

## Meanwhile Use Factsheet

London's Universities and TFL have holdings in every borough – some of these are vacant and bring with them a risk of vandalism and associated security costs. TFL wants to explore community use of archways present throughout the city. Productive uses of these underutilised properties would avoid the degradation of spaces but also support constructive and attractive uses that would be welcomed by the wider community – and bring reputational benefits. Councils meanwhile have access to organisations such as arts, service groups and community entities that are priced out of commercial lettings. London Higher has access to student groups who can provide skills to get properties running and host numerous accelerators whose start-up organisations could benefit from closer access to communities. The chance to match up these groups and spaces could bring vibrancy to localities as well as mutual aid, support skills grow and offer employment opportunities. This working group is looking at the possibility to match these groups and spaces for mutual benefit.

Places for London is the property arm of TFL and they have been working identify property which can be used to pilot different types of meanwhile use, to demonstrate its value for places. We are looking to answer the following questions. *What would be needed to help match up organisations with local authority contacts for community benefit? Would it be possible to design a process or pathway which makes this more feasible and successful across different areas of London? How can we put this into action?*

Meanwhile Leases which have been around since 2013 facilitate the short-term use of empty shops and businesses to get assets quickly into use. The key lasting benefits that can come from meanwhile activity are positive shifts in perceptions of place, local economic development and the creation of communities in place through greater interconnectedness and social inclusion. While providing space for small and social enterprises is needed for decent employment, providing adequate public spaces and markets can also function as incubator spaces, helping to foster new business ideas and community services, facilitate accessible opportunities and localise growth. Successful meanwhile activity can be supported through a focus on addressing local issues, engaging the local community in identifying needs and tenants, clustering similar spaces, integrating local heritage, considering the long-term outcomes and communicating the project aims (Abdi et al, 2021).

### Opportunities

- Benefits for property owners include reduced business rates liable on empty property, reduced security costs and land value uplift that comes from placemaking.
- While these uses maybe temporary in nature, characteristics of flexibility, affordability and efficiency allow for immediate opportunities to test out new projects and provide employment which can lead to long term benefits (NLA, 2020)
- Local businesses and organisations taking advantage of assets such as railway arches, which are also often small, locally focused and flexible, can support placemaking (GLA & ARUP, 2020).
- Locally owned and socially minded enterprises are more likely to employ, buy and invest locally (McInroy, 2018). Incorporating small community-focused local businesses facilitates a more sustainable and equitable model, helping to build community wealth (Diamond et al. 2018; McInroy, 2018).
- Priority given to Community Businesses can provide greater social value. Community businesses are broadly defined by Power to Change as those which are locally rooted, trading for the benefit of the locally community, locally accountable and provide broad

community impact (Diamond et al., 2018). These locally rooted businesses are likely to be best located by local authorities where they may previously have accessed networks, advice, businesses support or grants through local authorities.

- Far reaching benefits for community wellbeing, health and prosperity can be supported by space to help local businesses flourish and for communities to design and deliver services that meet their needs (Paddock and Partridge, 2021).
- Assets used for public use or being amendable to change through their nature can also support community resilience (Carmona and Wunderlich, 2013; GLA, 2020). Spaces that support community networks are also critical for economic stability in the long term and resilience (Paddock and Partridge, 2021).

### Challenges

- The burden of business rates and significant transaction costs combined with temporary tenancies could limit the opportunities for private operators, especially if in competition with large companies or chains (GLA, 2018).
- Uncertainty of outcomes from smaller flexible tenancies, alongside many intangible benefits and the difficulty of measuring value may create barriers to successful funding for tenants (Edgar and Gregory, 2013).
- A risk of opposition when projects are developed without sufficient community engagement, suggests a need to consider the locality and impacts on place when customising pathways for organisations into obtaining space (Scafe-Smith, 2019).

### Case Studies

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Space /Form</u>	<u>Users</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Challenges</u>
<i>LONDON</i>						
Central Parade	Walthamstow	A Former Council Direct Centre converted to a mixed use creative hub with retail, co-working, studio and exhibition space and bakery-café.	Freelancers, artists, small businesses, bakery and café providers.	A council owned building was renovated with local authority and GLA funding, and is operated by Meanwhile Space CIC. Now a mixed-use creative hub that includes a variety of retail, co-working, studio, exhibition spaces and a bakery-café where events and workshops take place. Aiming to actively engage the local community and animate the high street, the space offers a	The space has helped to animate the high street and increase evening footfall. Increased opportunities for local creatives with low-cost space and low risk leases in a prime high street location.	

				diverse cultural programme throughout the week and into the evening.		
Croyden Arts Store	Whitgift Centre, Croydon	Vacant Shopping Centre Store	Arts Collective, Charity and University School	Includes the temporary takeover of a shopping centre store in collaboration with the council, First Floor Space (artist collective) and Turf Projects (charity). The site included a research space for Kingston school of art, free exhibitions, desk space and workshop spaces for young people.	Participatory practices have been used to encourage youth engagement and to understand the role of arts in the future development of Croydon. The project has facilitated lasting networks, collective works and learning opportunities for young people.	
Camden Collective	Camden NW1 8JN	High street properties	Local start ups (knowledge focused), freelancers and the public	Camden Collective combines free hot-desking, subsidised start-up offices and incubator support. They have taken on over 18 high street properties under meanwhile leases, providing business support, start-up incubators, training, free events and public realm projects, such as Camden Creates festival.	Chance for collaboration and experimentation between freelancers, start-ups office users and business-led accelerators. Social capital created through events, training and a long-term commitment. There has also been 200 jobs created and increased local procurement.	
International House	Brixton, SW9 7QE	12 storey office block	Youth Business Launch Pad, Charities, Start-ups, Art and cultural organisations	The initiative came from consultation with 200 local organisations. Using an 11-storey council owned building, a 5 year tender has become an affordable mixed-use workspace with public space and seminar rooms for businesses, community groups and third sector organisation. An initiative offers free space to community organisation for every office purchased.	A London Living Wage agreement with actors and operator has raised wages in the area. The mix of established and small enterprises, community groups and charities, plus the 300 community events attended by 5000 people has created an open, collaborative and innovative atmosphere. 22 businesses were started in the Youth Business Launchpad.	
Peckham Levels	Rye Lane, London, SE15 4ST	Converted multi-storey car park, 4500 sqft.	Food and Hospitality, local independent businesses,	Demands were identified by a local steering group with consultations ran	The project supports 100 local and independent businesses, has increased footfall as a legacy destination, incubated start-ups,	

			artists and performers.	throughout the borough. A, now 8 year, meanwhile creative and cultural hub has been created in a council owned car park conversion, containing space for studios, offices, events, the public, retail and food stalls.	and has encouraged new projects to form through collaboration, events and practical workspaces.	
Museum of Futures	117 Brighton Rd, Surbiton KT6 5PQ	High street vacant retail unit.	Kingston University research groups, food start-ups, community kitchen.	A vacant shop transformed into a sustainable community space aiming to be more. Launched in 2015, with mayoral funding, by a social enterprise focused on community led regeneration, The Community Brain. Aiming for inclusive in access and delivery, it provides a fixed space for social interaction. With a community kitchen, Kingston University also host research activities within the space and access was maintained for disadvantaged groups during the pandemic.	A kitchen was added in response to community demands and the space has been used by a wide range of groups and individuals, creating new community connections and a space to try out business ideas. Over 40 organisations have used the space, creating a launchpad for new businesses and networks, there has been a spill over of two connected projects including Far of Futures, an allotment hosting 4 start-ups.	
Space makers Brixton Village	Brixton Market	Indoor market stalls.	Arts organisations, retailers and micro-businesses.	SpaceMakers were employed by property owners and Lambeth council to help rebuild the area's social life under perceived decline. They filled vacant units through 3-month free leases for community projects from rehearsal spaces to galleries and shops.	After a year of the project, the market was revitalised and fully let for the first time since 1979. Meanwhile, small businesses were able to flourish through initial low risk opportunities to acquire customers – helping the regeneration of the area.	
Spark Projects	Ilford, London	3 council assets including the Town Hall car park and Town Hall Building	7 business and community organisations, community members,	Use of council owned assets for meanwhile projects, including affordable workspaces, a market, a community growing space and public space. A 5 year lease of	New civic and community spaces, encouraging growing, cooking and eating together; welfare and housing for 42 people and, for new businesses, opportunities for	

		Converted to market stalls, public space, community growing and housing.	Independent retail businesses (market stalls) and Hostel residents.	Malachi place was given to the Salvation Army for a hostel and workshop space.	incubation through the market space or affordable studios.	
<i>UK</i>						
Fountain Mall, Enterprise Arcade	Stockton-on-tees	Department Store	Start-ups and independent local businesses	A vacated department store bought by the local council has been turned into a premises in which independent businesses pay peppercorn rent to test out ideas, helping them get off the ground.	Bringing activity back to the high street, many stores with unique offerings have developed, rooted in the local community. Around 15 former tenants have moved onto prime town centre locations, aided by £5,000 council grants for vacant property refurbishments.	
Open Doors Project	5 Locations across the UK			MHLGC (DLUHC) funded scheme to fill vacant high street property with community groups. Hired local freelance project managers to support the space running, with branding across the stores designed by Studio ND.	Assessment stunted by Covid-19. <a href="#">Open Doors   Meanwhile Foundation</a>	
<i>INTERNATIONAL</i>						
SSE Resourceries	Paris, France	Central street level stores.		A municipal authority initiative involving a network of 240 social agents tasked with creating a circular economy, repurposing waste, incorporating marginalised people into work, occupying public spaces and buildings, and creating points where community services can be exchanged.	The project has led to the public funding of seven cooperatives, helped to get young people into work and lead to the creation of an artists' association with studios throughout a number of central public buildings.	
Reviver Cultural	Rio De Janeiro, Brazil	Vacant street level properties throughout the city.	Artist and cultural groups	An open call for projects such as art galleries, bookstores, publishing, fashion, performing arts and music who consider having extended opening		

				hours and night hours and were available for 30 months. The project looks to enliven the streets and promote safety.192,000 Reals for renovations and 14,400R for monthly running costs provided by local authority.		
Polis Athens	Athens, Greece	12 shopping arcade spaces	Small businesses and community groups	With 27% of public buildings vacant, many of which were storefronts, a platform designed by If-untitled studio aimed to encourage collaboration between municipalities and designers. It promoted community-led interventions and temporary use of vacant buildings, free of charge. 12 arcade spaces were renovated and rented for a year. Grants were also given for small neighbourhood interventions.	Increased high street activity. 25 workshops a month were held reaching 2500 participants. The success of the project encouraged government funding for two more years of the project aimed at reaching young people with 6-month free leases, including utilities and advertising, with the agreement to host events, and the possibility to extend leases.	

## Affordable Workspace Policy

An overview of affordable workspace policies adopted by borough. While some boroughs may not have policies in their Local plans, they may have supporting policies set by their regeneration or economic departments. More detail is available in [sheet](#)



### Key:

Adopted and Draft new Local Plan policy (requirement)
Adopted Local Plan policy (requirement)
Adopted Local Plan policy (support/ encourage)
Draft Local Plan policy (requirement)
Draft Local Plan policy (support/ encourage)
Issues and Options
No current Local Plan policy

Source:  
Borough local plans / GLA analysis  
September 2023

Status (requirement / support / encourage) is based on a high-level assessment and may vary according to specific local circumstances within each borough. For detailed policy wording always refer to the Local Plan in question.

Note: boroughs may have other strategies / initiatives to support affordable workspace that are outside of the Local Plan process.

Authority	Details
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Camden	<p><a href="#">Camden's Affordable Workspace Strategy</a> sets out an approach providing discounted commercial space for small businesses. This includes planning policy commitment to making best use of their own resources, assets and levers to help create a more inclusive economy and ensuring access to workspaces for residents, small businesses and social enterprises.</p> <p>A partnership with LABS offers up to 10 free co-workspaces to Camden business owners – a central space which also offers opportunities for networking and mentorship</p>
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#### Further Links:

[Meanwhile City](#) (Marko and Lisa, 2021) – Cross sector interviews, tips for how local authorities can support initiatives, examples of city and private investor-led projects which supported long term transformation and how value was measured.

#### Tools

[What is a social value lease? - Property X-Change \(propertyxchange.london\)](#) A short Q&A with Haringay Regeneration Manager Gabriela Martino on the use of Social Value Leases

#### Articles

Using Retrofit to Turn Commercial Meanwhile Space in Nurseries - [How difficult commercial spaces can be utilised for “dynamic” nurseries - Design Week](#)

[Guidance for Those Offering Space for Cultural Use](#)

Research on Equity in Access to Space

#### Existing Databases/ Space Matchers

[Artist Studios Map](#)

[Cultureatrisk@London.gov.uk](#) - The GLA team keep a record of cultural organisations that have lost spaces.



[Cultural Infrastructure Map](#)

[Cultural Infrastructure Register](#) - For organisations and space providers, with a desire to encourage more council contributors.

[Hypha Studios](#) - a non-profit organisation helping tackle empty high street spaces by providing free spaces for artists who offer free public events through their tenancy.

[London Business Hub Openworkspaces Database](#)

[Meanwhile Space Projects](#) - managing meanwhile spaces by unlocking underused areas, engaging with the local area and providing seed and start-up businesses with spaces to experiment.

## **Funding**

[Untold Stories – Grants by Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm](#)