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City of Sunderland **Opportunity**



City of Sunderland



274,000
population

493,544
population within a 20 min
drive-time catchment

£1.3bn
buying power within 2 miles

1,000
new homes in the city centre
by 2030

440,000 sq ft
of new Grade A office
space recently delivered

6%
uplift in overnight visitors
from 2022 to 2023

7.62%
increase in total pedestrian
footfall in the city centre over
the last 2 years

3% growth (£3.1m)
in overall customer spending in the
city centre from 2022 to 2023

Over £4 billion of private and public sector investment is transforming Sunderland.

The UK's most ambitious urban regeneration programme, Riverside Sunderland, is breathing new life into the heart of the city centre, a rapidly advancing programme of change that will bring 10,000 new jobs and 2,500 new residents to the area.

World-class leisure destinations are taking shape too, creating exciting new places for residents and visitors to enjoy.

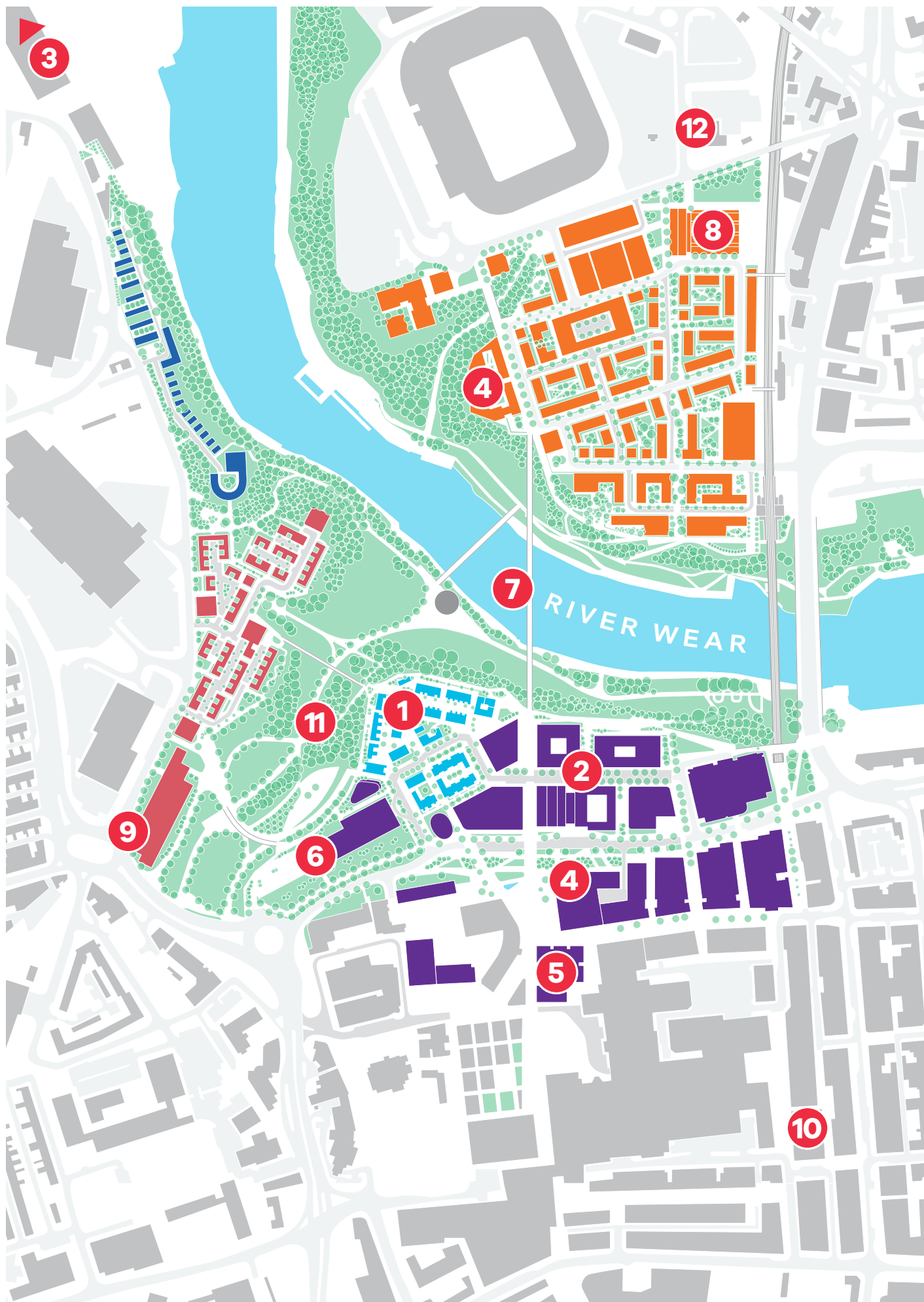
This once in a generation transformation demands high quality retail, hospitality and leisure experiences and we are seeking dynamic, forward-thinking retailers to grab this opportunity and become the driving force behind the delivery of our retail ambition.



Elsewhere in the city, some 7,000 new homes will be built, creating high-quality accommodation for families of all sizes, and more and better student accommodation is ensuring that the 11,000 students who choose the University of Sunderland each year are given the best possible learning experience.

A £450million world-class film studio complex, two EV battery plants, building on the existing automotive supply chain to Nissan, and numerous Grade A office and industrial

developments, including the International Advanced Manufacturing Park, will also see tens of thousands of skilled jobs created, bringing about the most significant economic shift the city's population has witnessed in decades, creating demand for a vibrant city centre, day and night.



See pages 6, 7 and 8 for details.

12 game-changing projects that will bring additional footfall, spend and increased dwell time in the city centre:

1. Housing within the city centre

1000 new homes will be built in the city centre by 2030 as well as aspirations to see a student village developed, delivering up to 2500 purpose built student rooms.

2. Central Business District

There is over one million square feet of new grade A office space in the pipeline at Riverside Sunderland, with 440,000sqft already delivered. This includes City Hall, home to Sunderland City Council, DWP, Gentoo, Sunderland College and private sector businesses. Legal and General have also invested in the development of two Grade A office buildings on the edge of the River Wear.

3. Crown Works Studios

Work is expected to start on the £450million Crown Works Studios – one of the largest film studios in Europe - in late 2024. Once complete, the world-leading film complex will create over 8,500 jobs, plus visiting cast and crew and will be just a few minutes' drive, or one Metro station away from the city centre, creating a new population of shoppers.

4. New hospitality venues

A 120-room, 4-star Holiday Inn opened in 2023, bringing life back into a site on the east side of the city's vibrant Keel Square. The Botanist and Keel Tavern have already opened below the hotel, with Flower Café and award-winning Pan-Asian restaurant, The Muddler coming soon.

The Grade II-listed North Eastern Railway Stables has been lovingly restored by Sunderland-based architects and engineers, BDN Ltd. Housing multiple street food vendors, restaurants, a microbrewery and whisky and cigar lounge, the venue welcomed over 30,000 guests in its first month alone when it opened its doors in August 2024, demonstrating that there is high demand for new venues and experiences.



5. Culture House

This spectacular cultural venue on Keel Square (main events space) will include a new city library, as well as a range of spaces for learning, making and creating in a unique, immersive environment. The development will be completed by summer 2025 and expects to attract 500,000 visitors a year.



6. Eye Hospital

Sunderland's nationally renowned Eye Hospital is moving to a state-of-the-art building in the city centre. Construction has commenced with the facility due to open in 2026 and approximately 300,000 visitors are expected, looking for places to grab a coffee or browse the shops between appointments.



7. New Wear Footbridge

A spectacular new bridge for walkers and cyclists will connect both sides of the River Wear between the city centre and Sheepfolds, linking Keel Square to the Stadium of Light, with up to 49,000 fans expected to cross the bridge on a match day. A new residential neighbourhood with hundreds of homes as well as new workspace at the Central Business District will also benefit. Work commenced in summer 2023 and will be completed by summer 2025.



8. Housing Innovation & Construction Skills Academy

The ground-breaking academy will be created around a re-purposed Engine Shed. Construction will complete in Spring 2025 with the academy being operated by a consortium led by Sunderland College. It will train next generation skills, enabling young people in the city to build homes of the future using modern methods of construction, as well as developing retrofit skills.



9. Riverside MSCP

A new 650-space car park, incorporating smart technologies and biodiverse living walls to create a unique structure for parking and EV charging has already opened on the edge of the city centre.

10. Sunderland Transport Interchange

The first phase of a £26million project to redevelop Sunderland's central rail station, located in the city centre, completed in 2024, providing a warm welcome to visitors to the city and multiple retail units ready to occupy.

11. Riverside Park

Riverside Sunderland's extraordinary landscape setting will be a unique selling point for the new urban quarter. The site's topography and its rich cultural heritage will provide an exciting and inspiring platform for delivery of a new biodiverse Riverside Park. It will also boast a café and numerous leisure activities for visitors to the city to utilise. Work will commence in 2024.

12. National Esports Performance Campus

The British Esports Federation are due to begin work on the development of a National Esports Arena which will draw athletes, teams and visitors from across the globe to the city when it opens its doors in Spring 2025.

The organisation has also opened a multi-million-pound training and performance centre which welcomes professional and amateur esports teams from across the globe each and every month.



Why Sunderland?

The scale of the opportunity is huge, don't miss out!

A flourishing Food and Beverage Sector

The Botanist, RIO Steakhouse, Speyside Distillery and Mother Mercy are just some of the successful hospitality brands to have invested in the city recently, with more set to be served up over the coming months and years. This has contributed to F&B enjoying a 10.5% increase in spend, 2024 v 2023.

Accommodation

The recently opened Holiday Inn at Keel Square brought the total number of medium sized hotels within two miles of the city centre to seven and there has been a 6% uplift in overnight visitors to the city last year, taking the total number to over 800,000.

Screen Sector

North East Screen, the region's screen agency, recently relocated its head office to The Beam at Riverside Sunderland. The organisation also recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the BBC to provide the foundations for sustainable industry growth and catalyse a broader renaissance of the North East's creative and screen economy.

Music

Elton John, Ed Sheeran, Bruce Springsteen and Beyonce have all performed at the Stadium of Light in recent years, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors. The opening of the £11m Auditorium at The Fire Station in Sunderland city centre and grass roots venue, Pop Recs, have also provided a significant boost to the city's evening and night-time economies and Sunderland launched its bid to join the European Music Cities Network in June 2024.

Events

Countless high-profile events are scheduled to take place in Sunderland over the coming months and years, including the opening game of the Women's Rugby World Cup, which will take place at the Stadium of Light in August 2025, Expo Sunderland, a citywide programme of events designed for residents and businesses to experience the city's incredible transformation, as well as a regular packed annual events programme that animates the city centre including the Festival of Light, Restaurant Week, monthly food and drink markets and the annual Christmas Lights switch-on.



Sport

The city is home to Sunderland AFC, a leading football club playing in the English Championship with a 49,000 capacity stadium and 23 home matches per season (23/24 average attendance 34,415). Sea swimmers and paddleboarders from across the UK flock to the city every year to capitalise on its two blue-flag beaches and stunning vistas and the multi-million-pound development of the National Esports Campus will see visitors of a younger demographic flock to the city in their thousands each and every year.



Culture

The city's iconic Empire Theatre is the largest of its kind between Glasgow and Manchester, hosting West End shows and comedians from across the globe and 2023 welcomed approximately 375,000 visitors through its doors. The soon to be completed Culture House, just a stone's throw away, will house the 'UK's smartest library' and will further build on the success of cultural venues such as The Fire Station, Museum and Winter Gardens and Abject Contemporary Art Gallery.



Leisure

Boasting a family bowling and games centre, Omniplex Cinema, retro gaming bars, snooker clubs, escape rooms and laser tag centre, Sunderland's leisure offering has improved significantly in recent times with more additions in the pipeline. The city also has a superb coastline, with fabulous blue flag beaches at Seaburn and Roker, a short distance from the city centre.

Accessibility

Sunderland city centre is just an hour's journey from Newcastle International Airport and is directly connected to the Tyne & Wear Metro with three stations located within the city centre.

It is also plugged into the East Coast mainline, with daily direct trains to London and has several reasonably priced multi-storey car parks, with EV charging, right in heart of the city centre, making it easily accessible to national, regional and local visitors.

Crime Reduction Partnership

Based in the city centre, Sunderland Altogether Improving Lives (SAIL) is a groundbreaking project that brings together partners including the City Council, Northumbria Police and Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID) to tackle petty crime and disorder, as well as improving the environment of the city centre ensuring that Sunderland remains a safe and vibrant city for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

Recruitment

Sunderland is perfectly aligned to balance the recruitment requirements of retailers with a healthy demographic of potential employees, 29.5% of residents are in routine and semi routine occupations (2021 census).

Retailers also have access to fully funded training for potential recruits via a local training provider.

Digital Infrastructure and Access to Data

Our goal is to make Sunderland one of the most digitally connected cities in Europe. We have already secured a £62m investment in the City Fibre network and have concluded a groundbreaking partnership with Boldyn Networks to deliver an ultrafast 5G network, which is now well underway. Businesses will benefit from Sunderland's high-speed connectivity, and the city's commitment to developing an unmatched portfolio of digital services and applications.

Sunderland City Council and Sunderland BID have partnered with Boldyn Network and Beauclair to establish a city centre data dashboard. We monitor footfall, spend and demographic sales contribution in granular detail providing a wealth of data to assist decision-makers.



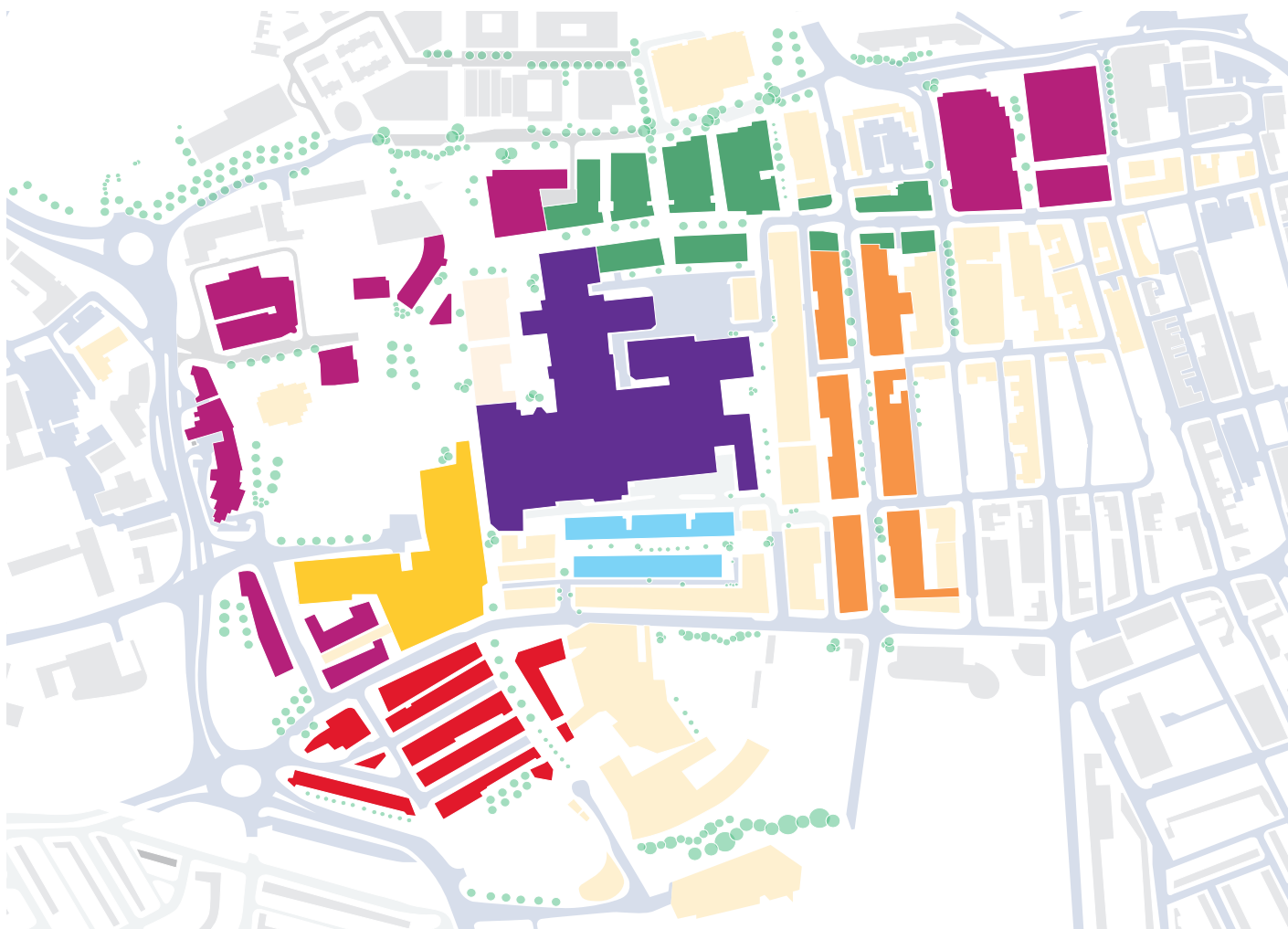
Smart city app

A new smart city app, utilising the free citywide Wi-Fi, is being operated by Sunderland City Council providing news and updates to residents in real-time as well as downloadable vouchers and special offers from Sunderland's shops, cafes and restaurants.



Zoning

An interpretation of how the city centre can be segmented.



Key	
Red	Park Lane - Community neighbourhood, experiential, startups with housing and Sunderland College nearby
Orange	Fawcett Street - Premium, small format, high end indies
Green	High Street West - Multiples, fashion/volume, high street brands
Blue	Blandford Street - Scale ups, indies, charity / vintage
Purple	The Bridges Shopping Centre
Pink	Leisure
Yellow	Family Leisure

Sunderland City Council and Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID) are working together to provide an environment where retailers can thrive, including zoning the city centre to ensure complementary businesses are located in close proximity.

Keeping good company...

Sunderland is home to a vibrant retail cluster comprising national high street chains, regional favourites and quirky local independents, meaning you'll be in good company.

The Bridges Shopping Centre

Recently purchased by Evolve Estates, part of the property group M Core, The Bridges shopping centre is the primary retail area in the city centre with a range of fashion and high street stores including Next, JD Sports, New Look, TK Maxx, River Island, Primark, Waterstones, Lush, Schuh, Pandora, H&M, Hotel Chocolat, Clintons and HMV to name a few. Overall, there are over 80 shops, 560,000sqft of retail and leisure space and 200,000 average weekly footfall.



Mackie's Corner

This landmark building is now home to 25 independent businesses, with 1,200 visitors through the doors each week. Once a forgotten reminder of Victorian Sunderland, Mackie's Corner is now a vibrant hub of independent retail and F&B businesses.

“ Sunderland BID

“In partnership with the council, we're working on a retail strategy that aligns with the city's broader goals and are **actively seeking to attract brands that will complement Sunderland's evolving landscape**. There are exciting projects on the horizon, which will see ideas around new retail, hospitality and leisure venues come to fruition and encourage yet more people to the city centre.”

“ Hays Travel

Dame Irene Hays DBE, DL, Owner and Chair of Hays Travel, said: “Hays Travel has had a presence in Sunderland city centre since the 1980s. We have **500 employees in our head office, most recruited from the local area**, including apprentices and graduates who learn and develop their skills through our in-house training programmes. We also have **three city centre retail branches, which all continue to trade well** and have their own customer base.

“Like most high streets Sunderland has changed a lot over the years, as it adapted and redefined its purpose. The tangible results of years of effort by public and private sector partners are positive to see; **we have businesses moving into excellent new office spaces, and many cranes on the skyline indicating the physical infrastructure developments underway**. Our city centre businesses need action, activity, and the right mix of office, leisure, and retail to meet the needs of Sunderland centre's changing inhabitants. **I am pleased to be able to work alongside Sunderland BID and other city centre business and partners to support their work.**”

“ Harrison and Brown

Mandy Brown, owner of independent furniture retailer, Harrison and Brown, has been trading in Sunderland city centre since 2017, and is one of many businesses now seeing the benefits of the Council's significant investment and redevelopment. She commented, **“Sunderland is a rapidly changing city and the major transformation happening around us is exciting for any retail business.** We are becoming something 'reimagined and new', and it's absolutely great to see.

“We have a fantastic (and diverse) food and drink offering with more on the way, and the new city centre housing developments which are being built now and planned for the future again, will drive huge footfall. The eye hospital which is being constructed and relocated, is within walking distance and this will encourage even more people into the city centre.

“As a successful Wearside business, it's really important to have confidence in our environment, and the redevelopment that is happening is giving us and many others just that. The regeneration is amazing.

“The City Council and Sunderland Business Improvement District have a great relationship with local businesses, especially independent traders, so we're delighted to be part of the retail landscape now and going forward.”

“ The Botanist

The Botanist Mary O'Shea, operations manager at New World Trading Co, who own the Botanist brand, said they were delighted with the response they received after welcoming **over 30,000 visitors in their first three months** after opening. “The reception has been overwhelming really,” she said at the time. “We have been so welcomed by Sunderland. A lot of people from the area used to go to the Newcastle branch and they seem really happy to now have a Botanist on their doorstep. **Our launch night here was one of the biggest responses we've ever had to an opening.**”

“ Fat Unicorn

Amanda Martin, co-founder of Fat Unicorn, said: “The city centre has such a strong community vibe where businesses all support and care for one another and the wider community. The **people are also very welcoming, encouraging and supportive to new businesses and have a strong sense of community** not often found in most cities.

“Looking forward, it is also a very exciting period for the city. **Huge changes driven by Sunderland City Council are adding more housing and offices to the city centre** and the open communication they have with businesses, explaining what is happening with developments, really ensures we feel connected and part of the city's journey.”

“ Mother Mercy Cocktail Bar

Mother Mercy Co-founder, Neil Donachie, **“Sunderland is a city with significant history and culture that is seeing major investment and regeneration.** With our successful track record in the cocktail and hospitality scene, we're looking forward to becoming part of this culture and we're confident that Mother Mercy will quickly become a favourite for locals and visitors alike.”

“ Keel Tavern

Ollie Vaulkhard, owner of The Vaulkhard Group, said: “We're not a huge chain or brand who opens four new pubs a year, each venue is unique. But Sunderland has been so welcoming. **We've had so much support from customers as well as nearby businesses** such as The Peacock and The Engine Room, **it's been an absolute joy and I don't know why I didn't open a bar here sooner to be honest.**”

Incentives and support

Sunderland City Council, in partnership with Sunderland BID, have incentives and support available to create the softest possible landing for those seeking to invest in the city and encourage businesses to discuss potential projects at the earliest opportunity with Sunderland City Council's Business Investment Team.

The team are also on-hand to make introductions to various partners, including potential supply chain partners, relevant council departments including licencing and planning and other investors in the city as well as facilitate tours of the city and available stock to interested parties.



Interested in finding out more about doing business in Sunderland and the city's ongoing transformation?

Contact Sunderland City Council's Business Investment Team

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