

ARUP



WeWork | 52 Bedford Row | London WC1R 4LR  
020 7078 7077 | [info@bee-midtown.com](mailto:info@bee-midtown.com) | [bee-midtown.com](http://bee-midtown.com)  
[@MidtownLDN](https://twitter.com/MidtownLDN) | [#MidtownLDN](https://www.instagram.com/MidtownLDN)



# VIBRANT STREETS, VIBRANT ECONOMY

GROUND FLOOR STRATEGIES  
FOR MIDTOWN



## WELCOME TO MIDTOWN

Midtown is the heart of London – a vibrant and evolving district, comprising of Holborn, Bloomsbury, St Giles, Farringdon and Clerkenwell.

The West End is world-renowned for shopping and leisure. Soho is a creative and media hub. The City is London's financial and legal district. Midtown brings this all together into one unique ecosystem, attracting professionals, entrepreneurs, and start-ups, whilst boasting a diverse mix of dining, culture and retail.

Midtown is a successful and growing part of London, unique in its:

- Diverse mix of sectors working together
- Accessibility to the rest of London
- Cultural and entertainment offering with big institutions and emerging talent

### Successful



**£15.7 billion**  
total GVA (2016) – 13% of  
Central London economy

### Accessible



**£9.48 million**  
in funding from (TfL)  
to active travel and  
better roads

### Opportunities



**74**  
buildings which currently  
have ground floor space  
to let (2019)

**Midtown BID, the Business Improvement District supporting Midtown, has a clear focus on making the 'ground floor' – the spaces people most interact with – attractive, engaging and interesting.**

Midtown's location makes it a unique convergence point for a number of thriving and distinctive neighbourhoods. From Clerkenwell's hub of creativity, design and making, to Holborn's new restaurants and evening attractions, Midtown has something for everyone.

Midtown BID is working with the business community, boroughs and TfL (Transport for London) to deliver a growing, resilient and safer district.

### Midtown's vision for economy and placemaking



Growth for a  
diverse economy



Build identity  
of the area



People's  
wellbeing first



Connectivity  
and wayfinding

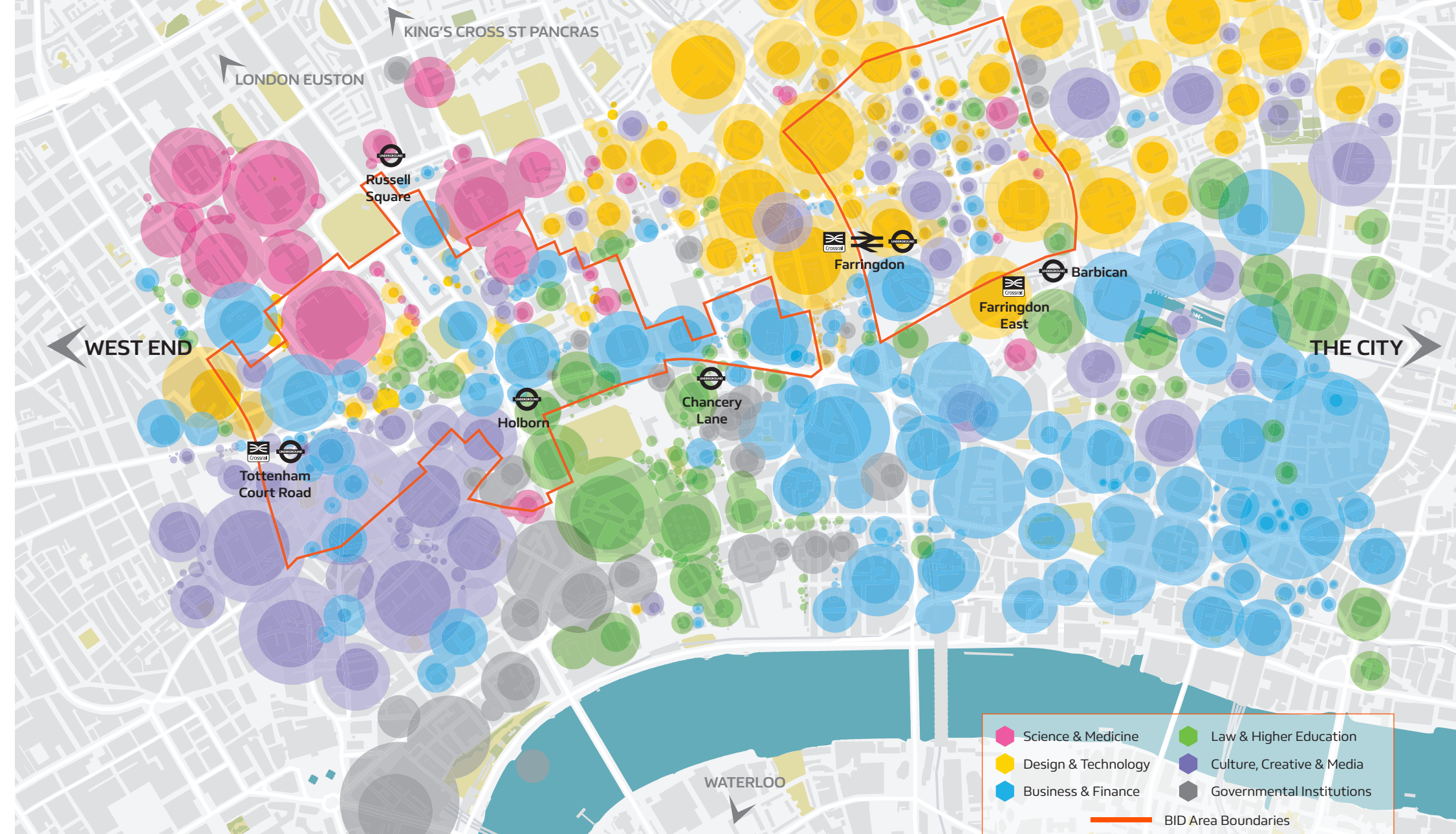


Managing Midtown's  
evolution

London Borough of Camden and Midtown BID have collaborated to deliver a supplementary (draft) planning guidance and the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme to invest in the long-term commercial attractiveness and liveability of the area.

This vision for active ground floor use supports Midtown BID's overarching aim for continued economic growth and public involvement.

### ILLUSTRATIVE REPRESENTATION OF EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN THE MIDTOWN DISTRICT





## THE GROUND FLOOR

### Where city vibrancy and public life thrive together

The street level (or ground floor) is how most people experience Midtown. The design and activities at ground level are vital in shaping the local economy and defining the sense of place.

Amenities such as dining, leisure and retail attract talented workers, in turn, helping to build successful businesses. This melting pot of local amenities make the ground floor one of the best places in Midtown to share ideas and feel inspired.

### Sensory spaces for everyone

Midtown caters to a wide variety of people – workers, students, residents and tourists. These groups use the area in different ways, and therefore have unique needs. Midtown BID is assessing and supporting inclusive design principles for active frontages, ensuring everyone feels at home in the district.

As well as enticing leisure and dining offerings, Midtown BID will encourage offices and businesses to invest in their frontage, in order to delight passers-by and showcase their work. Whether you work in Midtown and want to delight a client, or are seeking a unique shopping experience, Midtown will be the destination of choice.



### Supports flexible functions at all times

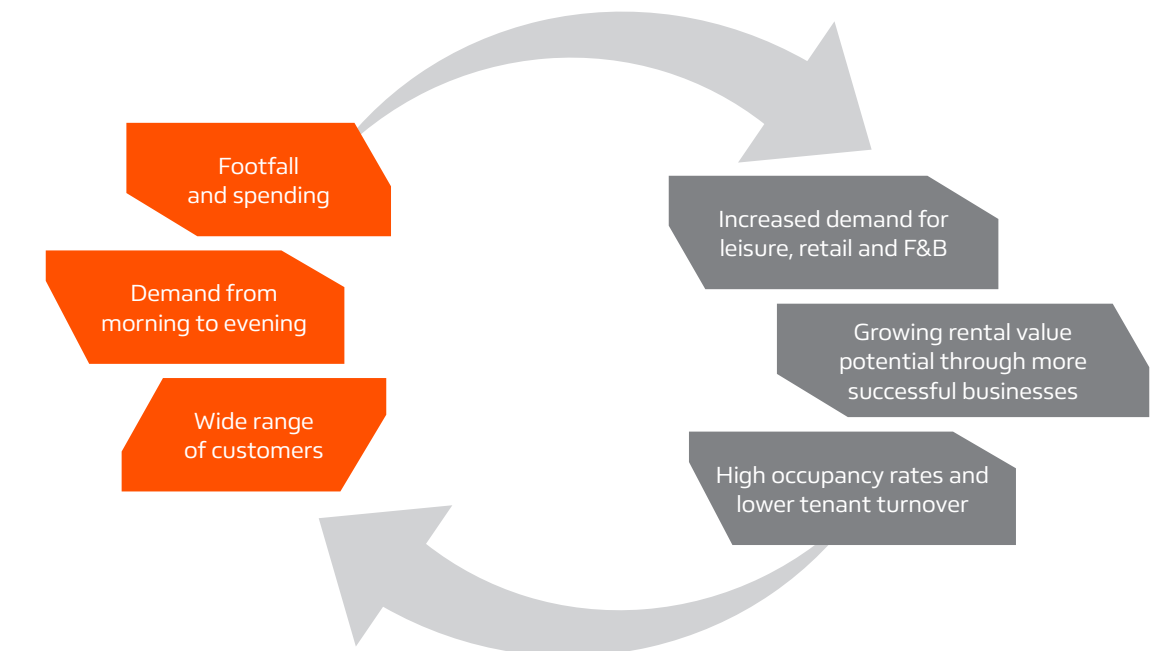
Ground floors can be engaging places, and could include gallery space, restaurants, or design-forward office lobbies. Pop-up shops, events, markets and other temporary activities can create a sense of excitement in the area, engaging people in a dynamic way.

Ground floor uses in Midtown will be multi-purpose and flexible. Midtown BID will work with property owners and businesses to make the most of the extensive opportunities at street level, both inside buildings and in public spaces.

### Reflecting the character of its people

In both the commercial streets and passageways, there is great opportunity for activation of ground floor spaces. The scale and 'speed' of a street, its architecture, infrastructure and current businesses will all define how people experience Midtown.

This variety in streets, spaces and places, will be recognised when defining ground floor interventions that are appropriate in scale and character, and that will shape the sense of place and activity.





# THE VISION

Midtown will use the potential of its ground floors to further develop its sense of identity and establish a more diverse and sustainable economy.

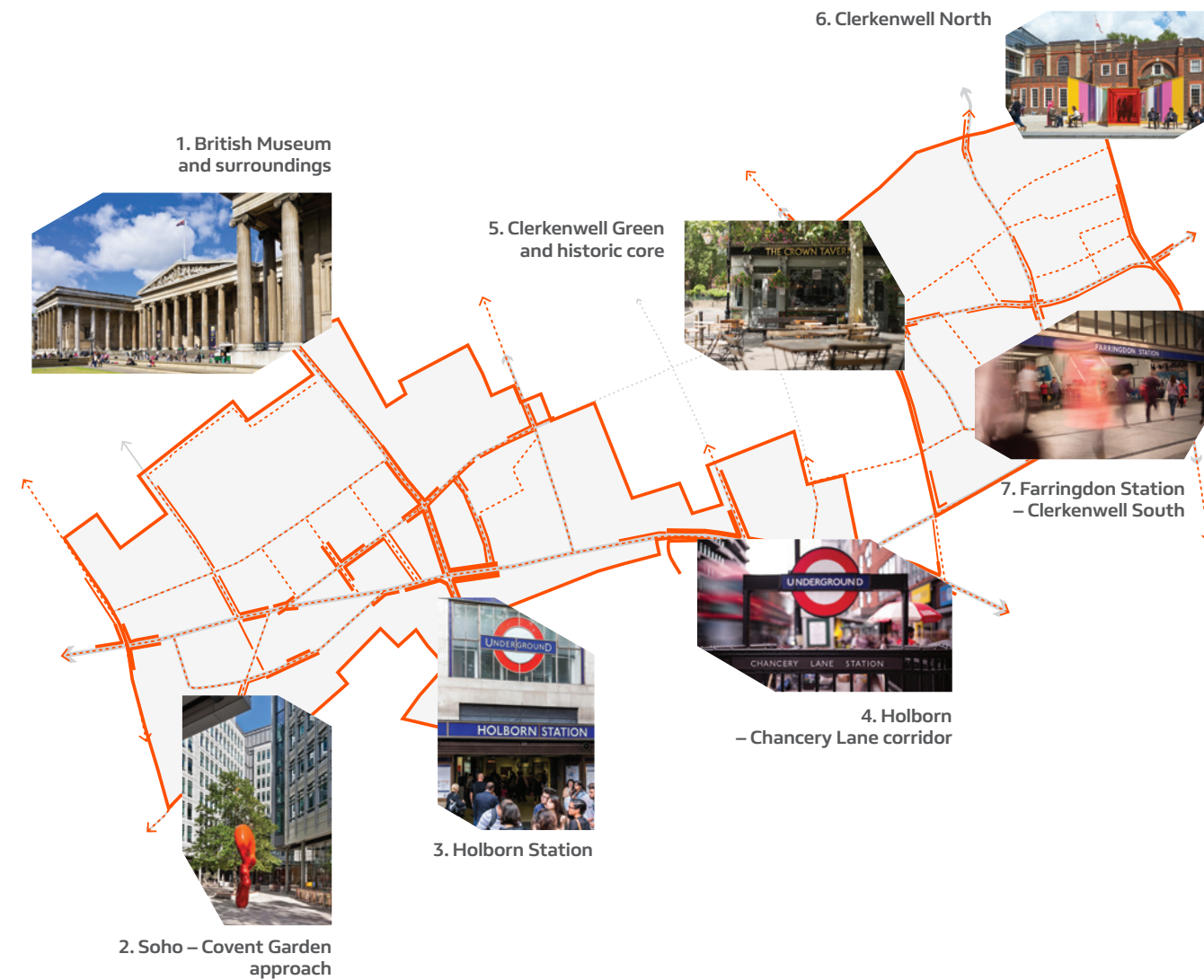
Midtown is made up of seven distinct areas, based on the types of businesses, existing ground floor characteristics, street typology, pedestrian traffic, and institutional or cultural landmarks.

Each area holds unique opportunities for the ground floor to shape the economy. Midtown BID will advocate for and lead on strategies to activate the ground floor spaces in these areas to meet their potential.

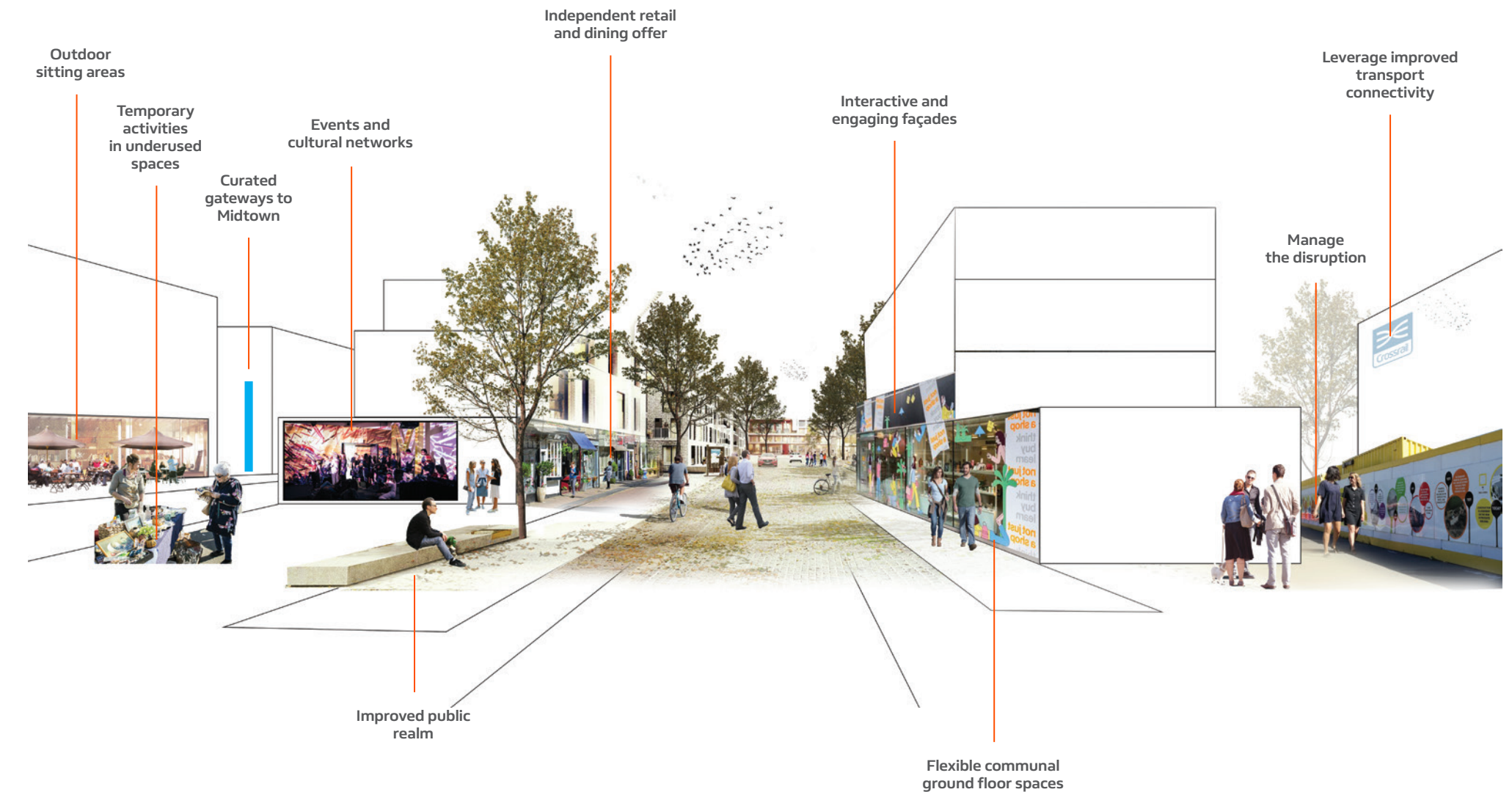
The strategies which support this vision, if implemented, will bring renewed colour and vigour to Midtown, whilst building on its economic and cultural successes. Seven strategies have been identified and organised into four clearly defined categories based on the type of intervention:

- District-level curation
- Property-level interventions
- Short-term interventions
- Urban design interventions

## Midtown's distinct areas



## Ground floor activation strategies





## ACTIVE GROUND FLOOR STRATEGIES

The proposed strategies will bring together businesses at ground floor and above – property owners, local government, estate agents and developers – to create a more interesting and attractive ground floor offering. This will promote the area's sense of place and attract more customers and businesses for its continued success and growth.

Taking learnings from the successes of city districts in the UK and abroad, Midtown BID has built a solid evidence base to support these strategies. If successfully implemented, it is expected that they should boost demand for local leisure, dining and retail businesses; increase the attractiveness of Midtown to professional services and creative firms; and attract property investment.

These strategies are organised into district-level curation, property-level interventions, short-term interventions and urban design interventions.

### District-level curation

#### Elevated leisure, retail, and food and beverage offering

In order for a sustainable and thriving high street not only to survive, it is essential that street-level includes a mix of leisure, retail, and food and beverage offerings – sustaining footfall and custom throughout the day – for local workers, residents and visitors.

Midtown BID would like to work with businesses, property owners and local government to develop a strategic approach that encourages independent and boutique options alongside well-known brands. This vision is informed by businesses and provides practical tools for licensing, change of use, and business support.

MAYFAIR, LONDON



### Property level interventions

#### Designing interactive and engaging year-long façades

Office buildings and retail outlets should use engaging and seasonal window displays to add variety and colour for all to enjoy.

Using 'visible permeability' (being able to see into the building) can activate a façade, even if the building itself is not open to the public. This approach will enable businesses to showcase their work and contribute to a greater sense of place for the passers-by. By making façades interactive and engaging, people on street level will have a window into what is going on in Midtown.

#### Flexible communal ground floor spaces

Small retail outlets, informal meeting areas, pop-up cafés and mini exhibitions can all be used to activate a building's ground floor spaces. Flexibility is key – once the space has been designated, a pop-up approach could be taken, creating variety, and ensuring continued interest.

By identifying the availability of flexible spaces and promoting them on different platforms, Midtown will be able to attract new and interesting activities into its ground floors.



PARIS, FRANCE

AL QUOZ, DUBAI





# ACTIVE GROUND FLOOR STRATEGIES

## Urban design interventions

### Curated gateways to Midtown

By designing unique and recognisable street signage, shopfronts, or public street furniture, the gateways to Midtown will help people visualise the space as an exciting place to be.

Midtown BID will work with local councils to support public realm design specifications and wayfinding routes and they will work with businesses to improve frontages at key gateways.

### Turning disruption into opportunity

There will inevitably be disruption to Midtown over the coming years, with improvements to streets and pavements in the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme, and as development sites are brought forward.

By being proactive and planning ahead, tenants can take advantage of this, particularly when pedestrians are nudged off the main routes and towards the smaller side streets.

A wayfinding strategy in line with improvement works schedules can guide people through the new routes, which should be engaging, making the most of new footfall.

AMSTERDAM,  
NETHERLANDS



GLASGOW, SCOTLAND



## Short-term interventions

### Events and cultural networks in Midtown

Midtown BID will coordinate and develop a programme of regular events such as lectures, workshops, classes, and exhibitions, at a range of venues across the district.

This could showcase cultural/seasonal events or the maker/designer businesses in the area, bringing local commercial heritage to the public. The effect could be to increase footfall and patronage in Midtown throughout the day, as well as attracting new visitors to the area.

### Temporary activities in underused spaces

There are underused spaces in the area, particularly outside of the typical nine-to-five working day. Bringing activities into these spaces will enliven the streets of Midtown at different times and days of the week, increasing the vibrancy and liveability of the area.

Temporary or short-term interventions might include exhibitions, markets, performances or community projects.



BRISTOL, UK





# A COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE CURATED ESTATE MODEL

## Achieving the right mix to deliver value and placemaking

Whilst Midtown BID can act and advocate to achieve benefits for its members and the area, a set of more formal, transaction-based arrangements could potentially deliver investment and sustained value at a street level across the BID area.

The diagram on the opposite page presents a stylised view of a commercial structure that could be used to optimise ground floor uses, meaning: driving social, economic and financial value for stakeholders.

In a given street or neighbourhood, property owners (PO1, PO4) would transfer or pool their ground floor leases (L1,L8) to a special purpose vehicle (SPV) which would be owned by the property owners. The SPV would then coordinate (curate) ground floor uses in an area with the intention of enhancing value sustainably across the piece. Crucially, its objectives would stretch beyond short-term gain associated with commercial rental values for ground floor activities. The SPV would focus on enhancing value for office space occupiers by curating an interesting, rich mix of ground floor uses that would otherwise not be possible or commercially viable through a fragmented lease-ownership structure.

In co-ordination with Midtown BID (and local authorities) the SPV could also identify and secure public realm improvements that would complement its ground floor use strategy.

If there was sufficient ‘balance sheet strength’ the SPV could borrow to invest in both the ground floor uses it was responsible for and/or public realm improvements. These would drive value for property owners and the wider community. It could also act as a centre of expertise to assist prospective tenants with developing their business plans to maximise their chances of commercial success.

BROADGATE, LONDON

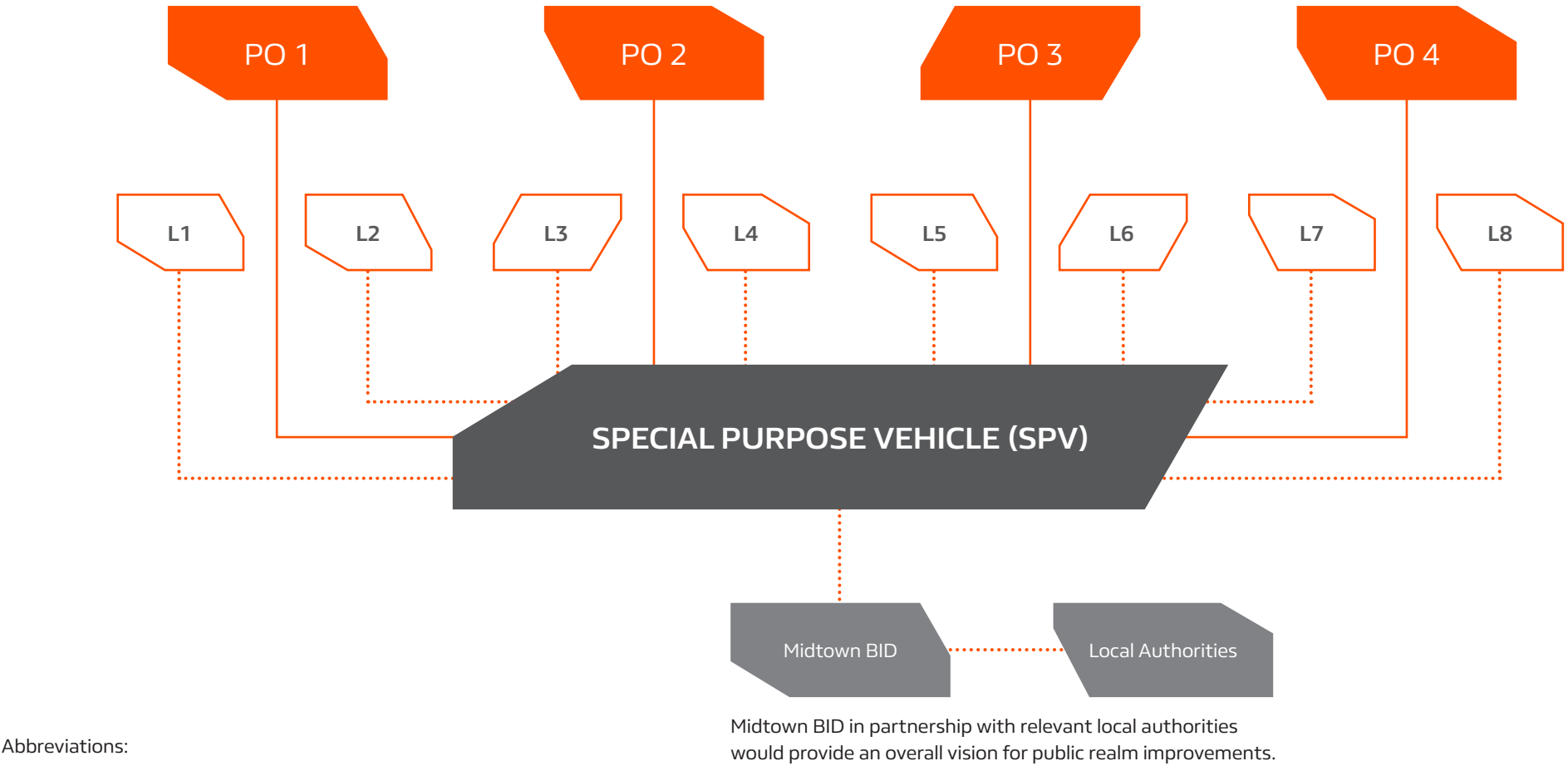


CHICAGO, USA



## Example commercial structure to maximise the potential of ground floor uses in Midtown

Property Owners would have shared ownership of the SPV.



Abbreviations:  
PO – Property Owner  
L – Ground Floor Lease

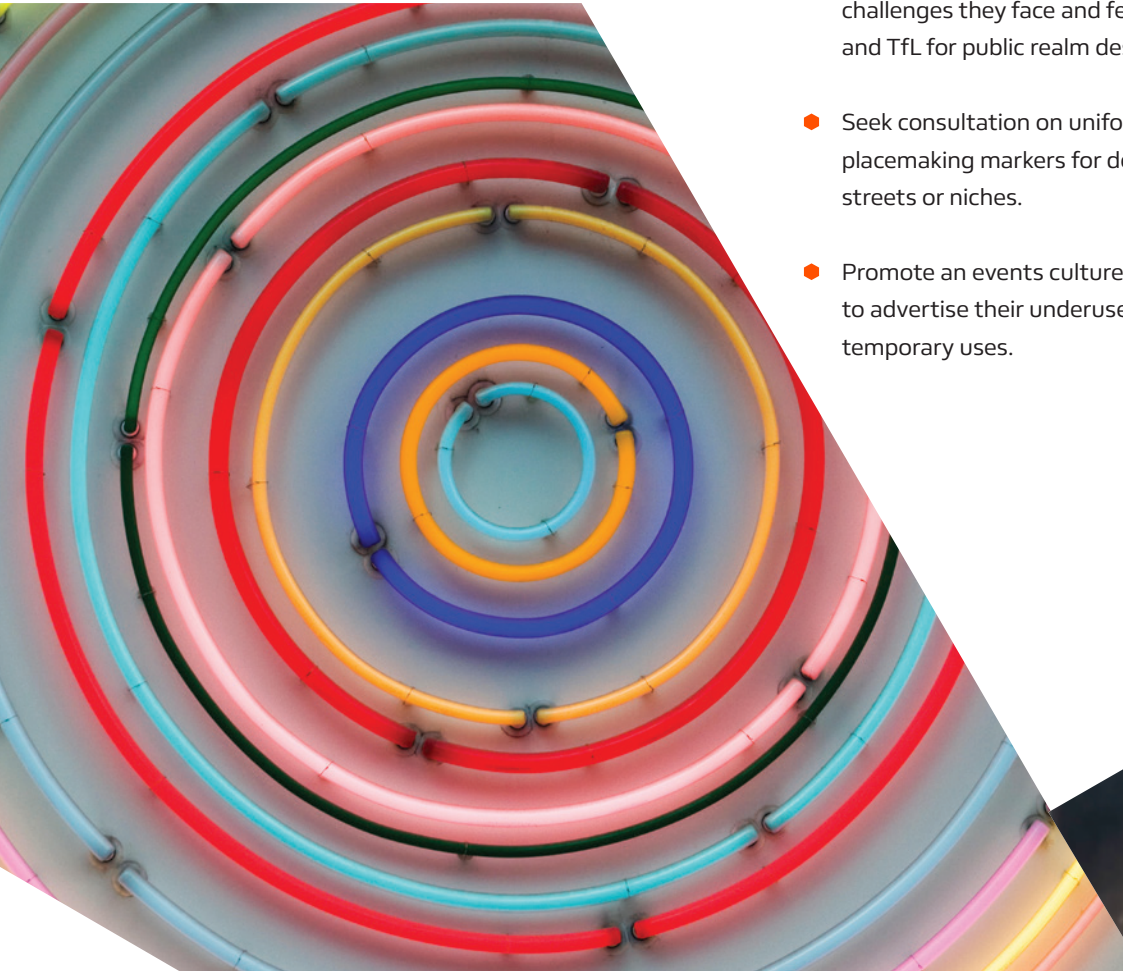


## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION

Implementing the strategies across the seven areas requires action and advocacy for Midtown BID with key partners.

Midtown BID will collaborate with the following stakeholders to achieve the ground floor vision for Midtown.

SHOREDITCH, LONDON



### Existing ground floor businesses

- Engage with businesses through design materials and visual merchandising advice for more attractive ground floors.
- During Liveable Neighbourhoods improvements, work with existing ground floor tenants to understand what challenges they face and feed back to stakeholders and TfL for public realm design.
- Seek consultation on uniform signage and other placemaking markers for defined areas or specific streets or niches.
- Promote an events culture by encouraging businesses to advertise their underused spaces for events or temporary uses.

### Above-ground floor occupiers

- Gather insights from existing businesses to understand what leisure, retail, and food and beverage offering they want – and what is missing from the existing offer.
- Promote interesting and new ground floor businesses (e.g. dining, leisure and retail) and encourage local businesses to host events to generate awareness of Midtown.
- Encourage collaboration between above-ground floor tenants to maximise potential of communal ground floors (e.g. lobbies and windows).

NEW YORK, USA



BAYSWATER, LONDON



### Local authorities

- Collaborate with local government partners to ensure Midtown remains vibrant and accessible during disruption.
- Work with planning departments on design guidance which sees Midtown BID's vision realised.
- Work with local authorities on issues around planning and licensing, and explore the opportunities presented by local development orders.



### Property agents and developers

- Develop engaging designs with Midtown branding for empty ground floor frontages to be incorporated into construction hoardings to reinforce sense of place.
- Listen to local property agents, understand what is attracting tenants or why some may choose not to locate in Midtown.
- Identify opportunities for more ground floor usage on side routes near Crossrail stations which could alleviate pressure from main roads.

### Landlords and property owners

- Work with existing landlords to improve the activity and visual permeability on ground floor of offices – using the case for improving sense of place and identity and increasing footfall.
- Engage with property owners to develop façade design guidance.
- Encourage landlords to provide information to estate agents and prospective businesses on ground floor opportunities.