

Drawing Commendation - Ryan Canning and Titas Grikevicius, Holmes Miller

Dumfries Co-lab Proposal for Dumfries Midsteeple Quarter Ideas Competition,

Intro - Dumfries Co_lab is a proposal to stimulate activity in the Midsteeple Quarter by creating a 'Collaboration Lab', a multi-disciplinary network of studios where creatives and the public can work and collaborate in a mixed use environment. To sustain this mixed use living/working environment, we envision a rich programme of spaces, and various events which will take place within the Quarter, the central event of which is a Hackathon. This will act as a catalyst for attracting people to gather within the Quarter.

The High Street - In recent years, the High Street of Dumfries has witnessed a slow decline, as many commercial outlets have de-centralised to larger stores on the outskirts of the town. In the last 4 months alone, 18 businesses have closed. In order to respond to this decline and repopulate the town centre, we believe there's an opportunity to introduce new activity by focusing on technology with the aim of attracting existing residents of Dumfries back into the centre, but also bring new inhabitants in.

Technology - The development of the internet has meant that it is no longer necessary to rely on the local economy alone to sustain our communities. These shifts have also changed the notion of the workplace, where it does not require a physical environment, rather, it can be anywhere with an internet connection. However, the value of people gathering together has enormous social and cultural benefits. We envisage the Co_lab as providing a space for this gathering to take place by providing studios for artists and offices for potential new startups, encouraging and facilitating spontaneous collaboration. Furthermore, the internet is opening a new realm of possibilities in terms of 3D fabrication and prototyping, making it an ideal fit for the creative culture already established in Dumfries by The Stove Network. The Co_lab would aim to be a part of this, linking the studios and work spaces with the existing community. However, in order to take full advantage of this we must place greater emphasis on the education in emerging technologies and skills, this will play an important role in Dumfries Co_lab, where a series of education programmes will take place in the events spaces.

Hackathon - To nurture this creative atmosphere, a 'Hackathon' is proposed as a yearly event that will take place within the Co_Lab and the Midsteeple Quarter. The event will be open to the creatives who occupy studios in the Quarter, as well others from outside Dumfries. Similar to other Hackathon events, participants will collaborate with each other and form teams in order to rapidly develop and build new ideas. Hackathons are





not restricted to software development, and normally extend to graphic designers, and artists. At the end of the week long event there is the potential to focus on successful teams, providing them with the spaces, funding and facilities to further develop their ideas into a reality. Hackathons around the world are responsible for the creation of thousands of successful new startups each year.

Collaboration/communication - We believe that the collaborative atmosphere is vital for the success of the project and the ideas that are created within. As a species, we have only become so advanced through our ability to communicate and work together. This notion was famously alluded to by Leonard E. Read in *I, Pencil*. Read explores the creation of an object as simple as a pencil, where it requires collaboration of thousands of people in dozens of industries to produce it. Read concludes that there isn't a single person on Earth who could make a pencil from conception to production on their own. We are at an exciting point in time, in the sense that we can now communicate instantly with anyone, anywhere in the world through the internet. However, physically gathering plays an even more important role in collaboration, and we can facilitate this through the spaces proposed in the Co_Lab.

Design of the space - The architectural proposal is to construct a canopy as a superstructure which unifies the closes and infill buildings of the Midsteeple Quarter under a single roof. The purpose of such a structure is both symbolic and practical. Depending on their condition, existing buildings will be renovated, or adapted to form new spaces. At the ground floor, the closes will be divided into small independent units suitable for a variety of uses. We would not assign specific uses to each individual unit, but rather allow these to be defined dynamically as either studio spaces or independent shop units as the quarter develops. The proposal utilises these existing closes to develop a series of public routes which connect the High Street to Irish Street through the quarter development. Around the perimeter of the quarter, residential units will occupy the upper floors of the blocks, looking onto the High Street, and Bank Street. A portion of this will be student housing. These new inhabitants will in turn attract more, diverse uses for the units within the Midsteeple Quarter activating the area throughout the day and night. Flexible spaces have been included to allow for this, with events like open air film screenings and music performances. Recognising the overall scale of the proposal, the construction of the project would be split into several phases, using The Bakers Oven as the initial foundation for the project. The principles of the Co_lab can be applied at a much smaller scale, as an inter-disciplinary studio space, with a Hackathon event. As interest grows, the project will develop dynamically and additional spaces can be renovated/created in sequence. Not only to address ongoing decline but generate new opportunities for art, culture and industry.