

# BLACKROCK MAIN STREET 4-YEAR FOLLOW-ON STUDY: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & BUSINESS FEEDBACK

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- Evaluates **medium-term (4-year) economic and business impacts** of Covid Mobility and Public Realm Works in Blackrock Main Street and adjacent streets during Covid-19.
- Builds on Phases 1 and 2 of the DLR Covid Mobility Review study by TU Dublin, which included an interim review (2020) of the Covid Mobility Works in Blackrock which found 72% of businesses viewed the works as positive.
- Hypothesis: Covid Mobility interventions contributed **positively to the regeneration** of Blackrock Main Street/Village Centre and remain **popular among businesses**.

## METHODOLOGY

- 22 interviews conducted including a mix of hospitality, retail, and service sectors.
- Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth, flexible discussions.
- **Thematic analysis** identified 16 key themes from the interviews.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. FOOTFALL, STREET VIBRANCY & VITALITY

- Strongest theme: **Significant increase in footfall and vibrancy**, especially on weekends and sunny days.
- Businesses reported a transformation from a “ghost town” to a lively, social space.
- Majority of businesses viewed the Covid Mobility works as **positive and effective**.

### 2. MAIN STREET ATMOSPHERE & VILLAGE FEEL

- Enhanced feel and **village ambiance**.
- Businesses appreciated the aesthetic improvements and **social spaces**.

### 3. OUTDOOR SEATING & TRADING AREAS, & GREENERY

- Near-universal praise for **outdoor seating, planters, and greenery**.
- Seen as **low-cost, high-impact interventions** that improve atmosphere and dwell time.



#### 4. SUPPORTIVE & ACTIVE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

- Strong sense of **collaboration and support** among businesses.
- The **Blackrock Business Association** plays a key role in communication and event organisation.

#### 5. BLACKROCK AS A DESTINATION

- Blackrock is now seen as **"on the up"** and a **destination** for food, coffee & leisure.
- **Magnet businesses** (e.g., cafés) attract footfall that benefits surrounding shops.

#### 6. BUSINESS HEALTH & MACRO-ECONOMIC IMPACTS

- Many businesses report an **optimist outlook** business development wise.
- Some businesses still feel the **aftershocks of the pandemic**.
- **Challenges remain** due to remote work, cost-of-living crisis, international geopolitical tensions and staff shortages.

#### 7. TRAFFIC, CAR-PARKING & DELIVERIES

- **One-way system** generally supported for reducing traffic and improving pedestrian space.
- **Delivery and loading logistics** are a concern for some businesses due to limited loading bays and enforcement issues.
- Mixed views on **car parking**—many see the trade-off that reduced spaces leading to more public space as worthwhile; some want more parking; others feel the management of current spaces is important.

#### 8. BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Mixed feedback: some praised the **cycle lanes** for bringing new types of customers; many criticised the **rubber kerbs** segregating the cycle-lanes as tripping hazards for pedestrians.
- Calls for better integration with wider cycle networks.

#### 9. MAINTENANCE, PERMANENT WORKS & FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

- Temporary infrastructure is aging and requires **regular maintenance**.
- Strong support for the Living Streets Blackrock **permanent scheme**, though concerns exist about construction disruption.
- Businesses see the **seafront as underutilised** & support considered redevelopment.

## CONCLUSIONS

- The Covid Mobility Works have been a **catalyst** for the **revitalisation of Blackrock Village**.
- The **business community is largely supportive**, citing improved footfall, atmosphere, and business opportunities, and the majority have an **overall positive sentiment** towards the temporary street redesign.
- The **temporary nature** of the infrastructure is now a limitation—there is strong support for **permanent upgrades**.
- The study helps fills a **gap in Irish research** on the role of public realm improvements and road space reallocation in socio-economic regeneration.