Cherrywood Implementation Strategies

Town Centre & Environs

While the SDZ will directly steer implementation in terms of fixed and flexible elements, a series of supportive strategies will expand guidance, assist interpretation and build consensus on shaping critical areas in the implementation process. These strategies will strengthen the Local Authority's leadership role in maintaining a holistic perspective on successful placemaking, by ensuring depth, quality, and diversity in specific sectoral areas, while also stressing the need for integration for example, between key areas of public realm, movement and mixed use.

Why Does the SDZ Need Strategies

Things can go wrong, and there are many reasons the SDZ could fail, or not meet core objectives. Over a long implementation timeframe, personnel in the Local Authority will change, and a robust development sector will challenge the fundamentals and seek weak spots. The need for continuity in interpretation and a consistency in what the SDZ stands for is critical. In the preparation of the Docklands SDZ, the design team within DCC, listed to City Councillors and the Steering Group, all the risks relating to potential failure of the SDZ.

Why might Cherrywood not achieve best practice objectives ? ;
- Failure to tell a coherent story, articulate the role of Cherrywood
- Severance with the neighbourhoods
- Standardized generic development, small number of architects involved
- Failure to write good briefs
- Not giving sufficient time for implementation
- Failure to support implementation with a series of core strategies.

In Cherrywood, DLR are carrying the flag for contemporary urban development in Ireland, and the benchmark is best practice in Europe.

Three Supporting Pillars

Embracing a philosophy of urbanism as a driving force is a good starting point. A logical follow-on is to explore how street-based urbanism can be applied. The street as a place of public life. A legible hierarchy of streets. Legibility and inter-connectedness in the urban structure.

It is suggested that the following 3 pillars could constitute a realistic platform to carry the core thrust of the Cherrywood SDZ and inform the follow-on strategies;

[a] A Sustainable Cherrywood; Aligning the new town's sustainability credentials with a range of core criteria required under EU policy and best practice. Providing Cherrywood with robust frameworks to meet the challenges of climate change.

[b] Embracing a philosophy of Urbanism; Urbanism is a systems type thinking which can be distilled as follows;

- Acknowledge complexity and the richness of co-existence in urban environments
- Create awareness of the need for systems thinking and embracing an urbanist mindset
- Recognise critical scales, and develop an agility in stepping up and down
- Build a thematic approach[High Level Themes] and develop a relational thinking between them
- Integrate the sectoral with the spatial
- Nurture the conditions for a Generative Urbanism, facilitating innovation, adaption and regeneration.
- Maintain the model of the European City and the Irish Town as a primary reference.
- Build a consensus on the language of the built fabric.

[c] Articulating High-Level Themes; The adoption of High-Level Themes spells out the core priority areas for the SDZ . It is not sufficient to list the themes, there must be a red-thread of continuity to policy, objectives, and action into implementation. The pro-active Local Authority needs to develop agility in creating dynamic integration between the themes.

Cherrywood Strategies

1. The Story Strategy

This is about developing a compelling story about the role of Cherrywood, and about what Cherrywood will stand for in the future. Inspiring suggestions have emerged from the consultants recently, building on the great location close to the mountains, and on the potential for providing different forms of recreational infrastructure. As a Local Authority, what do you want to be proud of in the future ? Promising elements to develop could include;

- A young population enjoying a healthy environment
- Great integrated networks of cycling and walking
- A town close to nature and the mountains, embracing bio-diversity
- A town with cultural identity, endowed with rich layers of community and cultural infrastructure
- A town of distinct neighbourhoods connected to a thriving town-centre hub
- Cherrywood, partnered with a number of towns offering similar lifestyle e.g. Boulder, Colorado.

2. The Public Realm Strategy

The Public Realm holds everything together. It is where public life is nurtured and where the sense of place is made most tangible. The public realm strategy will include the following;

- A network of main public spaces and the strategic routes connecting them.
- The generation of briefs for specific spaces and streets.
- Urban design of specific spaces/streets should acknowledge the importance of enclosure, and address the specific elements of : paving, street furniture, lighting, planting and art.

- The requirement for animation and night time activity will require collaboration with movement and mixed use strategies
- A legibility study is recommended to address legible coherence, mental mapping and inter-connectedness in the urban structure.

3. Movement Strategy

During most of the 20th century the needs of the car dominated urban thinking and the provision of road infrastructure to meet this perceived need seriously eroded the quality of the public realm. In recent decades there has been a major push-back with progressive cities and towns committed to a creative re-balancing in favour of the pedestrian, cyclists and active travel. This is not to eliminate entirely a response to the needs of the car, it is merely to establish an appropriate role for the car, in the context of changing lifestyle, sustainability, and more enlightened urbanist perspectives. A movement strategy will address the following;
- Ensure the town-centre is prioritized for walking, cycling and active travel
- Respond to the needs of children and older people
- Make Cherrywood a great place to walk. Build legible cycling and walking networks. Generate a tangible culture of cycling
- Connect Cherrywood to the mountains and the sea
- Exploit the wonderful infrastructure of the Luas
- Connect with best practice cities such as Copenhagen.

4. Housing and Community Strategy

Cherrywood must aim to deliver a cross section of the diversity of tenures and housing typologies found in a normal city or town. The range of accommodation must respond to demographic projections, and embrace the thrust of a national policy document such as 'Housing for All' The Cherrywood Housing Strategy should include elements of the following;
- Diversity of tenures
- Diversity of housing typologies
- Explore the potential of Approved Housing Bodies to develop different models of housing delivery supported by innovative community infrastructure
- The creative provision of community infrastructure and places for people to hang out and build community.
- The elimination of gated communities

5. Mixed Use Strategies

Mixed use is one of the fundamental characteristics of the European city and the Irish town. While the character of local shopping and services is going through profound change due to market forces and the internet, the vitality and attraction of a local street environment still depends on a mixed use character. While the market may have spontaneously provided the mixed-use character/diversity in the past, in the case of Cherrywood, the Local Authority must now play a leadership role in creating the development framework for this to emerge. Key elements to focus on include;
- Ensuring that mixed use colonizes a fine-grained building fabric on the primary street spines
- Ensuring that mixed use colonizes the containing sides of major squares/urban spaces

- Encouraging shop-owners/ restaurants/cafes, to interface positively with the public realm. Develop a shopfront/ front terrace design guide
- Ensure that supermarkets do not occupy extensive street frontage.
- Search for one-off creative independent retailers

6. Arts and Cultural Infrastructure Strategy

Cultural Infrastructure is often the 'cinderella' sector in urban regeneration. While major sectors such as residential or office have a definite market focus, cultural projects tend to be absent from specific objectives due to a lack of budget or a sponsoring champion. Nonetheless, culture and arts layers constitute a powerful part of town identity. DLR have only to look at the waterfront character of Dun Laoghaire, with its well designed mix of library, theatre, Town Hall, public realm and the superb maritime legacy of historic architecture, to be reminded of the importance of leadership from the public sector. A culture strategy for Cherrywood could include the following;
- A conscious awareness of the need to generate a strong sense of the civic in the design of the public realm and in the architecture that encloses public space
- To optimize the contribution of public buildings, such as libraries/community buildings, to the street and public space
- To seek innovation in how Approved Housing Bodies can encourage cultural uses to co-locate with housing.
- To champion the presence of arts/culture in the design of the public realm
- To sponsor an annual programme of arts/culture events
- The provision of work studios for artists
- The piloting of a post of 'Arts Curator' for Cherrywood on an initial 3 year basis.

7. Architectural Diversity Strategy

In the legacy of Irish towns and cities from the past, architectural vernacular of high quality was often mixed with the classical architecture of one-off civic buildings. An inherent discipline and awareness of urban design blended individual buildings into a successful streetscape. Unfortunately, modern development in Ireland is often challenged to replicate this streetscape quality, with coarse-grained, standardized, generic models predominating. Local authorities have a major leadership role to play in promoting good quality architecture and urban design. Key areas to focus on include;
- An objective to generate fine-grain in the composition of major streets
- The design of an individual building should offer sustenance to the walker. Think how the building meets both the ground and the sky
- Ensure there is a diversity of design hands. One firm should not monopolize whole tracts of urban fabric.
- Encourage a culture of design competitions
- Think carefully about the brief for each building
- Create an awareness of how the building will be maintained over the life-span.