



# Glasgow City Centre

## Recovery Plan 2022 - 24

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# FOREWORD

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the people of Glasgow and across the globe. Glasgow is the engine of the Scottish economy and centre for jobs and education, and has faced the longest and most significant restrictions in the UK.

These have had a particular impact as they effectively cut Glasgow city centre off from the metropolitan catchment of 1.8 million people. In response the Glasgow City Centre Task Force was established November 2020 to address the disproportionate pressures being faced by businesses in Glasgow city centre. The partnership between Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and key private sector representatives identified and progressed short-term measures in order to protect and support the economic sectors so critical to the city, regional and national prosperity and competitiveness.

As we look to the future we now set out a structured plan to support the recovery of Glasgow city centre and the wider region. This two-year plan has been produced to allow a continued focus on short to medium term actions that support an immediate - and sometimes fluid - response, while developing a longer-term strategic plan which will be in place by 2025. This recovery plan acknowledges that the pandemic has accelerated a number of trends, particularly around retail, technology and data, and it aims to reaffirm Glasgow city centre's position as one of the top city centres in the UK and Europe.

Glasgow city centre must be for everyone: an everyday, metropolitan, international city centre. A high priority in the coming years will be the delivery of the City Centre Living Strategy and Strategic Development Framework and associated 20-minute neighbourhood approach to encourage city centre living by providing the amenities that support residents. Maintaining high-quality spaces, enhancing heritage assets, business space and providing access to a breadth and depth of experiential assets, facilities and activities which are unique to the city centre, will successfully bridge the daytime and night-time economies and drive the foundations of a far more sustainable centre, better able to withstand global economic pressures.

The city centre must also build on its inherent assets to attract businesses and residents who want to thrive in an environment that encourages connection, collaboration and innovation, and which will support a just transition to a refocused, inclusive and competitive economy. Policy frameworks must adapt to fast-moving

trends, find creative solutions, and embed flexibility and proportionality into associated measures.

Glasgow city centre will recover from the pandemic and will rebuild its competitive advantage, however the impact is still being keenly felt by some of our core economic sectors. City centre weekday footfall has recovered only 60% of pre-COVID levels by end August 2021 even after restrictions had been largely removed. The hospitality sector is able to operate but with a continuing range of pandemic mitigation measures to manage in addition to the general footfall decline. The constraints around international travel combined with high fixed operating costs have placed particular pressure on hotels and the visitor economy. The slow return to office impacts on already-struggling retail and night-time economy businesses. At the same time, the pandemic is yet to stabilise.

This two-year plan consequently sets out objectives and priority actions for the medium-term period, recognising that much may change in the coming months. Glasgow City Council will continue the collaborative approach through the City Centre Taskforce, which will drive forward this agenda of recovery and rebuild.

As co-chairs of the City Centre Task Force, we have warmly welcomed the support and inputs to the development of this plan by a wide range of city centre partners. The scale of the challenge should not be understated, however by working together we will deliver a sustainable and vibrant city centre with opportunities for all who choose to live, work, study, visit and invest here.



**Councillor Angus Millar**  
Co-chair City Centre Task Force, Deputy City Convenor for Inclusive Economic Growth, Glasgow City Council



**Stuart Patrick**  
Co-chair City Centre Task Force, Chief Executive of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

# INTRODUCTION

The City Centre Recovery Plan sets out to provide clarity to business and other stakeholders on the priorities and principles the City Centre Taskforce will follow to support the recovery of the city centre economy.

The development of the Plan will be inclusive, so that everyone has the opportunity to participate and benefit. Sustainability will be at the heart of the proposals so that we respond to the climate and ecological emergency by creating a more resilient economy. Finally, we will create a smarter city centre that enables innovation and digital technology for those businesses that will drive employment and as a means to attract people back into the city centre.

The plan has four main priorities:

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# ACTION PROGRAMME

## Executive Summary

<b>Supporting business operations</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Footfall recovery measures	Active	Active	Active
Look and feel audits	Active	Active	Active
Scottish and UK Government advocacy and engagement	Active	Active	Active
Vacant unit plan	Active	Active	Active
Skills development support	Active	Active	Active
<b>Transforming the city centre</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
City Centre Living Strategy	Active	Active	Active
Developer engagement and support	Active	Active	Active
Avenues programme design and delivery	Active	Active	Active
DRF programme delivery	Active	Active	Active
SDP programme delivery	Active	Active	Active
Planning policy review: changing uses	Active	Active	Active
Property Repurposing Strategy	Active	Active	Active
<b>Climate and ecological emergency</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Transport Strategy and City Centre Transformation Plan	Active	Active	Active
Net zero carbon residential development	Active	Active	Active
Heat and energy generation projects	Active	Active	Active
Heritage resilience plan	Active	Active	Active
Local Biodiversity, Pollinator & Open Space plans	Active	Active	Active
Introduce rain gardens and green infrastructure	Active	Active	Active
<b>Key destinations</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Renfrew Street digital Arts/Culture quarter	Active	Active	Active
High Street Area Strategy	Active	Active	Active
IFSD phase 2	Active	Active	Active
Scottish Events Campus	Active	Active	Active
River development plan	Active	Active	Active
<b>Liveable city centre</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Place Design policy development	Active	Active	Active
Policy one-stop-shop	Active	Active	Active
Conversion to residential supports	Active	Active	Active
Public space and social infrastructure planning	Active	Active	Active
Inclusive and accessible transport opportunities	Active	Active	Active
<b>Creativity and innovation</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Development of GCID	Active	Active	Active
Artists in Residence	Active	Active	Active
Community wealth building options	Active	Active	Active
Visitor tech data tools	Active	Active	Active



# PART ONE: COVID-19 IMPACT ON GLASGOW CITY CENTRE

As the heart of the metropolitan region, the location of Glasgow city centre has provided competitive advantages. As a high-amenity centre amongst the world's top 100 cities, it has successfully operated as a natural magnet of business, tourism, leisure, and culture, and generated a significant proportion of national tax revenue.

Its vibrant night-time economy and the conference and convention strategy has driven the city's success in attracting international delegates and repeat visits. The city is one of only five designated UNESCO "Cities of Music" globally, and the UK's first. The Scottish Events Campus (SEC) sits at the heart of this. In 2019 the SEC attracted 2.1 million visitors and had an estimated economic impact of £457 million. The most recent addition to the SEC, the Ovo Hydro on the edge of the city centre, currently ranks as the second busiest venue in the world after NYC's Madison Square Gardens.

Glasgow city centre has also benefited from strong regional connectivity with 43% of Scotland's population within a one-hour commute. With a low residential population, weekday footfall and vibrancy are largely generated by the regional workforce. The concentration of Further and Higher Education facilities, the largest student population in Scotland and the second highest in the UK, along with the scale of commercial and public sector assets, has generated footfall for many business sectors, as well as providing greater access to skills and talent.

The city centre employs over 150,000 people and is successful in a number of key sectors including Financial and Business Services, the Creative Industries, Life Sciences, Digital Technology and Engineering, Design and advanced Manufacturing. It is home to the Glasgow City Innovation District (GCID) which is the result of a successful partnership between Glasgow City Council, the University of Strathclyde, Scottish Enterprise,

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce and Entrepreneurial Scotland. The GCID has brought in new jobs, inward investment, and organisations with innovation at their core, from the Weir Group's Advanced Research Centre, to the UK headquarters of Europe's largest contract research organisation, Fraunhofer.

The city centre's retail sector has retained the number one UK ranking outwith London's west end over the past decade despite increasing pressure from cities across the UK.

The financial and business services economy is thriving and was set on this path by the development of the International Financial Services District which now sits at the heart of a sector that employs over 53,000 people. There are also other significant concentrations of business and financial services organisations in the Central Business District located around Bothwell Street and Charing Cross.

The city centre's success at attracting investment is also demonstrated by the development of the Barclays complex on the south bank and the hotel developments underway at Custom House Quay. Notable developments in the past two years include:





**Barclays Glasgow Campus:**  
a mixed-use development of office space and residential with local amenities and improved public realm (Drum Development Group)



**Clayton Hotel:**  
a 4 Star Hotel with over 300 rooms close to the riverside in the heart of the city centre (Artisan Real Estate)



**Candleriggs Square:**  
mixed use development. Masterplan for homes (including build to rent), offices, hotels, restaurants, and a new public space (Drum Property Group/Stamford Property Investments)



**Learning and Teaching Building:**  
this building is at the heart of the University of Strathclyde Campus. The project refurbishes two existing buildings, and also creates a new-build hub in between overlooking the university's Rottenrow Gardens (BDP)



**Love Loan:**  
mixed use development including residential, serviced apartments, student accommodation, hotel, office, retail, food and drink and commercial uses (Chris Stewart Group)



**Holland Park:**  
a residential development of 433 high specification apartments (Moda Living/ Apache Capital)



## Covid-19 impact on city centres

Covid-19 has brought an unprecedented shock and disruption to cities across the world. City centres have been most affected by these events and the profile of Glasgow's economy and low residential population has resulted in a disproportionately negative impact.

It is not yet clear how long-lasting the societal and behavioural impact of the pandemic will be. Combined with the rapid acceleration of technological change and global competition, the risk to city centres generally is significant. Fiscal challenges exacerbated by the pandemic, and the economic disruption being experienced by some sectors as a result of the implementation of Brexit and global supply chain issues, are likely to result in further pressures.

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### Impact on Glasgow city centre

Glasgow city centre's metropolitan role, the continued emphasis on home working guidance and the reliance on some sectors in which hybrid/remote working or digital alternatives have emerged, have contributed to a relatively slower recovery. The Scottish Government's guidance on working from home has slowed return to city centre offices. The negative impact on weekday footfall is pushing the city down the competitive ladder on both UK and European terms; since March 2020, out of 11 UK core cities, Glasgow has had the third highest decline in office footfall relative to pre-pandemic levels, the third slowest recovery to office working, the second highest decline in public transport use, and the second highest decline in retail footfall.

The comparatively small residential population, a reliance on the regional workforce and a slow return to campus for students has left the city centre in an exposed position without the local demand dynamics to sufficiently support some sectors of the local economy

during the ongoing pandemic. There is a high reliance on retail business and a large number of workers in vulnerable service sectors. Glasgow city centre also has 40% more commuters than other large cities in the UK with the exception of London. Many public health restrictions have been applied, and continue to be applied, to sectors critical to Glasgow city centre.

Despite this, city centres will remain the most compelling locations for investment and offer huge potential to policy-makers. The accumulated advantages of centrality, proximity, density, history, culture, and infrastructure are significant and impossible to replicate. Access to talent, opportunities to cluster and collaborate, the experience economy, and long-term investment in placemaking, transport and infrastructure, are of a quality and scale that smaller centres find hard to replicate.

A number of indicators identified by the Business of Cities reflect Glasgow city centre's **enduring resilience**:



**Demand: 3rd fastest private sector jobs growth** in the five years preceding the pandemic in leading UK cities. 90% of new F&B openings in 2020 were from local rather than national chains with many taking a positive long-term view



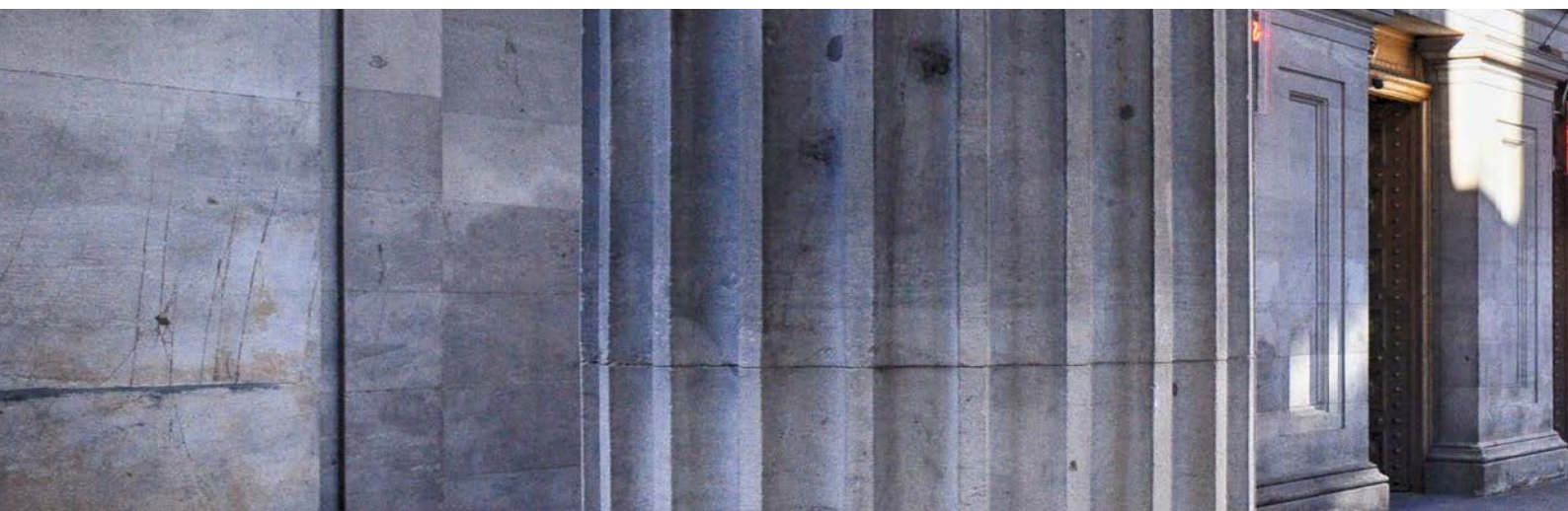
**Vibrancy: Glasgow is the top ranked mid-sized city globally for the vibrancy and variety of its cultural and lifestyle offering** (based on pre and post Covid-19 stats, Nestpick)



Glasgow is the **third most green place** to live and work in the UK



**Independent Economy: highest number of independent (local) businesses** per head among major UK cities







Customer Ethos: **one of the top 10 cities** in the world for the percentage of restaurants, hotels and attractions which have a **TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence** awarded for consistently high levels of customer service and strong online reviews



Glasgow has **one of the most skilled workforces in the UK** with 47% having higher education qualifications



Glasgow is ranked as **second as UK Tech City and First in Scotland**



Glasgow consistently ranks in the **top 20 most innovative cities** in the world (top 100 cities)



Glasgow has **40% of Scotland's Life Science companies** and **50% of its Medical Technology companies**



Glasgow **leads the UK for 5G speeds**. It is the first city in the UK to sign a small cell agreement

These structural advantages are however threatened by the experience of harsher short-term pandemic impacts, and the longer-term challenges outlined above. The objective of this two-year recovery plan is to respond directly to the immediate pressures in ways which recognise the coordinated strategy and narrative being developed for the future of Glasgow city centre. This will link to its broader journey as a city region with opportunities emerging in innovation, technology, Net Zero, and inclusivity.

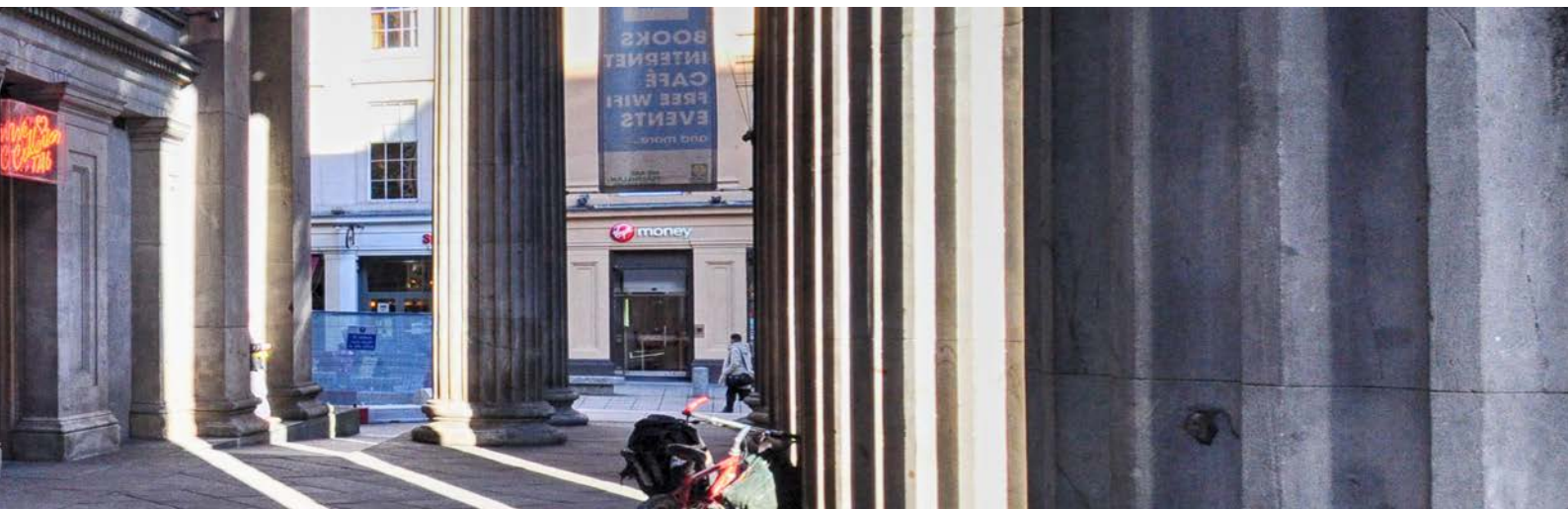
## Agenda for Glasgow city centre 2022-24

### Glasgow's metropolitan role

The city centre sits at the heart of metropolitan Glasgow which is a city within a region that accounts for a third of the population of Scotland and is still growing. There has been some evidence that during the pandemic house prices outside city centres have risen more quickly, however the benefits of urbanisation, the experience economy and concentrations of businesses do incentivise city centre living. This is especially true of those city centres that provide high-quality spaces and places which champion people-first design. Creating those places will be central to this plan and its objective of growing the population. They are supported by the planning policy framework set out in the City Centre Development Framework (SDF).

### Strategic priorities

The plan for Glasgow city centre will identify and prioritise both recovery and strategic regeneration activity. The initial focus will continue to prioritise business support measures and short-term interventions to stimulate the economy. However, as the public health situation improves, attention must return to more strategic measures that will deliver growth and sustainability over the medium to long term. The Scottish Government and City Centre Task Force are working together to map what changes recovery will require in terms of policy, legislation, regulation and investment. Both organisations are committed to delivering on these findings. This includes delivering the recommendations of the emerging property repurposing strategy project.





The **Glasgow Climate Plan** 2021 brings new opportunities and challenges for the city centre. A city centre with a reduced carbon footprint, one that is greener and with more natural amenity, will address the Net Zero Carbon by 2030 target and deliver a more attractive and sustainable place with a thriving inclusive economy.



The **City Centre Living Strategy: Vision 2035**, with its target to double the population by 2035, is central to strengthening the resilience and sustainability of the city centre. Significant progress has already been made towards this. Providing homes for everyone who wants to live in the city centre is also key, from families to students, from those starting out to empty nesters. Adoption of more agile policy solutions and a more flexible approach will be essential to the delivery of new assets, attractors and vibrant uses.



The **Connectivity Commission** was established in 2017 and produced its final findings in May 2019. These aimed to make Glasgow and its city centre an inclusive, thriving and liveable place, by maximising active travel and public transport capacity. The recommendations of the Connectivity Commission will feed into the development of the updated city centre City Centre Transformation Plan which will be published in 2022.



The **Place Commission** is an independent initiative supported by Glasgow City Council. It is an opportunity for open discussion and engagement on the relationship between people, place, and design. It is a dialogue

between communities, designers, developers, and city partners about priorities. These conversations have been focused around three themes: Glasgow as an Everyday City, a Metropolitan City and as an International City, which have been reflected throughout this two-year recovery plan.



The **Digital Strategy** encourages businesses across all sectors to realise that digital can stimulate innovation, and establish Glasgow's tech sector as a top 20 global digital economy. A further key aim is that Glasgow should be recognised as one of the most pioneering and innovative smart cities in the world in its private and public sectors.

## Positive outcomes 2020-21

As the city continues its recovery from Covid-19 there is also a need to retain ideas, developments and new ways of working introduced as a response to the pandemic. These have included designing places with more space for people, reduced regulation, and more flexibility in how regulations were applied. These changes have helped the city centre to respond to the needs of those that live, work, invest, visit and learn here, and enabled city centre stakeholders to react and support changes in economic use and activity. The UK and Scottish Governments have also made funds available to achieve this.

Glasgow City Council recently approved the retention of most of the Spaces for People infrastructure introduced during the pandemic. Designing spaces that are attractive to people, encourage participation, inclusion and improve the experience of the Everyday City, will create real opportunity for residents, visitors, businesses and investors.

The agenda for the city centre since November 2020 has been managed by a public/private City Centre Task Force. With the support of Scottish and UK Governments, the Task Force has established an agile approach with short-term priorities focused on business support (practical and financial), city marketing/events/promotion, resolving operational and environmental issues and undertaking the development work for the new property repurposing strategy which is required to address the pandemic's impact on Glasgow city centre's property supply.

## Emerging and accelerated trends

Covid-19 has accelerated existing trends and created new ones. At the beginning of the pandemic 6% of employees were working exclusively from home, it is now approximately 40%. These figures emphasise the need for guidance that supports the safe return to office working. It is clear from statements by some employers and employee surveys that a degree of hybrid working will remain, and with a continually evolving public health situation it is not yet possible to ascertain the permanent impact.

Retail, especially that found in the city centre, has been impacted by a move to on-line shopping. The proportion of UK on-line sales for clothing, textiles and footwear rose from a pre-Covid level of 20.5% to 59.9% in February 2021. The encouraging fact is that as restrictions have eased shoppers have started to return and in August 2021 on-line sales had fallen to 24.5%. (Springboard)

Before the pandemic employment growth was primarily driven by large cities. Jobs created in Glasgow city centre had been concentrated in footfall-reliant service sectors such as retail and hospitality, exacerbating the pandemic's impact. Glasgow city centre must look to maximise the success it has in sectors such as Digital Technology, Creative Industries, Financial and Business Services and Life Sciences and the thriving Innovation District to continue to attract a more diverse range of businesses that are less dependent on local footfall. This will create a more resilient urban centre that can compete effectively.

The success of Glasgow city centre and its attractiveness to residents, visitors and investors will ultimately be determined by the experience it offers, from vibrant and active, walkable streets to an attractive mix of uses and variety of facilities and services. The levelling up agenda has the potential to drive transformational change. The UK Government's representation on the Task Force will allow close engagement on this and related matters.

While considering the recovery plan for Glasgow city centre, it is also necessary to consider the additional dislocation of the implementation of Brexit. One key impact is around skills shortages, which are becoming critical across many city centre sectors. Actively engaging in the Just Transition Skills Action Plan which is being developed with Skills Development Scotland for the City Region will be a key part of the recovery plan's response.

Overarching all these issues is the climate emergency. Glasgow's Climate Action Plan and the city's objective to be Net Zero Carbon by 2030 set out a suite of principles and objectives which have been embedded in the approach and priority actions for this Recovery Plan.

These trends collectively provide a range of opportunities and pressures for Glasgow city centre. Its natural advantages must be capitalised upon, and new and creative solutions must be found to ensure the city centre recovers as quickly as possible from the unparalleled shock of the pandemic in a resilient, inclusive and sustainable way.



## Objectives 2022-2024

The Task Force has taken a deliberate decision to develop this two-year Recovery Plan to guide action for the city centre as it emerges from the pandemic. The impact of the plan will be monitored throughout its delivery period along with examples of best practice from other cities. Continued engagement with stakeholders will underpin the development of a new strategy for 2025 onwards.

The post-pandemic period does offer opportunities for city centres that are willing to adapt and respond to rapidly changing circumstances and here Glasgow has demonstrable experience of transformation and rebuilding. The next period of the city's development needs to be viewed as a further challenge that brings with it an opportunity to build a city centre that is more resilient, diverse, inclusive, sustainable, circular and innovative.

The success of this will largely depend on a continued focus on partnership, collaboration, and creativity in finding solutions and new flexible approaches. It has long been recognised that concentration of people and businesses drives innovation and productivity. The areas around universities, innovation centres and cultural quarters, as found in the Glasgow City Innovation District, have helped Glasgow's economy thrive. The benefits of this type of clustering will facilitate a return to the city centre and must be supported by city marketing and promotion.

By 2024 much will depend on the global status of the pandemic. Yet it seems reasonable to assume that by that point, a much higher degree of stability will have been achieved. The overarching vision for Glasgow city centre over the coming years is a natural evolution of that outlined in the 2014-19 City Centre Strategy. The focus on a resilient business ecosystem and a diverse, multi-sectoral and integrated economy without over-reliance on any one component will continue. The recently approved City Centre Strategic Development Framework sets out the planning policy approach and priorities for development. Reconfiguring the physical environment through initiatives like the Avenues programme will be well underway, embedding a range of alternative transport opportunities and green initiatives that put place and people first. A more agile policy approach that supports a wide range of business sectors and reflects rapidly changing consumer behaviours will make the city centre a mixed-use, vibrant city destination which is better able to withstand external pressures.

## Recovery and Rebuild

But the period to 2024 does require continued focus on recovery and rebuilding. A return to higher office working rates is required for us to see a return to pre-pandemic weekday footfall levels, without which we will see a continuation of pressures faced by city centre retail and hospitality sectors in particular. Accordingly, during the recovery period the Task Force will focus on the priority areas of business support, environmental improvement, and initiatives that drive footfall. This footfall creates the vibrancy for which the city centre is internationally recognised.

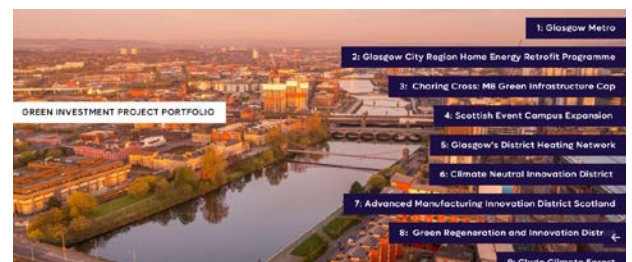
## Guiding Principles

Underpinning both the short and longer-term periods will be some key overarching principles; **inclusion, innovation and sustainability**. These will be key to the success of a resilient city centre.

## Sustainable City Centre

In response to the city's objective to be carbon neutral by 2030, and the Scottish Government's target of Net Zero by 2045, **sustainability** in all its forms will be the key driver for policy-makers. Since 2006 Glasgow has reduced its carbon emissions by 41% - well ahead of the 30% reduction target. Glasgow's Climate Plan will ensure that the City meets its target to be net zero carbon by 2030.

Glasgow has also launched the Greenprint for Investment prospectus. This contains ten major projects that will all contribute to addressing the climate and ecological emergency.



The need to deliver a carbon neutral, sustainable city centre will also see changes as a strategic repurposing of the road network prioritises people-friendly public

spaces. This will create greater opportunities for walking, wheeling and cycling and the development of new interlinked transport strategies for the city region, city and city centre. This interlinked approach will support a more sustainable carbon-neutral approach to connectivity generally, alongside specific measures like Spaces for People and the Avenues Programme.

The Recovery Plan will continue to focus on creating a network of green and open spaces, public realm that prioritises people and active travel, and a focus on community wealth building. These actions will meet the objectives of the Climate action plan, as well as enhancing the experience of the Everyday City.

## Inclusive City Centre

Ensuring that Glasgow city centre becomes increasingly inclusive, accessible and diverse in its offer, growing the residential population, and responding to emerging and known skills gaps will be critical to driving footfall beyond pre-pandemic visitor levels. It will also improve connections to neighbourhoods such as Sighthill, Tradeston, Laurieston, Woodside and the canal.

Inclusion is a commitment to empower and enable people to shape the look and feel of where they live, work and learn. The 2021 Glasgow Household survey found that 68% of respondents would like to get more involved in decision-making that affects their areas. Delivery of the City Centre Living Strategy, the City Centre SDF and the District Regeneration Frameworks have created opportunities for community engagement and empowerment. How and where services are accessed is central to a growing city centre population and cohesive communities.

Inclusion is also about ensuring that the benefits of a thriving economy are accessible. From an individual point of view the key to this will be through skills development. It can also be achieved by retaining as much economic value locally as possible through community wealth building.

The Task Force will ensure that recovery measures embed inclusivity throughout. This collaborative approach will support community wealth building initiatives, accessibility measures, skills development and locally identified priorities.

## Smart City Centre

The smart city centre principle will leverage the full potential of innovation for resident and visitor wellbeing through accessible technology, data, public services and other digitalised options.

The city's ability to deliver a smart recovery will be key to the ambitions around inclusion. The city centre must be able to leverage the full potential of its data and ensure it is used to direct resource allocation and measure the success of interventions. Each action should contribute to the experience of the everyday city and underpin the sense of Glasgow as a destination and quality place.

The data needs to be accessible so that everyone who lives, works, invests or learns here can participate in conversations about local services, development opportunities or better transport networks. Utilising this approach in the development of city centre strategy outputs will maximise community and stakeholder involvement and will continue to be a core component of project work.

This smart approach will also help address the productivity challenges that both Scotland and Glasgow face. Innovation and technology must be encouraged to support our key growth sectors as well as to improve inclusion by addressing the skills and health issues.



# PART TWO: 2022-24 RECOVERY STRATEGY

In 2019 Glasgow was voted Europe's leading Festival and Event Destination. It also came 4th in Global Sustainability for Sustainable Conference Cities. More than 22 million tourists and day visitors spent approximately £1.5 billion in that year.

However, the pandemic continues to pose a significant threat to a number of city centre sectors even as restrictions have eased in late 2021 with only a limited number of mitigation restrictions still in place.

Glasgow started 2020 as Europe's best city for new graduates, the 12th most hipster city in Europe, the UK's top Cultural and Creative City, the European Capital of Sport for 2023 – becoming the first city to hold the title twice – and the world's leading festival and events destination. The city has been a host city for the UEFA Championships and COP26 and welcomes the UCI World Cycling Championships in 2023.

## Glasgow city centre: Snapshot of sector issues – Q3 2021

### RETAIL

- Weekend footfall recovery but weekday footfall severely impacted by lack of office workers and students
- Retail skills shortages

### NTE, HOSPITALITY, CULTURE AND EVENTS

- Ongoing Covid-19 mitigation measures impacting many parts of sector which were last to open from lockdown
- Vaccine passports management and enforcement
- Lack of weekday footfall

### HOTELS

- Occupancy projections well down on pre-pandemic period and out with the COP26 period in November, are trailing Edinburgh
- Staff shortages with potential impact on business viability
- High fixed operating costs with conclusion of the Job Retention Scheme and the restart of Non Domestic Rates in April 2022

### TRANSPORT

- Removal of social distancing measures has restored passenger volumes to 65%-70% of pre-pandemic levels
- Driver shortages across sector mean most operators are reducing mileage and networks

### EDUCATION

- Glasgow's student recruitment is generally performing well with campuses offering mix of remote and on-campus learning
- Some emerging issues around student accommodation affordability and supply
- City centre businesses particularly retail and hospitality are major employers for students

### COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

- Current pandemic estimated office occupancy in Glasgow: 7.6% (Remit Consulting); Edinburgh 15.5%, UK average 18.3%
- Confidence is returning with several high-profile transactions recently completing

## Conclusions

It is recognised that hybrid working offers some benefits to employees and employers and while it is for individual businesses to decide whether they return staff or not, more explicit government guidance around the parameters that would enable a policy shift away from the current working from home guidance is required. Impacts on productivity, career development especially for younger staff, and wellbeing are not fully understood at this stage and a lack of policy guidance on how to optimise the return of office workers and students reduces businesses' ability to forward plan and creates potential for long-term competitive damage and reputational risk.

Overall, it is critical that the vibrancy and breadth of offer which underpins the city centre's unique appeal is not diminished. These immediate issues form the basis of the short-term Action Programme for the 2022-24 period.

## City Centre Strategy: Key deliverables since 2014

The development and delivery of the City Centre Strategy since 2014 has been based on a strong evidence base and intensive engagement with communities and stakeholders. Almost 15,000 people have participated throughout the development of the Strategy and its various initiatives and action plans. This approach will be continued by the Task Force through this Interim Strategy

The following section provides a summary of highlights of the first phase of City Centre Strategy which was due to be refreshed in 2020 for a second five-year period. The onset of the pandemic interrupted this approach and refocused priority activity since 2020 on short-term business support measures.

### Management

A **City Services** team has been established to provide a fast track response to businesses needing operational, management or regulatory support, with outdoor café permits waived during 2020/21

Several Operational **Action Plans** have been delivered since 2014. This type of response has been successfully used in Union Street, Gordon Street, Central Station, Royal Exchange Square, St Vincent Place, and St Enoch Square

The **Nite Zone programme** has been expanded and has given more than 2 million people a safer journey home

In 2016, an **Autism Aware City Centre project** was launched to assist people with autism and to make the city centre experience more accessible and inclusive

The **Commercial Waste project** has removed over 2,000 large, unsightly commercial bins from city centre streets and lanes, and has been successfully rolled out across the city

A **Glasgow Begging Strategy** has provided new support for vulnerable individuals and city centre businesses through a range of measures

### Development

The **City Centre Living Strategy** was approved and has created the policy and project framework to meet the ambition of doubling the city centre population by 2035

The **Avenues Programme** has secured further funding and will begin to deliver some of the 21 improved streets and spaces across the city centre during the period of this plan, reallocating space from vehicles to people, active travel and green infrastructure

The **High Street Station development plan** is underway and will provide modern station facilities and a new plaza

**Nine City Centre Districts** were established in 2014 and for each a 10-year District Regeneration Framework (DRF) has been developed, with five now in delivery

The **Strategic Development Frameworks** for the River Clyde and the City Centre have been approved providing more focused spatial plans and statutory planning policy frameworks to support the strategic development ambitions for the city centre

The **redesign of George Square** is progressing with ongoing engagement with the public which will help shape the designs for the city centre's primary civic space



The **City Centre Lane Strategy** has enabled a range of community groups, artists, and businesses to deliver events and lane improvements

The action plan of the **High Street Area Strategy** has been working to deliver a range of interventions supporting the promotion of heritage, reduction in vacant shop units and the greening of the High Street corridor

In 2015 a **Retail and Night-time Economy Action Plan** was produced. This was followed by the launch of the Night-Time Economy Commission which will make its recommendations for the recovery of the sector. Winter lighting features have been delivered in George Square and various other high footfall areas

Since 2006 Glasgow has reduced its carbon emissions by 41%, surpassing the 30% target set for 2030

**Glasgow's Climate Plan** was approved on 17 June 2021 and will be a guiding strategy for all city regeneration plans

A city centre **Property Repurposing Strategy** was established in late 2020 in response to the pandemic with recommendations expected in December 2021

## Enabling Infrastructure

The **City Centre Traffic and Transport Strategy** was developed in 2014 and the new City Centre Transformation Plan, currently in the final stages of development, will update it in the context of the Net Zero Carbon agenda



The digital infrastructure has been improved with businesses participating in the **Digital Boost programme**, 780 devices being issued to vulnerable people as part of the Connected Scotland programme, over 3,500 intelligent street lights in the city centre and Glasgow became one of the first cities outside the USA to join the MetroLab Network which fosters city/university collaboration to drive smart city innovation

The **NextBike cycle hire scheme** was launched in 2014 to promote active travel. There have been just under 1.7 million rentals since launch which equates to a weekly average almost 5,000

Various measures have been introduced to **improve street cleansing**: larger bins, large recycling bins, a trial of solar powered bins and smart bins along with a range of other new plant and equipment

## Promotion

To celebrate Glasgow's renowned reputation as a centre for the arts and culture, a Contemporary Art Trail has been developed on digital platforms. This has built on the **City Centre Mural Trail** which has become a great success with visitors and residents who use the digital platforms to navigate the city centre, obtaining a Trip Adviser Certificate of Excellence in 2020

The **Glasgow Loves Christmas campaign** has been delivered annually as a six-week integrated marketing and PR campaign

**Additional marketing and events activity** made possible through the allocation of Scottish Government City Centre Recovery funding in 2020





## Glasgow city centre recovery and investment programme 2022-24

The City Centre Strategy 2014-19 undertook a significant amount of development work to ensure the work programme had a strong evidence base and public/stakeholder support. Accordingly, the successor strategy was intended to focus on delivery.

The pandemic has changed this approach with the need to consider new short to medium term actions to support recovery. Some of the priority actions outlined below for the 2022-24 period relate to longer-term actions already underway or in development. These will be progressed in parallel with the identified Task Force priorities for the recovery period.

The Task Force will continue to support the continuation of reduced regulations enabling decisions to be made and delivered locally. Responses to the sector issues and

opportunities identified above have been consolidated in the Action Programme for the Recovery Plan.

The Action Programme includes short term recovery interventions and longer term recommendations which support the repurposing of the city centre. The city centre must be a place that continues to grow its population, encourages visitors and provides the framework for business to respond flexibly to the opportunities that. This plan will remain agile and responsive to ongoing changes in the external environment.



### SUPPORTING BUSINESS OPERATIONS

- **Prioritise footfall-recovery measures** such as return to the office guidance and city centre marketing promotion
- Further **animate streets** and spaces by simplifying the temporary street café process
- Support city centre **look and feel** through the City Services resource and monitor with annual independent Environmental Audits
- Regular city centre walk-rounds with commercial stakeholders focusing on the **consumer experience**
- **Support core city centre sectors** through UK and Scottish Government advocacy with a focus on financial support/subsidy for those sectors most impacted
- Collaborate with commercial stakeholders to **create standards for vacant premises** and to enable **meantime use and pop-up options**.
- Accelerate programmes to **increase support for skills development** to address specific skills shortages and actively participate in the Just Transition Skills Action Plan.
- **One stop** fast tracked business issues management support



### TRANSFORMING THE CITY CENTRE

- Continue to deliver the City Centre Living Strategy and **increase the local population** by enabling development, repurposing, conversions and the policy environment (ongoing)
- Complete development and move to deliver recommendations of the **Property Repurposing Strategy**
- Deliver the Avenues programme providing segregated active travel routes, trees and raingardens, and **people-focused space reallocation** (ongoing)
- Deliver the **District Regeneration Framework programme** for all nine districts (ongoing)
- Deliver the actions outlined in the **City Centre Strategic Development Framework** (ongoing)
- Support the objectives of the new **Economic Strategy** which will be published early 2022
- Review of Planning designations and options to **streamline processes** in context of pandemic impact on property supply/demand
- Approval and **implementation of the City Centre Transformation Plan** from 2022
- Develop a **strong circular economy** based on the principles of reducing, re-using, recycling and recovering materials in the production, distribution and consumption processes
- Support animation in **mini-destinations** throughout the city centre through the Lanes Strategy



## RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

- Promote and seek funding for the **refurbishment and conversion of city centre property** in support of the net zero carbon target
- Begin work on delivery of **heat and energy generation projects** including distribution of heat from parks and rivers in Glasgow and utilising the recovery of heat from geothermal sources
- Support delivery of local biodiversity including pollinators and **a network of connected open and green spaces** in the city centre
- Develop solutions for **historic buildings to be resilient** to the impacts of climate change, protecting Glasgow's rich heritage
- Support the preparation of an **updated River Clyde Flood Management Strategy** and work in partnership with SEPA



## SUPPORTING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

- Support proposals to **improve the technological and innovative ecosystem** in the Glasgow City Innovation District to benefit the tech and foundational economy sectors.
- Work with the private sector to extend the **development of innovation/work hubs** within the city centre to supplement the anchor institutions in the Glasgow City Innovation District
- Identify ways in which improved **technology can help to attract people back to the city centre**
- Extending the **Artists in Residence** programme in the city centre
- Explore **community wealth** building options
- Prepare an **Arts and Lighting Strategy** for the City Centre to focus on installations and events that activate underutilised spaces and features
- Support the Digital Glasgow Strategy by **focusing digital investment on economic and social recovery and renewal**; improving digital skills and tackling digital exclusion; supporting and developing the city's tech cluster, and renewing a focus on open data, data analytics and open innovation



## THE LIVEABLE CITY CENTRE

- Develop a **regulatory framework that creates commercial opportunities** to provide a mix of residential tenure types
- Work with the Scottish Government and the national City Centre Recovery Task Force to **remove obstacles to conversion of commercial and retail properties**, particularly with change of use options for upper floors
- Deliver an **integrated transport strategy** which focuses on access and connection to support inclusion, a thriving economy and a vibrant metropolitan city centre
- **Prioritise active travel:** walking, wheeling and cycling
- Support the Bus Partnership to deliver **20% improvement in journey times** to and within the city centre
- Support the introduction of an **integrated ticketing system**
- Prepare **Urban Design Guidance at District level** to guide and encourage high quality design responses to development.
- Monitor the supply and cost of **student accommodation**



## DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING KEY DESTINATIONS

- Work with stakeholders around Renfrew Street to develop a **digital Arts/Culture Quarter**
- Support the development of **civic/community hubs and attractive spaces** around the entry points to the city
- Complete delivery of the **High Street Area Strategy Action Plan**
- Support a placemaking approach to the development of the next stage of the **International Financial Services District** with mixed use objectives
- Support the **development of the Scottish Events Campus**
- Continue to develop the feasibility and vision for the north and south banks of the river at **Custom House Quay** in alignment with River Park objectives
- Improve the **visitor experience** at key transport hubs
- **Access UK government funding** for major capital priorities such as the proposed M8 cap
- Work with the **Night-time Economy Commission** to develop a set of achievable actions

# GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING 2022-24

In early 2020 Glasgow city centre's first five-year strategic plan had concluded, the evaluation completed and preparations well underway for the second five-year phase. Everything changed in March 2020 and the city acted quickly to establish a multi-partner task force to oversee events in Glasgow city centre during the pandemic

Representatives have been welcomed from all core city centre sectors, Council services and arm's length companies, further and higher education, and Scottish and UK Government, and their collective contributions have been highly valued during the past 18 months.

The decision to publish this two-year Recovery Plan has required consideration of the governance approach going forward. While Glasgow city centre has yet to fully emerge from the impact of the pandemic, the City Centre Task Force has been an important forum and has secured commitment by service providers and funders to deal with the core priority issues identified by task force members.

The City Centre Task Force will continue its collaborative partnership-working approach to take this recovery plan forward. It will have oversight responsibility for Glasgow city centre's progress over the coming two years, monitor its progress and impact, and inform the next stage of regeneration strategy post-2024.





**PEOPLE  
MAKE  
GLASGOW**

If you have any questions or comments on this City Centre Recovery Plan, please contact the team at [glasgowcitycentrestrategy@glasgow.gov.uk](mailto:glasgowcitycentrestrategy@glasgow.gov.uk)