



What are the Barriers to & Potential Solutions for the Temporary Use of Vacant Sites & Vacant Buildings in Dublin's Inner City?

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INTRODUCTION

Vacancy is an enormous challenge for many of the world's cities at present. However this is a challenge that must be seen as an opportunity. In providing a stop-gap during periods of little or no development, temporary use has the potential to deliver a solution to vacancy.

BARRIERS

The research identified a series of barriers for the establishment of temporary use ;

1. Identification of available sites & property owners & land/building acquisition.
2. Lack of flexibility with regard to payments of rates.
3. Requirement for full compliance with fire safety certification.
4. Requirement for planning permission for a change of use.
5. Litigation concerns and the need for public liability insurance.
6. Funding mechanisms.
7. The potential for adverse possession claims (squatter's rights).

Based on the research findings, recommendations with regard to possible modifications to Irish planning policy and other relevant structures were identified.

RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS TO THESE BARRIERS

1. Identification of available sites & property owners & land/building acquisition : Consideration could be given to using the Dublin City Council assessment survey of vacant sites & vacant buildings as a basis on which to build a database that would contain information relating to ownership, site/building size, condition etc. A database containing interested potential users could also be compiled. It would then be a case of matching users with appropriate sites/buildings.

2.Lack of flexibility with regard to rates : Perhaps the provision of some form of tax incentive could be provided on a rolling basis for these groups.

3.Requirement for full compliance with fire safety certification : Realistically it would not appear to be feasible to allow any significant level of flexibility around the issue of fire safety. However, the provision of more easily understood information to temporary use groups explaining the necessary steps involved in acquiring fire safety would be helpful. Perhaps Dublin City Council could help in the provision of such support.

4. Requirement for planning permission for a change of use : An idea that could be explored and where deemed appropriate by a senior figure might be the granting of a fixed exploratory period of time to new cultural, creative, community & social enterprise uses. This would enable groups to clarify their goals and likely uses before planning permission for a change of use is sought.

5.Litigation & the need for public liability insurance : Temporary use groups could attempt to seek sponsorship agreements from local businesses to contribute towards their insurance costs. Crowd sourcing through websites such as fundit.ie and other social networking could also be used.

6.Funding Mechanisms : Temporary use organisations need to be able to raise the majority of funds themselves as funding from government sources is now very minimal. Organising funding campaigns through crowd sourcing using social networking sites can generate some of the necessary funds required. Perhaps sponsorship agreements with local businesses could also assist with some of the running costs involved. As the proposed vacant sites levy supports the principle of temporary use, perhaps consideration could be given to using some of the levies collected to provide financial support to temporary use groups.

7.The potential for adverse possession claims (squatter's rights) : The concept of having a contractual lease agreement explicitly stating that there is no intent to ever adversely possess the site/property could be signed by the temporary occupant in order to give the land owner some level of comfort. Where a temporary use is being sought on public land, a licence as opposed to a lease is usually set up. It is important that a short term lease or licence with appropriate clauses is set up to protect the interests of both parties.

INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

Temporary Use Groups :

- Smithfield Art Tunnel
- Block T, Smithfield
- Upstart (Granby Park), Dominick Street
- The Chocolate Factory, Kings Inns Street
- Mabos, Hannover Quay
- PrettyvacanT, located citywide

Public Bodies :

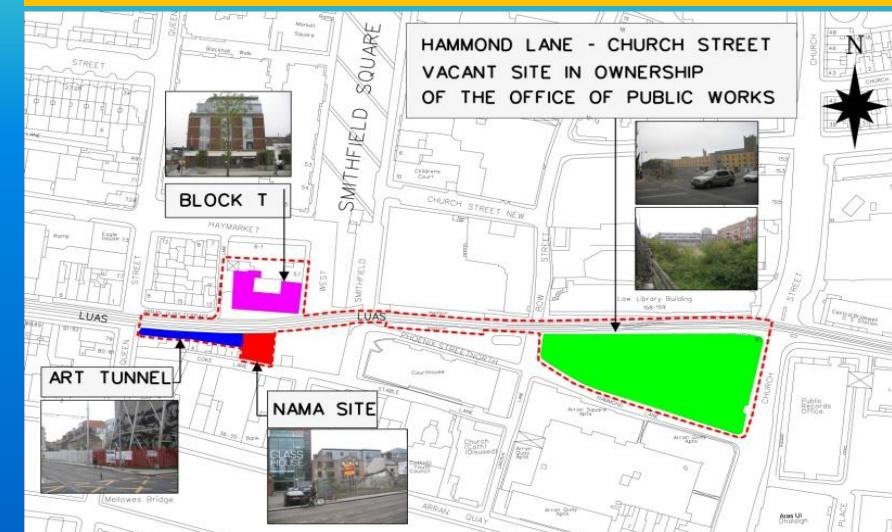
- Dublin City Council
- Office of Public Works (OPW)
- National Asset Management Agency (NAMA)

Private Landlords :

- Block T
- Smithfield Art Tunnel



AREA OF INVESTIGATION : SMITHFIELD



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