourage young, educated workforce to stay and contribute to area/Region
- Develop city branding to encourage civic pride
- Create a “shared space” in the city centre
- Attract investment
- Market the quality of life here and home/work balance
- Develop events and festivals unique to the area
- Improve public transport within Belfast – buses and rail

- Develop tele-medicine
- Review funding arrangements – more long term funding – particularly for disadvantaged areas
- Build/development should be based on **need** rather than political correctness ie one leisure centre in west Belfast counter balanced with one in east Belfast
- Develop knowledge based industry
- Appoint a Minister for Belfast
- Develop skills in green industry
- Closer links with community sector
- Improved Planning process and removal of obstacles to develop Brownfield sites
- Political stability

3. What skills underpin your area's businesses and how can these be improved to attract new business and encourage economic growth?

- Engineering, IT, Bio-medical and Information skills as used in Call Centres
- Community work skills
- A developed and emerging music culture
- Good third level educated workforce but also a high percentage with no qualifications
- Skills mismatch – need to train for the future and develop closer links between education and industry at all levels
- Encourage education/industry links through bursaries and apprenticeships
- Improve hospitality /service skills
- Encourage and support innovation and entrepreneurship
- Attract and encourage migrant workers to remain in NI and use their knowledge and skills
- Encourage and market the Region's skills and abilities to promote self belief
- Develop "green management" skills
- Develop niche markets, particularly using creative skills of the area

4. What opportunities might exist to co-operate with nearby towns/areas to improve your area?

- Improved high speed communications to encourage "remote" working
- Benchmark and learn from other cities worldwide
- Develop closer links with Dublin
- Collaborate rather than compete with towns for tourism and investment
- Improved connectivity through better infrastructure and public transport schedules

- Tourism Strategy to include themed tours and sporting connections within and between areas
- Invest in ferry links to join NI to GB

5. Are there any particular equality or health issues in your area that need to be considered?

- Pockets of social exclusion, tribalism and racism within a segregated society
- High level of poverty which impacts on health
- High level of unemployment in some areas which can impact on social housing
- An aging population impacts on health
- Current services and infrastructure are designed for car owners
- Invest in community based health
- Improve social/community agenda
- Option for electronic participation in government policy development by citizens throughout the process rather than merely organised pre and post consultation exercises
- Air quality and the quality of the environment