



# Strategic Plan

2023—2028

## **Outhouse**

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## Section 01:

Introduction.....	4
Chairperson's Welcome.....	8
The Future of Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre .....	9

## Section 02:

Why Outhouse? .....	10
---------------------	----

## Section 03:

Our Goals & Objectives .....	14
------------------------------	----

## Section 03:

Appendices .....	21
------------------	----



# 01

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## Introduction

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## Who We Are

Outhouse is an LGBTQ+ charitable organisation based in Dublin providing a range of programmes, services, and resources to LGBTQ+ people, groups, organisations, and allies. In 1994, less than a year after the decriminalisation of homosexuality, the need for an LGBTQ+ community centre was identified as urgent. In 1996, Outhouse was founded following extensive community consultation.

Outhouse has evolved to become a cornerstone of greater Dublin's LGBTQ+ community. The centre offers a vibrant and inclusive space for the community to gather, connect, and organise. Outhouse provides a wide range of services, including a community café, information and referral services to help those in need, specialised peer support groups, and much more. Outhouse has been instrumental in the legal and social progress of the last three decades.

*“We strive to make of this place a haven free of the ills and abuses we find outside it.”*



## LGBTQ+ Rights in Ireland Today

Ireland has made significant strides towards achieving greater LGBTQ+ equality, with successful referendums and the enactment of progressive legislation and public policy. However, LGBTQ+ communities still face significant challenges, including barriers to accessing healthcare and increasing hate speech and hate crime. Poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, and substance misuse disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ individuals and have a substantial impact on people's day-to-day lives.

Positive policy developments include the publication of two national LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies. However, despite two national strategies, funding from the government to LGBTQ+ organisations remains sporadic and inadequate to meet the community's demand for services or the scale of resources needed to transform society. The lack of financial support has a significant impact on organisations' abilities to provide essential services and support to our LGBTQ+ communities, holding back progress for the most vulnerable and marginalised.

It is essential to recognise that addressing these issues requires a sustained effort from both the government and society as a whole. Collaboration between LGBTQ+ organisations and statutory bodies is crucial to ensure meaningful and longstanding change and equity for LGBTQ+ people.

Furthermore, addressing the rise of far-right groups and tackling poverty and homelessness requires a broader societal effort. It is essential to acknowledge that these issues are interconnected and affect many marginalised communities beyond just the LGBTQ+ community.

As we look to the future, it is clear that addressing our intersecting needs requires a multi-dimensional approach. More significant societal change is necessary to achieve true equity for **all** LGBTQ+ and marginalised people in Ireland.

## Our Achievements to Date

The past twenty-five years have seen significant progress in Ireland. Outhouse has been at the forefront of agitating for that change and supporting, nurturing, and encouraging people, groups, and movements changing the face of Capel Street, Dublin City, and Ireland. Some of the incredible achievements of Outhouse over the past twenty-five years include:

## 01

Supporting tens of thousands of LGBTQ+ people with information, support, sign-posting, and peer support groups - ensuring no one was left alone.

## 02

Supporting the founding and early-stage development of two critical national LGBTQ+ organisations, Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland and the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI). Both organisations successfully left the nest and went on to win vital victories for the LGBTQ+ community.

## 03

The Marriage Equality and Repeal of the 8th referenda were successfully fought and won from within the walls of Outhouse. Creating space for activists to come together, organise, and campaign was one of the founding goals of Outhouse.

## 04

105 Capel Street, our home and one of the first Georgian buildings built in Dublin, has been lovingly and painstakingly restored. Preserving part of our city's heritage for generations to come and inspiring the revitalisation of Capel St and its environs.



## Chairperson's Welcome

A chairde,

It is my great pleasure to share with you our new and ambitious 5-year strategic plan for Outhouse. This is the result of months of hard work, dedication, and collaboration from our staff, board, volunteers, donors, and community members.

At Outhouse, we are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ people. This plan is a testament to our unwavering dedication to that mission. The past few years have been challenging not only for Outhouse but all of us. The pandemic brought into sharp relief for us all the importance of the physical, social, and cultural spaces we do or, more importantly, do not have access to. Having emerged from the pandemic's long shadow, this plan outlines our vision, mission, and values and sets a clear roadmap for achieving our goals over the next five years.

In recent years, Outhouse has seen significant organisational changes, with a new CEO starting in 2022. Considerable work has been undertaken to broaden the range of skills, diversity, and lived experiences represented among our staff, volunteers, and board members. We have a capable and dedicated team in place, and I look forward to working with them, and with you, our friends and supporters, over the lifetime of this plan, building on the progress and hard work of those who have come before us over the last 25 years.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the development of this plan. The dedication and commitment that so many have shown towards our organisation and the LGBTQ+ community in the Dublin region and beyond, has been truly inspiring.

Thank you to our external partners at Fumbally Exchange Design Partnership (FExDep), Nick Sparrow, Niall O'Sullivan, and George Boyle, who worked with us to generate new ideas, challenge our thinking, and bring everything together. We are also very grateful to our partners in The Community Foundation for Ireland and Central Bank of Ireland, who provided generous financial support to enable this work to happen.

I invite you to join us in celebrating this milestone and to support us as we work towards achieving our shared vision of a world where all LGBTQ+ individuals are accepted, celebrated, and embraced for who they are.

Le bród,

**Séamus McManus (he/him)**

*Chairperson of the Board of Trustees*





## The Future of Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Friends,

It is with great excitement that I present to you our new five-year plan for Outhouse, a charity committed to supporting and advocating for the LGBTQ+ communities in the Dublin Region and beyond. As the new CEO, I am honoured to lead an organisation that has significantly impacted the lives of tens of thousands of individuals over the last twenty-five years. I took up this role to unlock the potential I could see in the organisation, and with this plan, we will.

Over the next five years, our primary focus will be on four key areas: Connection, Community Support, Culture, and Campaigns. These pillars are integral to our mission of advancing the rights and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals, and we believe that this plan will enable us to have an even more significant impact on our communities.

Through Connection, we will work to create a sense of belonging and connectedness among LGBTQ+ individuals and allies. In the short-term, this will entail enabling universal access to our existing premises and creating more and better safe spaces for socialising, networking, and mutual support, as well as partnering with other organisations to foster more inclusive communities. We will also develop an ambitious plan to create a world-class LGBTQ+ centre which we will deliver in a future strategy.

Community Support remains a cornerstone of our work. We will continue to provide essential signposting and information to the community, including growing over the medium-term to provide a dedicated case work service. We aim to ensure that every community member has access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Culture is an essential aspect of the joy of being part of the LGBTQ+ community. We will work to celebrate and promote our community's rich history, traditions, and achievements through events, art in all its forms, and celebrations. We will highlight the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals to our society and work to create a more accepting and inclusive culture.

Finally, we will continue to advocate for the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals through Campaigning, pushing for change at local, national, and international levels. The areas in which we will actively lead in campaigning are poverty, homelessness, and the safety of our communities. We will work with policymakers, other organisations, and our communities to create a more equitable and just society for all.

Thank you for your continued support. I look forward to working with you to make Outhouse an even more impactful organisation in the coming years.

In Pride,

**Oisín O'Reilly (he/him)**

*Chief Executive Officer*



# 02

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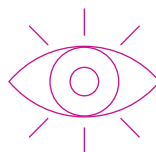
## Why Outhouse

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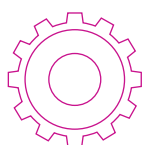
## Our Purpose

Outhouse is dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities.



## Our Vision

Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ individuals are safe, seen, and celebrated.



## Our Mission

To improve the quality of life for LGBTQ+ people by providing a safe space to find:

- **Connection:** Discovering themselves, their people, place, and passions.
- **Community Support:** Accessing information, programmes, and services.
- **Culture:** Experiencing creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.
- **Campaigns:** Being part of a strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.



## Our Values

### Trust



Trust is the foundation of everything we do at Outhouse. We prioritise transparency, honesty, and reliability — fostering authentic relationships within our LGBTQ+ community and with our allies. Everyone is heard, valued, and safe.

### Respect



We treat everyone with respect at Outhouse. We value the diverse experiences of all individuals and treat everyone with dignity, kindness, and consideration. Our LGBTQ+ community is a safe, welcoming space celebrating the unique journeys of all members of our communities.

### Joy



Outhouse fosters belonging and pride, empowering LGBTQ+ individuals to express themselves and find fulfilment. We believe joy inspires positivity and strengthens our communities.

### Inclusivity



Outhouse celebrates diversity. We create a safe and welcoming environment for all LGBTQ+ people and allies. Using an intersectional approach, we work to eliminate discrimination and marginalisation in all its forms.

### Impact



Outhouse is committed to creating meaningful and measurable change by empowering LGBTQ+ communities and advancing equity and justice.

## Our Commitment to Intersectionality

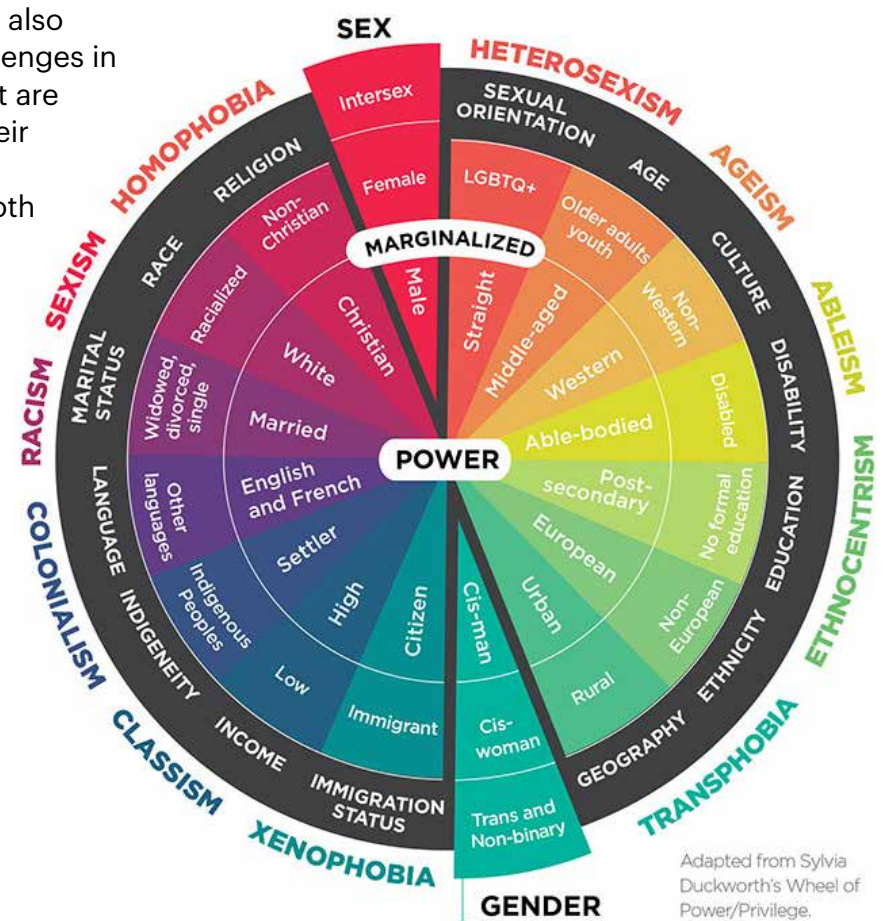
The concept of intersectionality describes how systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, class and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects. All forms of inequality are mutually reinforcing and must therefore be analysed and addressed simultaneously to prevent one form of inequality from reinforcing another.

For instance, a transgender person of colour may experience discrimination and violence that is different from what a white transgender person or someone of colour who is not transgender experiences. They may face multiple forms of discrimination based on their gender identity, race, and ethnicity.

Similarly, a bisexual person who is also disabled may face additional challenges in accessing healthcare services that are inclusive and understanding of their unique needs. They may also face stigma and discrimination from both the LGBTQ+ community and the disability community.

An older gay man who is also low-income may face challenges in accessing affordable housing and healthcare, as well as social isolation and lack of community support. They may also experience ageism, homophobia, and poverty, which can all intersect to create unique challenges.

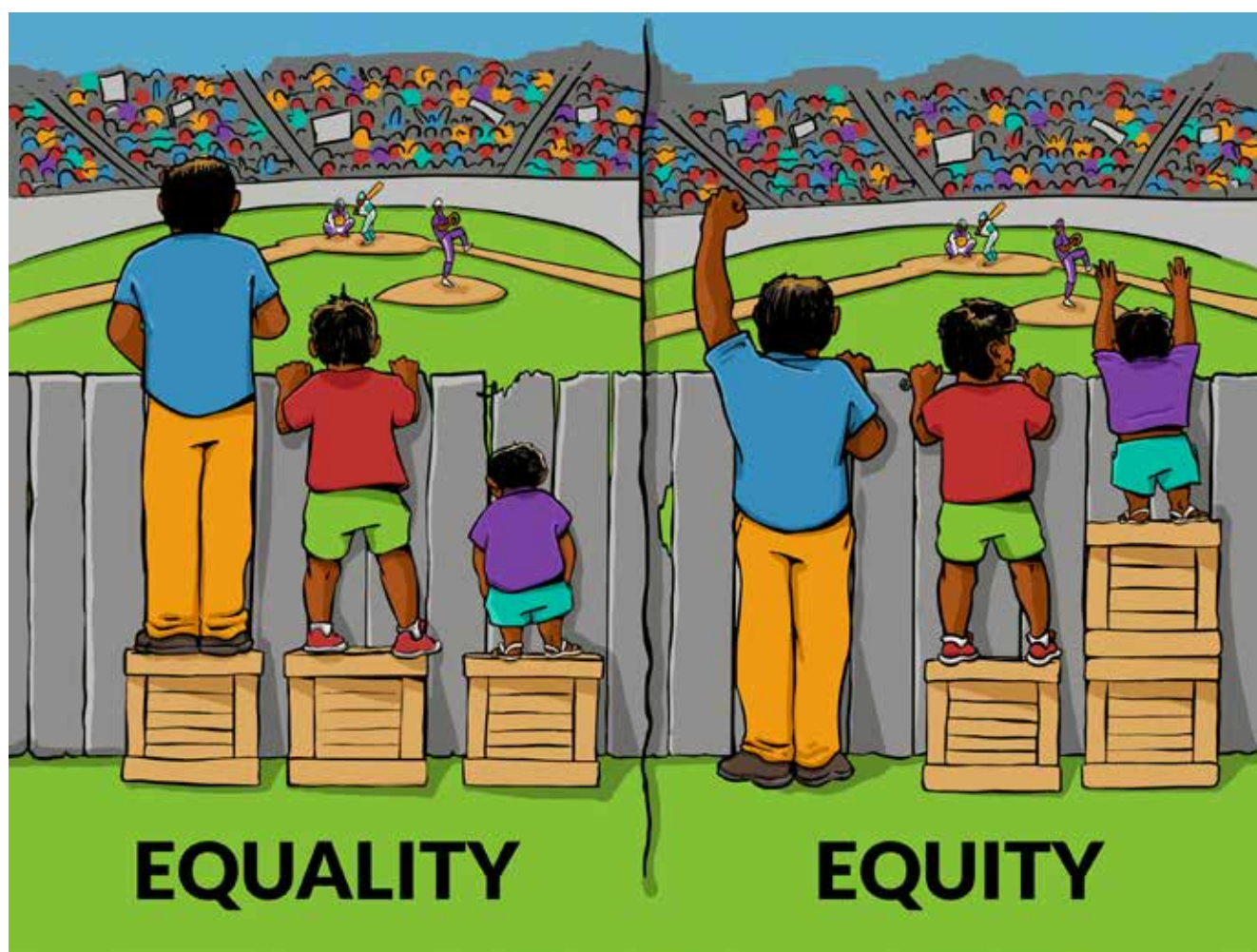
Recognising and addressing intersectionality is important because it helps us understand the complexity of social inequalities and the unique experiences and needs of individuals who may belong to multiple marginalised groups. It also highlights the importance of simultaneously addressing multiple forms of discrimination, rather than treating each form of oppression in isolation, to create more equitable and just societies.



Some gender identity terms include:

Agender	Genderfluid	Gender neutral	Transgender man
Bigender	Genderqueer	Non-binary	Transgender woman





## Our Commitment to Equity

Equity means ensuring everyone can access and benefit from the resources, services and opportunities needed to thrive. This requires acknowledging and addressing the barriers that prevent some individuals and groups from accessing these resources and opportunities.

We recognise that systemic barriers based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, socio-economic status, and other forms of discrimination exist; and that they can result in inequitable outcomes for individuals and communities. We are committed to actively addressing and dismantling these barriers to create a more equitable society.

We believe achieving equity requires prioritising the allocation of our limited resources to those most impacted by systemic barriers. This means investing in initiatives that directly address the root causes of inequity and supporting those who have historically been excluded or underrepresented. We recognise that achieving equity may require a redistribution of resources and a realignment of priorities.

We are committed to actively working towards equity, recognising that this requires ongoing effort, self-reflection, and continuous learning. By prioritising equity in our work, we aim to create a society which is more just and fair, where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential.

# 03

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## Our Goals & Objectives

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## GOAL 1

**Connection:** To be a centre where LGBTQ+ individuals can discover themselves, their people, place, and passions.

We believe that by providing a place for LGBTQ+ people to connect and explore, they will feel safe, accepted, and valued, thereby improving their wellbeing.

### Objective 1.1

**Foster a sense of community and belonging by providing safe and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ individuals to socialise, connect, and explore their identities.**

We will maximise attendance and engagement levels as measured by footfall and event attendance and demonstrate that the centre successfully provides safe and inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. We have reopened on Saturdays and will continue to expand opening times.

### Objective 1.2

**Ensure that the physical space is accessible, welcoming, and accommodating to individuals of all abilities and backgrounds.**

Within 18 months of launching the strategy, universal access will be delivered for the ground floor and basement levels of 105 Capel Street.

Within two years, a feasibility study on the future options for the premises (redevelopment/ relocation) will be completed, and a decision will be made on the medium and long-term future of the centre's physical space.

Within five years of the feasibility study being published, the resources necessary to act on the long-term plan for the centre will have been identified and secured.

### Objective 1.3

**Create opportunities for individuals to connect with other LGBTQ+ individuals through events, programmes, and peer support groups.**

Within one year, the centre will have developed and successfully run a schedule of events and peer support groups as measured by the number of events run and the attendance rates at those events.

### Objective 1.4

**Include ALL members of the LGBTQ+ community.**

Within two years, the makeup of the attendees at the centre and its events will have greater representation from under-represented parts of the community, as evidenced by a change in the demographics recorded in the annual stakeholder/ community survey.





## GOAL 2

## Community Support: A safe, accessible space to provide information, support, and services to our communities.

By providing access to referral, advocacy, and peer support spaces and programmes, the resilience and wellbeing of our communities will improve.

### Objective 2.1

#### **Be a first point of contact for LGBTQ+ people in need.**

Within two years, the organisation has seen an increase in the number of LGBTQ+ people who report that they first reached out to Outhouse for support, as measured by intake records.

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### Objective 2.2

#### **Provide advocacy support for those individuals requiring assistance in accessing services.**

Outhouse is establishing an advocacy support service for LGBTQ+ individuals within three years, by which time we will have hired a Programmes and Services Manager and case worker to support those in need of help and support.

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### Objective 2.3

#### **Provide tailored support and resources to staff on labour market activation programmes (LMAP) (Community Employment [CE] & Community Services Programme [CSP]) to enhance their skills and employability and support their successful transition into sustainable employment.**

Within the next 12 months, 80% of staff on labour market activation programs (CE & CSP) will report increased confidence and improved employability, and at least 50% will successfully transition into sustainable employment with the support of the programme over the next five years.

### Objective 2.4

#### **Offer educational and skill-building programmes that foster personal growth and development.**

Within two years, at least 100 individuals will have completed educational and skill-building programmes, resulting in them feeling better equipped in the courses' skill, as measured by pre-and post- programme assessments.

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### Objective 2.5

#### **Cultivate an ethos of wellbeing and safety.**

In the next two years, we will reduce the number of safety-related incidents starting from a baseline to be established in 2023.

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### Objective 2.6

#### **Ensure services for the LGBTQ+ communities are comprehensive, accessible, and effective.**

Through collaborating with community organisations, government agencies and healthcare providers, we will identify a comprehensive set of referral pathways for sign-posting to more appropriate services. We will also establish clear protocols for responding to safety concerns and emergencies and ensure team members are adequately trained to follow them. This will be completed in 2024.



## GOAL 3

## Culture: A space to experience creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.

By providing a space for people to explore, learn, find joy, and connect with culture, our patrons will have a deeper appreciation and pride in being in the LGBTQ+ community.

### Objective 3.1

**Celebrate LGBTQ+ heritage and culture. Showcase the unique perspectives and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals.**

Within one year, we will have created successful partnerships with two LGBTQ+ creatives and hosted exhibitions of their works.

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### Objective 3.2

**Preserve and share LGBTQ+ history, heritage, and legacy through exhibitions, collections, and other cultural programming.**

Within the first year of implementing our LGBTQ+ history and heritage programming, we will achieve a minimum of 500 attendees to our events and exhibitions.

### Objective 3.3

**Engage with the broader cultural effort in the LGBTQ+ community.**

Within one year of launching our cultural programming, the centre will have developed partnerships with other like-minded LGBTQ+ organisations, activists, and individuals to help infuse and shape our cultural and heritage activities.

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### Objective 3.4

**Promote creativity, expression, and self-discovery by offering workshops, classes, and other artistic and personal development opportunities.**

Within 12 months, we will launch a range of creative workshops, events, and groups to achieve a minimum of 500 attendees to these workshops within the first year of operation.



## GOAL 4

### Campaigns: A strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ people and communities.

By amplifying voices, actively campaigning, and joining coalitions, we will be a strong voice for our communities. Our solution-focused policy positions will impact on laws, policy and practice and improve the rights, protections, and lived experience of LGBTQ+ people.

#### Objective 4.1

**Amplify the stories and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and communities to raise awareness and advocate for change.**

Outhouse's external communications and lobbying work gives visibility to the stories and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals.

#### Objective 4.2

**Campaign for laws, policies, and strategies that enhance equality and protect the human rights of LGBTQ+ people.**

The organisation successfully advocates for laws and public policy that enhance equality and protect the human rights of LGBTQ+ people.

#### Objective 4.3

**Foster a culture of activism and engagement.**

The number of campaigns/advocacy groups which have used Outhouse as a base and/or consulted with Outhouse before their establishment will increase.

#### Objective 4.4

**Maximise impact and create lasting change.**

Within a year, Outhouse has successfully convened a broad coalition of organisations working on LGBTQ+ homelessness, poverty, and safety. Dublin City will join the Rainbow Cities network within three years.

#### Objective 4.5

**Actively partake in international movements to promote LGBTQ+ rights and equality.**

Within one year, Outhouse will participate in at least two international events or campaigns that promote LGBTQ+ rights and equality and establish partnerships with at least one international LGBTQ+ organisation.

#### Objective 4.6

**To provide LGBTQ+ education and training to relevant sectors, enhancing LGBTQ+ inclusion.**

Within 18 months, 70% of training participants report improved confidence in or knowledge of LGBTQ+ topics as measured by a post-training survey.

#### Objective 4.7

**To bring an LGBTQ+ perspective to climate action and climate justice issues.**

Outhouse will join and actively participate in Coalition 2030, starting in 2023. Coalition 2030 is an alliance of seventy civil society organisations from the international development, environmental, anti-poverty, and trade union sectors working together to ensure Ireland keeps its promise to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ireland and abroad.



## GOAL 5

**Capability:** A sustainable, professional organisation with a skilled team and robust systems working to support our LGBTQ+ communities.

By investing in becoming a sustainable, professional, and well-governed organisation, we will secure the trust and resources needed to achieve our strategic goals and our charitable purpose.

### Objective 5.1

**Nurture a high-performing team rooted in team members' wellbeing and professional development.**

Within two years, 80% of team members will have taken up training and development opportunities associated with their roles. Following the launch of this Strategic Plan, every team member will be supported in understanding their role in its delivery and will be responsible for delivering agreed quantified outputs within agreed time frames.

### Objective 5.2

**Establish and maintain a strong team culture grounded by our values.**

Within two years, 80% of team members will take up training and development opportunities associated with their roles.

### Objective 5.3

**To grow earned income and fundraising to ensure sustainability and growth.**

The organisation will implement a funding plan to secure the financial resources to deliver its strategic and operational plans.

### Objective 5.4

**Operate transparently and ethically, following best practices in not-for-profit management and governance.**

Within three years, the organisation will be recognised as a leader in transparency and ethical management in the charitable sector, having won a sectoral award for governance.

### Objective 5.5

**Invest in research, evaluation, and data analysis to inform decision-making and measure impact.**

Within three years, we will have established a robust research and evaluation program that regularly produces insights and recommendations that inform decision-making, as measured by the number of research and evaluation reports produced, the percentage of programmes and initiatives that are informed by research and evaluation data, and feedback from stakeholders.

## Objective 5.6

### **To minimise the environmental impact of the centre's activities.**

Within five years, the centre will have reduced its carbon footprint by 30%, as measured by an annual sustainability report that tracks progress on key environmental metrics such as energy use, waste reduction, and water consumption.

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## Objective 5.7

### **Stay relevant to our communities and stakeholders.**

Within three years, the organisation will increase its reach and engagement among the LGBTQ+ communities, as measured by our website traffic, social media following, footfall in the centre, and attendance at events and programmes.

In year 3 of the strategic plan, the organisation has conducted a mid-term review and update to ensure our strategy remains relevant to the changing environment.

Outhouse carries out an annual stakeholder feedback survey which informs future planning and provides indicator and outcome data highlighting progress in implementing the strategic plan.

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## Objective 5.8

### **To have a Board of Trustees capable of guiding the organisation towards its goals and achieving its charitable purpose.**

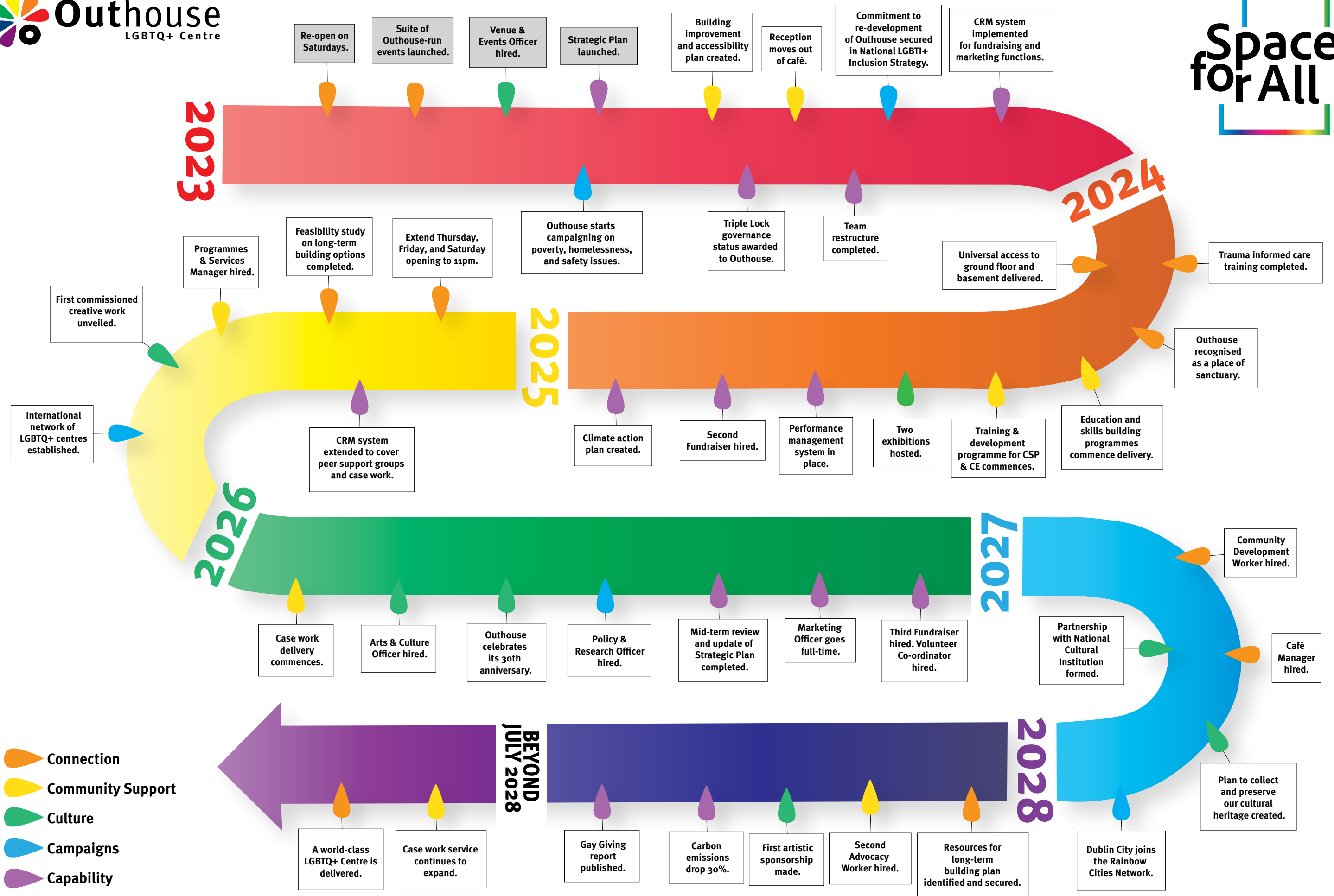
A stronger and more effective charity that is better equipped to achieve its charitable purpose.

# 04

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## Appendices

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Strategic Plan 2023 - 2028



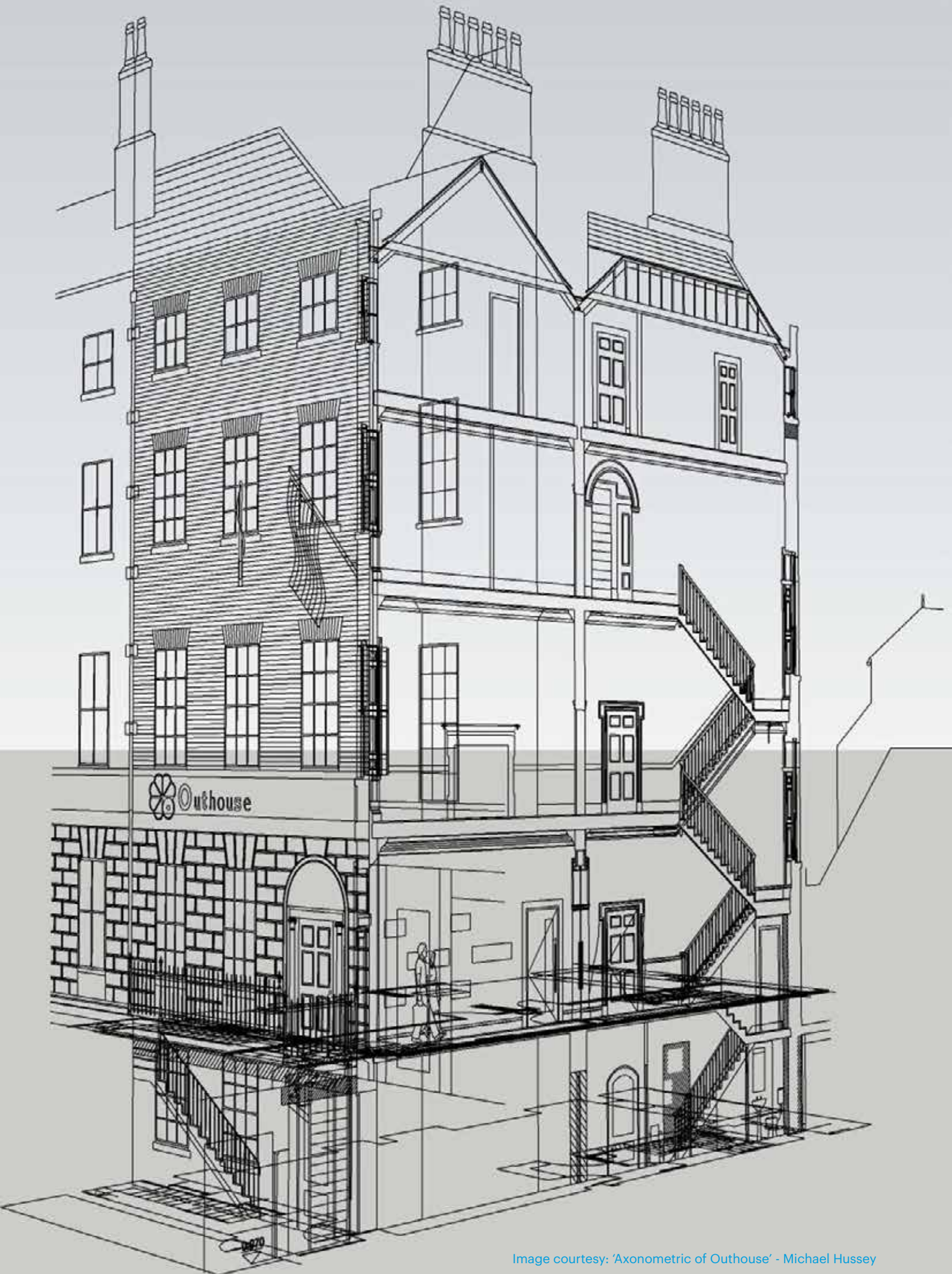


Image courtesy: 'Axonometric of Outhouse' - Michael Hussey

## Appendix 1:

# Architectural Challenge and Analysis

## Introduction

The 2023 - 2028 Outhouse Strategy Design Process is a methodology applying established tools of architectural, urban, interior design, and spatial science to a complex tapestry of issues using a challenge-and-analysis process.

Our findings comprise a matrix of improvements, enhancements, aspirations, and suggestions – a pattern language for human interaction and fabric consolidation, the undertaking of tests for viability and concepts with potential were set out along a guided pathway of phased stages with high-level estimates of investment, benefits, and returns. The summary recommendations of this exercise can be described in three key priority actions:

- A. The “Building Improvement and Accessibility Plan” - a small works package to proceed right away. This will provide access for all to key public spaces, functions and activities in Outhouse. It involves limited but vital other initiatives, upgrades, and repairs to elements of building fabric and minor reconfiguration of spaces to maximise comfort, compliance, sustainability, conservation, and safety. It will deliver universal accessibility to the ground floor and basement of the premises.
- B. The “Feasibility Study” - the design process uncovered a wide array of opportunities worth exploring, each showing real potential to elevate Outhouse to an exemplary LGBTQ+ centre of global scale and significance. Many strands need further careful unraveling in this exercise, with many factors at play. It is recommended that a detailed expert study be assigned to bring the most feasible paths into sharp focus, to allow others to fall away, and test potential for this expression of the community, here and on the international stage.
- C. The “Implementation and Delivery Plans” - masterplans requiring investment of time and resources need granular scheduling by specialists acquainted with real application of costings, procurement, contracting, conservation, and planning. These form important addenda attending on each of Actions A and B above.

## Discovery - what are we dealing with?

### Outhouse

Outhouse traces back to 1970's iconic Hirschfeld Centre, the first comprehensive LGBT HQ and community centre in Ireland, which included a nightclub, cinema, telephone hotlines, library, support groups, and café. The bold and courageous public-facing profile of Hirschfeld transformed the gay social scene, nurturing and celebrating gay pride in 1980s Ireland. Despite a devastating fire that destroyed the Centre in 1987, the Irish LGBTQ+ community remained resilient. In 1997, Outhouse opened a temporary shared LGBT Resource Centre on Wicklow Street.

In 2001, Outhouse moved to its current premises at 105 Capel Street, a once-luxurious Georgian residence, dating from 1770. This protected structure is held in trust for the LGBTQ+ community by a registered Charity. Since 1997, Outhouse has been providing and fostering services, culture, and information to the LGBTQ+ community in Ireland. Diverse offerings include a safe drop-in space, theatre, library, café, development courses, meeting/workspace rentals, directories, support services, and facilities for groups, individuals and campaigns; these remain crucial to the community's well-being today.

### Outhouse in the City

Outhouse lies in the Electoral Division of "Rotunda B", on the West side of Capel Street. This ancient urban artery bisects the city, connecting North and South hinterlands on a die-straight mainline landing right at the steps of City Hall, seat of city management, with Dublin Castle, symbol of the city's origin and identity, beyond. Throughout the 20th Century, the neighbourhood was known for decay, dereliction, and anti-social activity. Today, it is flourishing, with rapid inevitability. Dublin, first appearing in Ptolemy's maps as Eblana, in 140 C.E., grew from two distinct clusters along the River Liffey – Áth Cliath (the "ford of hurdles") - the only river crossing was settled by natives, while Dyflin – (Dubh Linn - "Black Pool"), a tidal basin on the River Poddle estuary, was settled as a Viking port in 841 C.E. The Gaelic settlement's makeshift Liffey crossing near Capel Street was part of an ancient road that continued to the Hill of Tara. The Viking enclave meanwhile became well-established as a sophisticated walled town that grew out of the meeting of two rivers. The Christian era saw monastic settlements spread across Ireland. St. Mary's Abbey and St. Michan's were founded in the 11th Century incorporating parts of Capel Street, covering extensive lands on Dublin's northside. In 1536, Henry VIII started to disband monasteries, priories, convents, and friaries throughout his kingdom. His processes sought to expropriate income, dispose of assets and allocate them to persons hand picked to suit the crown. In 1676, one such landowner, Sir Humphrey Jervis, then Lord Mayor of Dublin, built Essex Bridge, named for Arthur Capel, Earl of Essex. Jervis also formed a syndicate of landowners to set a grid of streets and houses on the estate of the former Mary's Abbey. Dublin City as we know it grew from this initiative, and Capel Street was the first to emerge.

## Capel Street

Capel Street is Dublin's most colourful, diverse and dynamic thoroughfare. Much beloved by cultural icons from Phil Lynott to Anthony Bourdain, the street neatly bisects and connects the city on both sides of the river, from shabby North King Street, via ebullient city markets, through to the serene authority of City Hall, with Dublin Castle beyond at Dubh Linn from which the city takes its name.

With Jervis at the helm in the 17th Century, Capel Street developed as palatial, detached mansions with opulent gardens and courtyards for the landed gentry. In the late 18th Century, these large residences were demolished and replaced by compact brick terraces: the earliest model of the renowned Georgian pattern in Dublin. The six-dwelling set-piece of 103 - 108, Capel Street, completed 1771, is one of the first, finest, and rarest surviving examples of formal urban townhouse living in the city. The street was transformed over the 19th Century, commercial uses becoming more widespread. Many merchants lived over their business premises or commuted into the city to work. Houses that did not embrace this business-based model fell into tenements, many with absentee landlords, after the Act of Union (1801) saw wealthy families return to England or to prosperous British Empire colonies. Although the North Inner City was the epicentre of 17th – 19th Century Dublin's highest society, this flight of wealthy classes meant it rapidly declined over the 20th Century. One afflicted was 106, Capel Street, rescued from a state of decay under tenement use in 1880 by Dublin City Corporation, who repurposed the old Georgian house as a City Library.

Recently, the North Inner City has enjoyed strong regeneration initiatives and activity in the environs of 105 Capel Street. Rotunda B transitioned from a "very disadvantaged" category in 1991 to the north triangle of Capel Street firmly placing it "marginally above average" in 2006. This has continued to improve rapidly in the years since. (DICI Report on National Affluence and Deprivation) The diversity of activities in Capel street has led to an explosion in interest and popularity, making it one of the most enviable urban branding stories in the world. To achieve control in preserving essential character and special interest, Capel Street was designated an Architectural Conservation Area in the Dublin City Development Plan 2005- 2011.

Time Out, Lonely Planet, Condé Nast Traveler and Tripadvisor all recognise and enthusiastically celebrate Dublin's Capel Street as a place to watch for its edgy, freestyle character and atmosphere. Time Out placed it in the top 20 "Coolest Streets in the World" in 2022. Capel Street was pedestrianised in 2022, and is now a riot of optimistic grass-roots development in colourful, experimental mixed and micro-business uses. It is the longest traffic-free street in the city, an ideal spot for hanging out. The place sports vibrant whirls of culture, the best and most unusual eateries in Dublin. There is genuinely always something new to discover on Capel Street.



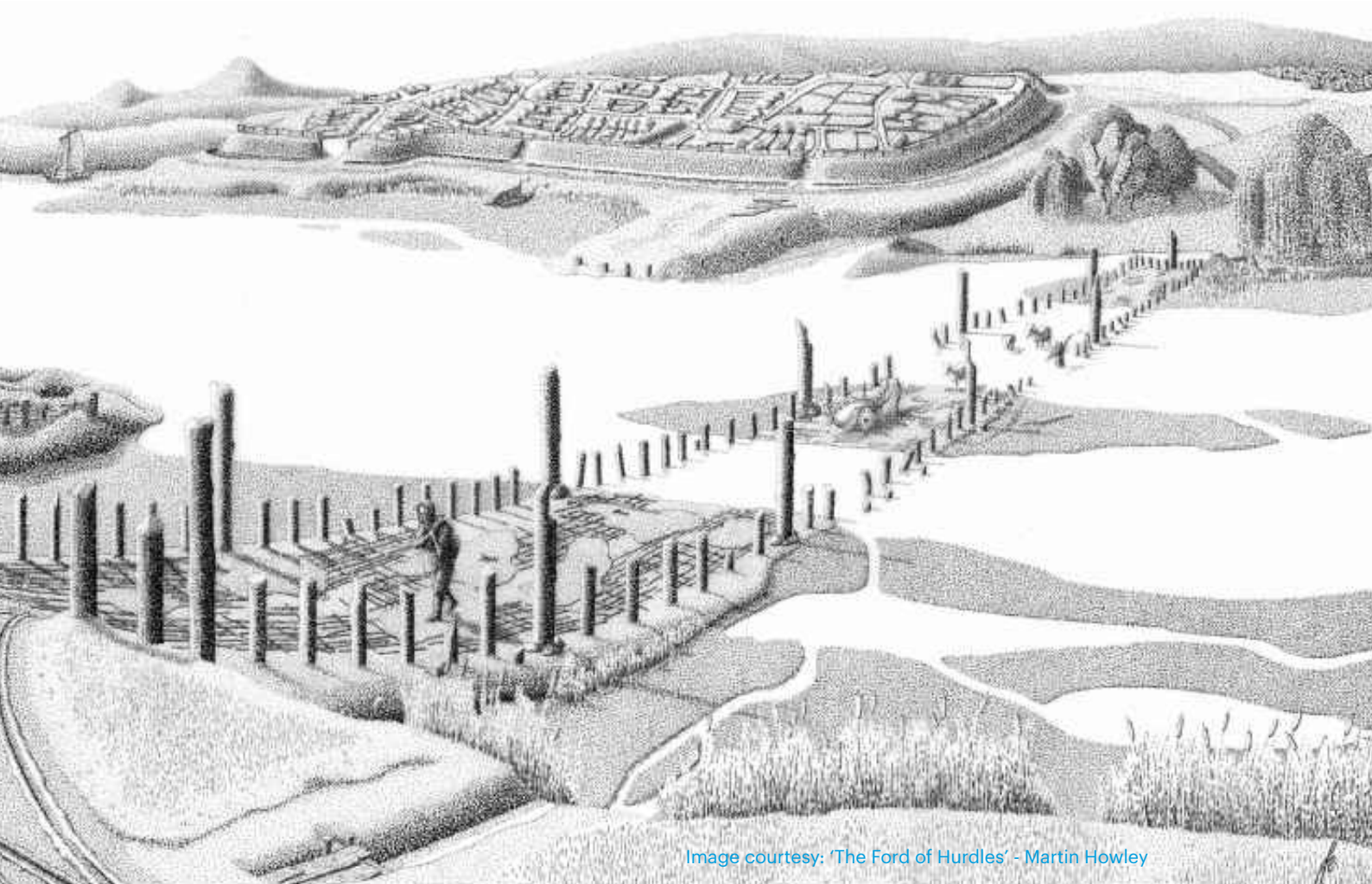


Image courtesy: 'The Ford of Hurdles' - Martin Howley

## Location, Location, Location

Outhouse can be seen through this lens as symbolically resonant in the whole Dublin story. Capel Street channels both the identity of the ancient river ford (Áth Cliath) origin story, and the heart of the Viking settlement (Dubh Linn) where the street ends. It is an archetype of the earliest articulation of Dublin's iconic pattern language. Created by colonising English overlords on lands stolen from the church – previously appropriated from swathes of marshes fished or worked by native clans and Viking raiders – it all makes for a progressive, creative tension. In ways this potted history captures – even in a context of bitter conflict at times – how humanity intermingles, relates, survives and connects with natural resources, social capital and authoritative forces, to conceive and develop lasting works of exemplary creative endeavour.

The power of this paradox is an arresting metaphor for a rarely articulated reality of Dublin's identity. Outhouse inhabits a spot with direct connection to historically distinct and divided societies - yet these energies yielded to history substantial, elegant and iconic fruits of their pooled efforts and labours. Dublin's complex character continues to evolve from a melting-pot of people of disparate origins, circumstances, opportunities, and colours. Their existence could only arise from a commitment to peaceful integration and mutual understanding between them.

*Perhaps it is no coincidence that the move of Outhouse to Capel Street in 2001 aligns uncannily with an unprecedented surge in interest, style, currency, and glamour on this street like no other in the world.*

# Diagnosis

## 105 Capel Street

Jervis' syndicate of private investors turned vast tracts of land outside medieval Dublin into a brisk profitable enterprise. Dublin's population rose from ~6,000 to ~60,000 over the 17th Century. Ormond Quay, the first stone quay in the city, was a precedent for all future city quays. Jervis' Estate at Mary's Abbey was the most ambitious urban scheme of its times: a Renaissance-style rectangular grid, commenced in 1675 with a street named for viceroy Arthur Capel, Earl of Essex. Essex Bridge (renamed Grattan Bridge, 1874), the most easterly crossing and main thoroughfare, connected the north and south sides of the Liffey. "The pleasing grandeur of Capel Street, resplendent with its fashionable Dutch-style mansions" became the most stylish city address, and was fully built up by 1710. Among the most impressive of the Capel Street mansions was home to William Conolly (1662 – 1729), speaker of the Irish House of Commons. This palace stood on the full site of 103 – 108 Capel Street. Conolly, then Ireland's richest human, purchased the luxury residence in 1707, where he lived "in commanding elegance, his brilliant vermillion and gold state coach adding distinction to the neighbourhood" until his death in 1729. No known illustrations of the house survive, but 1756 maps show it to be a grand, wide, symmetrical, Renaissance-style structure with substantial gardens. In 1771, Thomas Conolly sold the site to Ralph Ward, Surveyor General, who demolished the residence and built six terraced houses in its place. Outhouse is located at 105 Capel Street, part of this symmetrical fourteen-bay terrace (103 – 108).

The six dwellings cover the site of one former mansion, yet still had grand proportions and intricate masonry details. Those surviving give a good indication of character of the prestigious residential north end of Capel Street, with plots reflecting the layout of that period, considered to be "extremely rare, and among the earliest instances of formal street design in Dublin". (C. Casey). The houses form a unified terrace, with 105 & 106 making an advanced six-bay centre piece, each three bays wide. They were flanked by more modest four-bay wings: 103 & 104 (now lost) and 107 & 108 (greatly modified). Ward developed several houses at Merrion Square North in the 1760s, these showcase identical rusticated granite façades, a feature unique to here and 105/106 Capel Street.

105 Capel Street is a large three-bay, four-storey-over-raised-basement townhouse of national architectural significance (NIAH), with surviving enriched hand-modelled Rococo stucco work, cornices and ceiling roses; original intact room layouts, original doorsets and many original 18th Century windows, and an original open staircase with carved tread ends and internal joinery of fine architectural quality. The roof is double-pile slate, hipped to north, concealed behind rebuilt brick parapet walls with granite coping, lead hopper and downpipes breaking through and shared stepped brick chimney stacks to the south party wall with clay pots. External walls are brick in Flemish bond with recent lime pointing. Continuous granite sill at first floor with brick apron over granite platband framing rusticated granite moulded stonework to ground. Granite plinth over rendered raised basement walls. Gauged brick flat-arched window openings with flush rendered reveals, granite sills and timber sliding sash windows. Window panes are 3/3 to third floor, 6/6 to front elevation with contemporary full glass inserts at ground floor level. The rear is partly rebuilt with unsympathetic fenestration. Arch-headed front door ope, with moulded stone

surrounds, recent double-leaf glazed timber doors and plain fanlight. Access over replaced granite flagged platform with single-nose step, bridging basement. Basement area reopened in a recent phase of works and is enclosed by new iron railings on a moulded granite plinth with iron gate. Steel steps provide access to basement.

Occupancy on the site has seen significant turnover over the centuries. The original mansion, thought to date from 1676, was bought by Conolly in 1707 from Mr. Barry, and demolished in 1770. No. 105 Capel Street's notable tenures included Corbet's Hotel (1774 - 1810), where Robert Emmet planned his ill fated uprising in 1803, providing lodgings for the upper ranking generals of the French Army who came in support. From 1810 - 1910 it was mostly active in the spirits trade, with the Drake family Vintners (1810 - 1845) and Begg Brothers, in-situ for almost a century (1808 - 1905). The 20th Century saw it change hands ten times, with main tenants Magill (chandlers, confectioners and stationers, 1910 - 1960), Cosmon Ltd. (typesetters, 1965 - 1980) and Capel Upholsterers (retailers, 1990 - 2001). Outhouse took over the premises as its home in 2001. Although the house suffered extensive alterations over the years, miraculously much has survived, including the original first floor Piano Nobile, with its grand salon overlooking the street, exceptional carvings, staircases, details, stucco plaster, ornamentation and rusticated stone at ground level. All contribute greatly to the architectural variety and historical layering of this historic street, show clearly its former character as a grand residential property and give us great insight into patterns of living in the city in the late 18th Century.

## Potential for Renewal

Our task to examine the physical infrastructure of Outhouse assets, in parallel with the emerging strategy and scoping, is to ensure suitability for the next chapter of its maturing life. We studied context, setting, spatial layout and fabric of structures, along with accommodation distribution and capacity, to determine whether they are, together and separately, fit for projected current, future and long-term vision and purpose.

105 Capel Street is one of Dublin's finest historic 250+ year-old townhouses. The house, much modified and often neglected, has survived with remarkable integrity and recently enjoyed renewed, extensive and careful restoration under supervision of one of Ireland's most eminent Grade I Conservation Architects Kevin Blackwood. As Outhouse transforms along an aspirational path to be a leading cultural, social and supportive hub for the LGBTQ+ community, the building needs to adapt to ensure every spatial inch counts practically, functionally, aesthetically. It needs to achieve not only basic, but enhanced levels of compliance with codes and regulations, albeit allowing for certain dispensations and adjustments peculiar to such delicate, historic and important protected structure.

A fully inclusive and expansive project to achieve and service all goals, ambitions and objectives set out in the overarching Strategy 2023 – 2028 would take several years. Such an endeavour will require considerable investment, perhaps exceeding €5M in raised funding. This can be properly pursued only against a backdrop of thoughtful, expert guidance, master-planning and clarity. An orderly design process must be fully acquainted with, and mindful of, proper assignment, planning, procurement, implementation, risk, sequencing, safety, phasing, and delivery procedures.



Our recommendation is that first of many stages of work consequent on this Strategy includes a schedule, budget, procurement model, and plan for a comprehensive and inclusive feasibility study. This study will run in parallel with a first phase of works: a modest building improvements and accessibility plan, to address the centre's pressing priorities and urgent needs.

*Whether the longer-term ambition can be achieved at 105 Capel Street, or be better served by a relocation or hybrid approach under many combinations or permutations, was one of the first broad-brush exercises to test in this high-level evaluation of condition, capacity, and conceptual opportunity for Outhouse.*

It is easy to demonstrate how historic symbolism of the place where Outhouse sits and works is extraordinary, not just in terms of cultural significance, but also resonant with the values and mandate of the institution itself. Alignment with - and ignition of - the vibrant conduit of electric social energy that is Capel Street, is further enhanced by the building's proximity to an emerging Cultural Quarter, with a focus on reframing/launch of contemporary northside institutions such as Hugh Lane Gallery, James Joyce Centre, Abbey and Gate theatres, Poetry Ireland, Dublin City Library, Parnell Square, Henrietta Street, Irish Writer's Museum and Centre, Collins' Barracks, and many of the city's finest industrial heritage museums and innumerable other wonderful places of culture, heritage and legacy. The setting is perfectly positioned to embrace, in some instances, and magnetically attract in others, a collaborative connectivity and even direct co-location with like-minded community services along Capel Street itself, a haven - home as it is to iconic LGBTQ+ venues and a firm favourite of the queer community in Ireland. At the forefront of consideration is the real opportunity to raise funding not only to support goals, policies and objectives of Outhouse, but also to align

with bodies committed to preserving and conserving our national heritage, e.g. the Irish Heritage Trust, Heritage Council, Irish Georgian Society, Landmark Trust, An Taisce, the Historic Structures Fund, Built Heritage Investment Scheme, Section 482 of the Taxes Consolidation Act, etc. Capital fundraising campaigns commencing now will be refined as future studies narrow down and identify actual possibilities rolling out of various multifaceted deliberations on direction initiated here in this vision piece. As studies progress, it became clear that the long plan will take time, expert interrogation and shrewd scrutiny. This pointed towards a short-term project, making a new chapter in the old house's life an early imperative.

The plan for the short-term promises therefore to make a lasting and significant impact on the cultural and social life of the community, as well as significantly bolstering regeneration of the North end of Capel Street, with what will in effect be a hand-picked selection of disparate micro-projects, each designed to address a pressing or urgent need or essential obligation for the building's integrity, its users' safety, comfort, health or the accessibility of its many functions for all.

## Conservation Stimulus: Waking an Urban Dream

Adapting a Georgian townhouse to contemporary uses can be more readily attainable than might be expected. The prevailing perception is that no problem arising can ever be economically answered: this drives many to abandon older properties, allowing them to fall into decline, with whole units or upper storeys empty. Often, clumsy solutions are forced onto fragile infrastructural ecosystems via misguided conversions or misappropriated renovations. The old city suffers daily assaults thus on its authenticity, and regulation is not adequately adapted to suit the more brittle but brilliant context of elderly structures – leading to a massive failure

in imagination. In the Strategic Plan, the team approach to the house was with a critical mindset, fully prepared to find in favour of disentangling the organisation from the old residence. As the project unfolded it took time to see both the Georgian City and Capel Street as among Dublin's most potent and magical resources. An impetus follows: to encourage a view to restoring and using glorious spaces within the house in a new way, transforming them from staid, inflexible, stagnant spaces into a cultural beacon, a hub of diverse colour.

This involves pushing boundaries of capacity to embrace contemporary interventions and needs fully, which will allow it to perform in line with an overall Vision. It involves acknowledging, and addressing, a list of challenges:

- meeting objectives, policies, development standards, use zoning objectives, etc. as set out in the statutory city development plan;
- compliance with building and safety related codes, standards, statutes and regulations;
- identifying constraints and limitations of possibilities for intervention and altering of protected structures to meet individual requirements;
- overcoming mainstream perception that protected structures are impossible to adapt, thus causing owners to question the value of any investment;
- negotiating through heavy obligations in statutory compliance for what may be a modest scale intervention;
- working within the wider urban environment, including transport, accessibility, public realm, support and the potential helplessness or isolation of those burdened with the care of and attention to these structures.

*105 Capel Street is an old master with shabby credentials – but it is a jewel in the city crown.*

Architectural interventions must and should be honest, humble, and modest. The layout is simple: two main reception rooms around a lofty double-height staircase hall with many strange things undone over years, some added for good measure; a series of spaces riddled with secrets and mysterious boltholes and cubbies. At rear, anomalies and puzzles around use, ownership, edge and boundary belie that profound opportunity lies in solving these riddles, along with potential of partnerships with neighbours and friends.

Envisaging Capel Street as a framework - a ribbon of co-located modern spaces for the LGBTQ+ community – with individual former houses now opening out to the street - is, in a way making the original intent of these houses sing with their original voices, albeit in a different key, but one fully in harmony with the way the old pattern language can be used and reimagined. The variable house types along the length of the street supports this idea, many houses are already in public or semi-public use, some with built-over gardens and yards. There is a tug, not least due to traction in the late 20th Century at proximate locations, to open backlots and mews to absorb part of a cultural function connecting older associated out-buildings back through to the primary street. And that street, a dramatic linear stage, now pedestrianised, is integral to the house – a place to be claimed and inhabited.

*It was a compelling early imperative in the strategy for Outhouse revival – that this house must reach – OUT.*

Metaphorically, yes, but physically, also, yes. So many other units on the street have claimed their slice of the urban realm. It is something not difficult to do, with the unusual anticipated result of a most likely delighted public authority, rather than a reticent or forbidding one. The Work proposed as part of this plan for 105 fits completely into the Capel current and flow, throws open doors, brings people in, a model prototype. Looking at existing assignment of spaces within inspires a kind of cross-section, ephemeral response – theatrical, dramatic independent spaces at basement, third floor retained as the organisation’s administrative “brain” – ground/ first floors reimagined gently for tailored public/ semi-public use, middle floor working hard in a multi-functional way: co-working, collaboration crucible, forge – focus on campaign, advocacy, co-located services: functions, alignment and co-operative partnership.

*It is apparent that three things are beyond question: however fine this building is, it is failing its community as an accessible space, a habitable space, a truly safe space.*

Even as it offers refuge, sanctuary and succour, it does not allow the mobility-impaired, physically or sensory compromised individual to access its essential services. It has not finished keeping out the damp, and though ready in case of a disaster such as fire, flood or displacement to a satisfactory extent, there are refinements just beyond reach – the result is uncomfortable.

And so the first phase is one – not of wild vision and castles in the air – but of complex technical problem-solving of a cranial kind, making small, simple things work better, shaping spaces to fit the wretched or ebullient visitor in equal measure, allowing such

moments occupy the space without negatively impacting each other. It is a project of many tiny actions and moves – one of patient, straightforward conservation, of micro, tender repair, of shuffling existing offering cards to better fit their setting, of overlaying smart services and sustainable features driving energy conservation and green philosophy, and more than anything it is a language of inclusion, inclusion, inclusion.

Key moves include integrating wheelchair access within the open front area to provide universal access to ground/ basement, a review of organisational layout, consolidating café and library and refitting to optimise zoning and maximise benefits of such uses, review of sanitary space provision, granular study of spare areas to rear and establishing early sustainable measures to help diminish both carbon footprint and energy spend.

In future, the vision opens up, embracing diverse possibilities beyond known and unknown constraints. There is a joyful “what-if” feel to explorations that venture out, well past the immediate needs horizon. Without dreaming, there can be no innovation, without inspiration, no realisation. Looking beyond the confines of 105, whether down to street level where the pavement begs for a live connection promising to be a hive of social activity, out back to the lanes and mews to carve out and under, with built-over gardens, secluded courts and woven magical shared adventures – engaging with the magnificent structure that is the former Library Reading Hall alongside at rear - creating a new vernacular, or simply working with poché spaces in miniature to make smoothly interleaving – a solid horseshoe brick access lift climbs the rear elevation – a sequence of moves in a game of urban chess, the idiom becomes inevitable, the crossing of rivers of resistance emerges even as the carefully placed stepping stones are laid. Let us Play.

## Differentiation

Having examined Outhouse places and spaces and identifying their values, opportunities and challenges, the next stage of the Strategy's research sought to identify best global models in practice, to compare & contrast with our own emerging agenda. An extensive array of architectural, conservation, cultural, community, social, and LGBTQ+ award- winning and notably recent case studies were examined in detail over several months of immersive study. This intensive, constructive learning exercise set benchmarks of bold ambition, profound wisdom, quality, and efficiency. Absorbing other expertise in analogous briefs provokes the useful, beautiful, efficient and possible in our solutions. The study of contemporary projects of similar scale, setting and nature across all cultures is enriching, and empowering. We selected five projects to illustrate a cross-section of best precedent from which we have gained so much insight, inspiration and, at times, cautionary tales.

### Sean O'Casey Community Centre, East Wall, D3 : O'donnell & Tuomey Architects

This building provides social resources and civic representation for the community of East Wall, and includes a theatre, library, café, creche, community, educational, and recreational facilities. The site fits on cleared ground of former backlands buildings, taken over for community and sports facilities. The project captures energies of existing community activities in a new vernacular, a place apart integrated with a larger, strong-patterned historic consistency, a knot in the grain of the given. Four blocks emerge from a single storey plinth cut to form four courtyard gardens. Three sizes of circular windows and roof-lights perforate the outer corrugated concrete shell: childcare, community, social, sports, and drama facilities are the functional components of the brief. Courtyards provide diagonal transparencies between different centre activities, connecting old with young, relating passive and active recreations. An introverted organism, sub-divided in quarters for operational purposes, expressed as a singular element in urban landscape.

## Anita May Rosenstein LGBTQ Centre, La: Leong Leong Architects

Curved glass, white stucco and punctured courtyards work together to form this facility for Los Angeles' LGBTQ+ community, by architecture firms Leong Leong and KFA. The Anita May Rosenstein Campus is a major milestone for such centres worldwide, offering programmes and services to 42,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (queer) youth and seniors. The bespoke facility arose from detailed planning, funding and viability studies culminating in an architectural competition for a 17,066 sqm campus. On Hollywood's Santa Monica Boulevard, the campus integrates with LA's LGBT centre The Village, comprising theatre, galleries, offices, meeting spaces. The complex provides a youth centre, drop-in centre, academy, career services, a senior centre, and dormitories sleeping up to 100 homeless people, housed within a series of stucco and glass volumes. "It's a sanctuary space ... but also an institutional interface to the city," says Leong. "The design negotiates two types of presence ... we saw the project as a mosaic of a multiplicity of identities." Courts and solids interact to break up programmes ensuring different groups and distinct identities are offered plenty of bespoke ownership and privacy. "The building meets many needs for a variety of groups - by far the largest is youth services, including emergency/ transitional housing, counselling, employment, and educational services," says project manager Ottinger. "Organising these spaces required us to balance security, identity and privacy with access and connectivity."

## Goethe Institut, Merriion Square, D2: Henschion Reuter Architects

The Goethe Institut was split between a Georgian house on Merriion Square, for cultural programmes, and another Georgian on Fitzwilliam Square, housing the language school. This project relocated both functions to the Merriion Square premises, to facilitate better interaction between students and the cultural programmes the institute offers. The house is a protected structure built between 1780 and 1786. It was in reasonable condition, but was extensively restored according to best conservation practice. The radical, refreshing new building is multi-storey, complex, and expertly integrated into its setting. It consists of a sub-parterre level over most of the site, a half level above Stephen's Place to rear, with a split level three-storey mews above. The new building provides seven classrooms, a theatre/ auditorium and accommodation for teachers and administration staff. A new garden is provided on podium level between existing house and extension in line with historical precedent. The new building is designed to service the existing house. It all forms a unified plot consistent with Georgian arrangement of House/ Garden/ Courtyard/ Mews/ Courtyard. The combined project achieves a BER rating of A3, setting a new sustainability standard for a protected structure of this era. To mitigate scale of mews development, the form makes material distinction between solid base and the emergent crystalline form, glazed with bespoke vertically-spanning high-performance triple-glazing with a layer of copper mesh between outer layers of glass. This provides a vision screen and acts as a solar protection layer. The building reads, at times, as glass box, at others, a metal box. At night the building reads differently as sections of the box are opaque and others are transparent.



## Poetry Ireland Centre, 11 Parnell Sq, D1: McCullough Mulvin Architects

With Ireland a nation long-lauded for poetic heroes, it's fitting that the art form should be given an official headquarters in one of Dublin's most historic 250-year-old town houses on the city's first Georgian square. Poetry Ireland, the Irish Heritage Trust and the Irish Landmark Trust secured planning permission to restore No. 11 Parnell Square to become Poetry Ireland Centre. A creative and cultural hub, it will house custom-designed Seamus Heaney Working Poetry Library, performance and dramatic spaces, a workshop area for all ages, offices, café and more. €1 million in funds has been raised to date, and Poetry Ireland are leading a capital fundraising campaign to raise the remaining €4 million to launch the next chapter in the building's life. The restoration promises to give a strong and important uplift to literary life in the country, a major boost to regeneration in Dublin's north inner city. Initially a private residence in the city's once most coveted residential area, No. 11 was built by Luke Gardiner, among Georgian

Dublin's visionary developers. Among its many guises since included The National Club, frequented by WB Yeats' muse Maud Gonne, featured in Yeats' famous poem 'September 1913'. A superb council chamber is setting for 'Ivy Day in the Committee Room', in James Joyce's iconic 'Dubliners'. The restoration, led by McCullough Mulvin Architects, includes extensive conservation-led refurbishments of the house. The new identity will see the basement function as a restaurant/ café, ground floor and first floor housing Poetry Ireland Centre, of elegant library, performance and workshop spaces, a café and bookshop, and the jewel in the crown, the Seamus Heaney Working Poetry Library.

"This project is about dualities and layers – using old things in new ways, reading new things through a lens of existing geographies. Without extending analogies, it seeks to construct a world in space much as poetry constructs a sequence of words and silences, working to find a reductive and essential nature that can express clarity and emotional depth without overt representation." – Niall McCullough, McCullough Mulvin Architects.

## Dilemma

As the purpose, values, scope, and potential growth pathway of Outhouse became clear over the course of the Strategy, it became also clear there were limitations on what the single house at 105 Capel Street could, in any but the most modest provision – truly offer within its four walls. The first step in describing the dilemma is, therefore to define the role of Outhouse as an optimal matrix – a multifaceted, multi-functional organic matrix of interdependent parts (see diagram below).

As capacity will always be limited by size, shape and layout of spaces at Capel Street, the team explored alternative courses to assess for ease of conversion to an affordable, timely future for the Outhouse centre. Options explored were as follows:

## Option Zero: Consolidate / Dissolve

Option to explore whether, in essence, Outhouse might be better served to dispose of its primary asset, in favour of a more consolidated (with other LGBTQ+) merger-style manoeuvre, or focus entirely on making a perfect, virtual world of hang-outs and support for the community to access, engage and thrive.

*Recommendation:* features of this strand are worth exploring, but it is contrary to core values, legacy, and responsibility of Outhouse to select this as a solution in its entirety.

### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF OUTHOUSE?





## Option 1: Stay

Explores ways to remain in situ. In the end this amounts only to a constraining and refining brief, keeping Outhouse boutique, making it work at micro-scale, perfecting the house as an elegant iconic place of historic legacy benefit - with an elevated and – inevitably – exclusive feel.

*Recommendation:* This captures the very welcome and solid acknowledgement of the celebration of Outhouse in-situ, its legacy, archive, library, historic records, and materials charting its naissance, growth and many notable achievements over time. However, it is felt that option 1 is too narrow, that containment may infer inevitably a higher “quality” perception, perhaps implied aloofness and/or higher “price tag”. This is not compatible with Outhouse values of inclusion of all and therefore not a preferred direction.

## Option 2: Franchise

An option of many ideas – e.g. branded “Outhouse” franchise across smaller units, distributed around the city, region or country; possible partnership franchises in tandem with like-minded organisations in a network of interconnected, co-located or dispersed spaces. All benefit from shared facilities, services and activities in interdependent and collaborative way.

*Recommendation:* This approach requires detailed liaison at a high level of interaction, connectivity, co-operation and shared mission appraisal with others. The creation of engaged network bracelets of shared interconnected assets, supports, services, facilities and events is a worthy target and no mean feat. The option relies heavily on positive human engagement and involves too many assumptions to be the sole priority at this stage in its own right. Too much focus on fully integrating all entities in the community may result in a splintering of identity, and would be best considered as part of, rather than the underpinning essence of, a holistic strategy.

## Option 3: Lease

An option suggested as a short-term solution, to take a premises for a quick bridging period while a tailored, concise, modest body of works is assigned for the main house, to bring it through a transformative change and establish it as a compliant, acceptably accessible, safe, habitable, secure and fit-for-purpose facility.

*Recommendation:* This option is a likely requisite – a short-term project in the existing building will be required for any direction of the plan.

## Option 4: Sell

A number of iterations of this option include:

**4.1** Sell & lease another property long-term, and focus on delivery of services. Would this be another heritage property? A large modern commercial floor in a serviced office?

**4.2** Sell & purchase a high-performing alternative space of an affordable scale in an appropriate location, and enjoy such a lower-maintenance property for the future?

**4.3** Sell and buy a brownfield site, and build a bespoke facility for Outhouse, within the vibrant, transport-linked, accessible, and resonant city centre?

**4.4** Sell, buy, and build on a site on the fringes of the city, in up-and-coming immediate outer ring? More affordable, perhaps, but less accessible?

**4.5** Sell, buy, and build on a greenfield site in a suburb or even more remote location, to make Outhouse a destination centre, rather than a physical drop-in, accessible centre? - this changes the concept of Outhouse at a very core level.

## Direction: Recommended Option 5

In all options considered, we bedded design ruminations in context of the concurrent progression of the overarching Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028. For each option, we discussed and went out seeking prospects for partnerships, collaborations, conveyancing, and other mechanisms including detailed grant and funding potential. All these ideas and complexities are likely to be key to unlocking the most exciting vision for the future – whether heritage bodies that hold properties or purchase sites for the benefit of the city and for future generations to enjoy (e.g. Heritage Council, Landmark Trust, Office of Public Works, Dublin City Council) or like-minded institutions in nearby locations, or owners/occupiers in close proximity with striking, fit-for-purpose assets that might not be achieving full potential.

Lease and/or selling out options are all worth considering fully. Many real properties to let or on the market were discovered, visited, and surveyed at high-level with a view to suitability, including sites on Capel Street, in the inner Georgian city, in serviced office space, in the outer suburbs and beyond. It was clear that fully parsing this process could be a long one and should be accompanied by sufficient due diligence to ensure if this becomes an intention, it is worth a strong pursuit and will form part of a feasibility stage.

*It is a high-risk strategy to jump quickly in a direction of disposal of an asset when it holds so much latent, albeit subjective, value, in a location rapidly climbing the ladder of visible, tangible desirability, affluence, and security.*

A stronger comfort might attend to using the asset to unleash some capital opportunity for immediate access to resources.

We became aware of deep, strong ties of the LGBTQ+ community to 105 Capel Street that are emotional, profound, and heartfelt. Since the turn of the century, Outhouse at 105 has given a sense of home, identity and ownership to so many. This resonates with the community (who own the asset, held in trust). The house and grounds are part of the lore and legacy of the Outhouse story - this cannot and should not be casually dismissed.

Finally it was determined that while time and cost are “known knowns” parts of a relocation strategy, it remains obvious that extremely careful planning under the stewardship of skilled and appropriate expertise is always required. There remain many unknowns beyond what is measurable, technical, or tactical – uncertainty that may be unpredictably damaging and volatile. This urges a steady approach in any rush to seek alternatives, when such a magnificent piece already exists in hand. Factors including, inter alia, rates, service charges, utilities, inflation, conveyancing, hidden risks, human relations and other factors must be considered as wild cards, with so far arcane impacts it was deemed that given immediate priorities on site, these should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

*The more detailed feasibility study will identify, capture, and isolate the best of the tabled options, or a hybrid of options, across a longer-term, phased future plan.*

This strategy attempts therefore to describe at a broad granular level the first step of a longer process. The “Building Improvement and Accessibility Plan” – allows for the parallel commissioning of a Feasibility Study to establish proper mechanisms and plan for future stages. We have dreamed wild and wide here, and have offered tentative, rich, imaginary snapshots of what a phased, far-reaching, high-stakes result might look like, to whet the appetite for what may lie ahead. Orderly and responsible stewardship can show the way into an amazing adventure - a future worth fighting for.

*And so, Option 5 emerges, a kind of hybrid version of all previous options, one that allows for all immediate needs of the community to be met, in a thoughtful, controlled, collaborative fashion, leaning into relations with partners and friends, bringing the city and its own distinct problems to rise and shine inexorably alongside the community we serve.*

# Design

## Feasibility Study

To fulfil its blossoming ambition, Outhouse will require a creative expansion plan, one that will be a composite of spaces and places, developing an expansive, multi-purpose, public facility for the LGBTQ+ Community—that is grounded and centred in its small but physically exquisite, environmentally challenging, yet beloved 105 Capel Street. Our proposal sets out a preliminary scoping brief for a comprehensive feasibility study not only to explore the many innovative, responsive, and highly sustainable solutions to challenges of the organisation, its operations and site, but to actively engage the LGBTQ+ community even further in the process to determine appetite for far-reaching ideas as well as dynamic programmes that will serve its diverse community.

Before persuing any design schemes suggested or optional directions outlined here, it is imperative to craft an engagement process to allow the design team opportunities to listen, learn, and respond to the LGBTQ+ community in the region. This process will familiarise an expert design team more deeply with the site, its context, its unique challenges and opportunities, and allow them to better understand the people using the place.

Through a series of informal interviews and workshops, our team developed this vision statement, spatial programmes, and short-term concept for transformational change.

The nuts-and-bolts observations led to an urgent identified need for small scale but mighty interventions, and these are captured here in an outline brief for a Building Improvement and Accessibility Plan. As well as looking to refurbish and improve areas of safety, accessibility, and integrity, this will look at a gentle reordering of space use within the building to optimise layout efficiencies and yield a more economical and sustainable place.

## The Building Improvement & Accessibility Plan

Adapting 105 to maximise its performance and fitness for purpose as a contemporary community use will not be simple and will at times involve robust conversations that need to consider all requirements in full context of each other to make an appropriate correct selection. Conservation of the built fabric and features must not trump safety or acceptable standards of living or risk in daily operations. However there are still huge justifications required to make any intervention that damages, removes or remodels ancient crafted fabric or handiwork. The proposal for the Building Improvement and Accessibility Plan seeks to address the shortfall of the building as follows:

### Part A: Structure

Blackwood Architects recently completed a series of interventions in the house, but structural appraisal and rescue operations are still ongoing. The house appears to be relatively untroubled by settlement or structural risk, but full structural assessments and designs must precede and accompany any works, carried out by an engineer suitably qualified and experienced to work in the conservation setting.

### Part B: Fire Safety

Blackwood Architects successfully secured a fire certificate for the change of use in the house which was a difficult, admirable accomplishment. The BIAP will assess any unfinished business in execution of these works and reassess potential for considerations to require additional inputs from, modifications to or reapplications to the building control authority but will limit such liaison if possible.

### **Part C: Resistance to Weather & Ground Moisture**

The BIAP examines areas where water ingress appears to be an issue. From preliminary inspections of the property, albeit superficial, much of this risk was eliminated during the design and execution of former works. The plan suggests appropriate treatments, principles of prevention and details interventions to deal with lingering or new risk for water ingress due to weather or rising damp within the building. A notable concept in the BIAP will be opening areas that have yet to be fully explored, including an area at rear of “Theatre B”, one behind the single WC at basement, and an area under street, probably a former coal store. These may enhance possibilities for the plan.

### **Part D: Materials and Workmanship**

The BIAP will strictly follow protocols, codes and charters of architectural conservation in how existing fabric, components, materials, and elements are treated and worked. Any new features or items are to be inserted with due care and attention to the relevant guidance nationally, internationally and as set out in the Irish Heritage Advice series. Of the various levels of intervention, preservation and conservation methods will be preferred and any restoration, renewal, reconstruction or rehabilitation methods will be carefully recorded, designed to reflect the contemporary era of installation and, where possible, will be reversible and/or will occur independent of historic fabric or envelope. Facadism and retrofit will be strictly avoided, maintenance and repair will reflect the conservation context and sustainability will acknowledge and prioritise the heritage status at all times. Adaptive Reuse will be an applied use protocol. Conservation Method Statements will be provided as part of tender documents and suitably skilled Contractors will be pre-approved - this will apply to all consultants, artists, specialists, subcontractors and craftspeople.

### **Part E: Sound**

Although this section of regulation applies to dwellings only, the BIAP will recognise the multi-functional uses of the space and ensure specific use types and specific users and/or tenancies are not unduly disturbed by transmission of sound via building fabric. Grant aid for folding acoustic partitions separating two basement spaces was made during the Strategy plan period.

### **Part F: Ventilation**

The passage of fresh air and removal of stale air have become so much more vital in any building following devastation caused by the 2019 pandemic. It is imperative that clean air changes can be achieved in all habitable rooms and Outhouse is already engaged in ensuring levels of purity in the airspace. The BIAH will continue to ensure ventilation is adequate, achieved by natural and passive means where possible. The use of appropriate materials to avoid condensation, rot or dew point water damage is critical in Georgian buildings and fabric must be permitted to breathe.

### **Part G: Hygiene**

Often simple to design in modern developments, space planning of internal arrangements to meet sanitary requirements within historic plan layouts/rooms needs careful consideration, in particular location of service routes both horizontally and vertically. Stacked configurations should be considered to rationalise routes and lessen impact. Placing facilities to rear will, where feasible, lead to more acceptable servicing routes. Position and adequacy of bathrooms in existing facilities is deeply compromised, space is short for adequate response and there may be a requirement for novel solutions here to ensure that the new building, when complete, can cater to all.



**Part H: Drainage**

Spatial planning of interiors to comply with regulations in historic rooms and plan layouts need careful consideration. Planning drainage routes horizontally and vertically should be thought through carefully. Stacked configurations are preferred to rationalise routes and lessen impact. Locating functions to the rear of the property leads to more acceptable solutions for pipe runs, internal and external. Use of vacuum drainage systems inside a building can allow flexibility in planning for bathrooms and kitchens, and, critically, greater flexibility for pipework which can reduce interventions and impacts on building fabric. As negative air pressure is used in small pipes, waste water can be routed vertically or transported horizontally around obstacles in the floor depth. Pumps - location needs consideration and there will be greater need for maintenance. These matters will be examined during the feasibility study stage.

**Part J: Heat Producing Appliances**

This section includes a close look at how heating and cooling is produced throughout the building with a view to finding ways to support and decrease use of fossil fuels, using solar power, electric power, and other alternatives where possible. The BIAP will look at air supply, the discharge of products of combustion, protection of the asset and fabric, provision of fuel storage and in particular guidelines for the operation and maintenance of hearths, flues, chimneys, linings and exhaust.

**Part K: Stairways, Ramps and Guards**

Part K does not apply specifically to existing buildings subject to material change of use, but it is noted Parts A, B and Part M refer to Part K and compliance may, consequentially, require compliance with Part K. A further consideration is Health and Safety implications of low sills to openable up and down sash windows. This common scenario in Georgian Townhouses (particularly at ground/first floor levels), may require restriction of window opening, or discrete protective guardrails. The latter may be problematic with decorative window surrounds or operating shutters.

**Part L: Conservation of Fuel and Energy**

Part L compliance for protected structures that are subject to material changes is challenging. Basic guidance is not sufficient for historic fabric of traditionally solid wall, breathable construction. Insulating to achieve required standards must consider vapour permeability and condensation risk among other factors. Determining whether to insulate any face, externally or internally, requires consideration to performance, durability and suitability to mitigate mould growth and condensation. Of particular concern is risk of systems/solutions that might comply at design/specification stage but provoke performance problems in real life. Specialist advice will be required. It may be appropriate to consult with Dublin City Council's Building Control Officer to seek a dispensation. Conservation of energy will be enhanced in the BIAP by installing solar panels, as acceptable to the conservation officer, on sun-facing inclines behind parapets.

### **Part M: Access for All – Practicability**

This section of the regulations is most vital for Outhouse and the lack of accessibility is in direct conflict with its core value of inclusivity. The townhouse is currently not accessible at all by wheelchair or the mobility impaired. While the Georgian Townhouse prototype generally represents a challenging building typology to achieve Part M compliance, with its multiple levels and relatively small floor area at each storey, introducing lifts or ramps often has limited application and can only in any case provide partial access. The BIAP here aims to partially resolve this critical issue right away at least in public spaces, in what appears to be an attainable, low- impact, appropriate and relatively reversible fashion. The single most challenging issue is dealing with changes in level with the inherent constraints of the building form and its land-locked setting. Where it is not practicable to implement TGD Part M, an assessment of alternative design must be considered to ensure proposals represent the most sensitive access solutions available. DCC does provide dispensations in this regard. However, in this instance the integration of a lift is not only desirable, it is vital. The layout of the typical Georgian townhouse does not make for the easy insertion of a standard passenger lift within the main body of the house and it is inefficient and impactful in terms of space lost to circulation, lobbies, etc. Subdivision of primary rooms to incorporate lift shafts and potential disruption of fabric proves difficult to resolve without adverse impacts.

### **Part M: Access for All –**

#### **The BIAP and the Long-Term Vision**

Successful examples of integration of wheelchair lifts in front basement areas include No 8 Merrion Square (HQ of the RIAI), where a small vertical lift serves basement and ground floor levels. In this way the building's public floors can be made accessible. The BIAP

proposes a similar feature, a fritted walkway connects the lift to the main entrance of the house. It involves replacing a recent steel stairs and may involve reshaping work to the area recently opened up outside the basement. It provides access to Outhouse, but also to the basement rooms of 106, where Insight Matters currently runs a similar programme of public/ showcase/ theatre use. Opening access between two properties is an intervention that not only requires careful consultation on conservation rationale but also on legal ramifications – but the two organisations would benefit greatly from the possibility of pooling resources and sharing spaces with each other. Outhouse enacting such an intervention is probably the only way that access can be re-established to the basement level of 106 Capel Street, but should the model work well, opportunities to enhance shared access to the rear of the property may be of similar benefit. Solutions for providing full lift access to the rear may arise if the feasibility study opens a clear pathway to a new redevelopment to the rear of 105 Capel Street. Should this succeed, in a wider development a lift will be accommodated in rear structures with links to the main house. The half level condition of the return limits viability and access would be provided in this instance through actual formal rooms themselves. In the longer-term vision, it is thought that a single passenger lift constructed as a simple snug extension to the rear of the house, integrated sympathetically via window openings, would be a fine contemporary addition. In situations where two or more houses may be ready to connect or share access, the introduction of a passenger lift may be practicable where it can be planned to serve a number of rooms at every floor on both sites. Early discussions with the neighbours at 106 yielded exciting possibilities in this regard.





Image Courtesy: George Boyle - A representation of the future universal access arrangements for 105 Capel Street



## Vision



An architectural rendering of a possible future vision for a world-class LGBTQ+ centre at 105 Capel Street.

The long-term vision for Outhouse emerges as a mesmerising range of possibilities to suggest a phased masterplan to chart course for a sophisticated, expansive and welcoming brand-new and connected centre of excellence for the LGBTQ+ community. This will likely involve a number of key properties and sites in its attainment, and will cover

an inevitable level of interface with other community institutions, funding bodies, city stewards, and the community itself. It is likely to involve a chain of physical settings and assets, and to blend outdoor, indoor and ethereal/virtual spaces and places into one unified whole. It may involve a large new build project on a city centre site, and it may involve

the acquisition, purchase, or partnership with owners of adjacent, proximate or otherwise strategically important landholdings. There are many strands to this and some will be easily eliminated, but others may be complicated to understand and extracting the real potential of each possibility will be the remit of our future feasibility study.

# Recommendation

In summary, this design process, over a four month period of research, challenge and analysis, including the discovery, diagnosis, differentiation, dilemma, direction, design and vision stages outlined here, has framed a design response of three imperatives that is framed in three considerations:

## **A. Consolidate**

Fix and optimise the existing asset while relocating essential services in the short term (3 - 5 years).

## **B. Complement**

Use vacant yet vibrant and potentially fabulous gaps in the city fabric to fill gaps in Outhouse programming, services, activities and functions, working closely with owners and stewards of the urban realm.

## **C. Collaborate**

Investigate mechanisms and partnerships to optimise such vacant, underutilised, derelict or wasted space - this may involve investigations and/or acquisitions of underachieving plots in the hinterland of the house, should this be appropriate and achievable.

The Design Response is, itself, in Three Imperative Components:

## **A. the Building Improvements and Accessibility Plan (3- 5 years)**

This involves immediate attendance to priority works and the assignment of resources to design and construct a small works contract to address lingering issues of compliance and accessibility in the house. The works will include, inter alia, a mechanism to provide full access to the ground floor and basement storeys of the house, essential repairs and upgrades to windows, doors, stairways, landings, linings, floors, walls and ceilings within the main house, installation of solar panels on the roof as permitted by the conservation agenda, and some spatial remodelling/ configuration/ reassignment of uses and attendant fitout to make the functions of Outhouse more readily visible, accessible and economical. This is estimated to cost in the region of €175,000 to achieve.

## **B. Feasibility Study (1 - 2 years)**

A process of further investigation of opportunities presented by this study and others that may arise in the course of such endeavour, led by an appropriately qualified team, tasked to parse the potential for Outhouse to become a world-class centre for LGBTQ+ community events, activities, functions and services.

## **C. Towards a Phased Model for a Future Exemplar**

The results of the Feasibility Study in form of a costed, scheduled, and peer-reviewed programme for realisation of the long-term Vision for Outhouse, including a Procurement, Implementation and Delivery Plan, set out across a phased stages across a period of ~ 10 - 15 years.







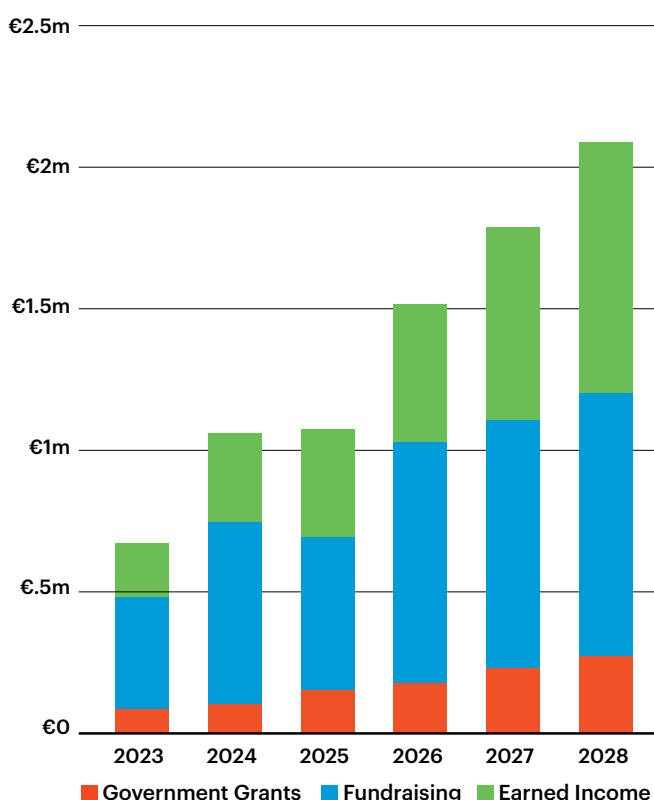
## Appendix 2: Funding Plan Overview

A detailed funding plan has been crafted as part of the overall planning process. A high-level summary of this follows.

To fund the ambitious plan, additional funding will need to be secured. This will be achieved across the board by

- increasing earned income from the café, venue hire, office rental, and ticket sales;
- increasing income from government sources; and
- setting up a professional in-house fundraising function.

**It is planned to increase income over the next five years from €700k in 2023 to €2.15m in 2027.**



### Earned Income

In summary, it is planned to significantly increase **café income** through expansion and change of pricing (moving from €30k income to €125k over five years). While **office rental** will remain stable, there should be additional scope for increased revenue from **events and venue hire** (moving from under €40,000 per annum to over €80,000 per annum).

### Government Funding

Regarding grant applications, the support from the Community Services Programme is assumed to stay as is. Still, there is scope to secure additional funding from the HSE (circa €350k per annum by 2027). There are plans to fund several of Outhouses's strategic initiatives by securing support from the Arts Council (€200k pa in years 4 and 5 to support the Culture Goals), the Disability Authority (€60k in 2024 once-off for access), the DRCD Community Centre's Investment and Improvement Fund (€118k for phase 1 building upgrade and repairs in 2024) and Dublin City Council (€100k in 2024 for a feasibility study on a future world-class LGBTQ+ centre).

### Fundraising

It is hoped that a small but mighty fundraising team, supported by the whole organisation, will lead to Outhouse becoming a strong and successful fundraising charity. An investment in fundraising has been made, and more will be required to enable it to achieve future targets.

Year one, in part, is an investment in creating the right policies, structures (e.g. a database), processes, and environment to help future fundraising more easily flourish. It will be a significant achievement and barometer of success when, as is envisaged, there is a team of three paid fundraisers and the marketing and other staff at Outhouse.

**Arthouse** has proven to be a successful fundraising event. It requires a significant amount of time from the team. At the same time, it is currently the most important unrestricted funding source. The time required could limit growth from other areas of fundraising that need significant effort to get off the ground. This may be less of a factor if more event expansion is achieved.

**Pride Month** is central to the future growth of fundraising from corporates, the LGBTQ+ community, and allies. A separate fundraising action plan will be developed (as a subset of this plan) for Pride, given its importance in fundraising for LGBTQ+ charities.

A straightforward **corporate offering** will be required to help maximise fundraising income from this source – which is believed to offer earlier higher-level potential than other fundraising types.

The fundraising is planned to build towards a **capital campaign** in 2027 / 2028. The success in the latter years of the plan will be determined by the capacity to have identified and then asked a body of individuals to consider donations that would be considered major gifts supporting the organisation's ambition to develop a world-class LGBTQ+ centre.

The first known **legacy** left to Outhouse was received in 2023. An ongoing (drip, drip) messaging programme on legacy will

generate significant rewards in the years ahead. Still, it cannot be predicted with any accuracy as yet when this source will achieve consistent income. Outhouse has the potential to be a key 'go to' charity for the LGBTQ+ community and allies for gifts in wills. In memory income could be generated in the shorter-term and yield lower returns but a steadier income throughout this plan.

**Community fundraising** has a galvanising impact on the spirit of a charity. While not always the most efficient way to raise money, it is clear there is scope to develop buy-in from the LGBTQ+ community to both help raise money and give money. Efforts will range from the traditional shaking of buckets to people organising events for Outhouse and partaking in other fundraising events initiated by Outhouse.

As the **footfall** at the centre increases, so does the scope for ensuring that more people fully realise that the organisation is a fundraising charity, not just a provider of services. A physical location is a significant benefit when developing fundraising awareness and opportunities, which the more detailed funding plan addresses.

**Grants** from various sources, in addition to government sources, will also be actively pursued. For many organisations, companies and foundations are vital donors.

## Conclusion

### **Fundraising isn't an option. It is a necessity!**

In summary, these are exciting times for Outhouse.

People are attracted to an organisation with a clear vision that is 'going places'. With a broader base of supporters and funding, and consequently an increased capacity to implement its programmes, the future looks bright for Outhouse.

## Appendix 3: Citations

Bauer, Greta. "Meet the Methods series: Quantitative intersectional study design and primary data collection." Meet the Methods series: Quantitative intersectional study design and primary data collection, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, February 2021, <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52352.html>. Accessed 04 April 2023.

Maguire, Angus, and Ivy Smith. "Illustrating Equality VS Equity - Interaction Institute for Social Change." Interaction Institute for Social Change, 13 January 2016, <https://interactioninstitute.org/illustrating-equality-vs-equity/>. Accessed 22 April 2023.

*105 Capel Street is an  
old master with shabby  
credentials – but it is a jewel  
in the city crown.*



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