West Belfast at the heart of Belfast City

The Financial Times listed Belfast as one of the ‘Top 10 places in the world’ to hold a conference or major event.

The financial services sector employs over 20,000 people and includes key investors such as Citi, the Allstate Corporation, Liberty Mutual, Wombat Financial Software and HBOS.

According to Ernst & Young’s 2010 European Attractiveness survey, Belfast is second only to London in respect to FDI, particularly in technology and financial services.

Belfast City has a population of 353,000 and total employment of 306,160 (Greater Belfast region approximately 700,000 population) and has experienced far reaching change with more than £2 billion of investment over the past decade. The scale and quality of the city's transformation has been of international significance.

With its two leading universities and world class educational facilities, competitive rental and housing prices, thriving business environment and diverse visitor experiences, Belfast has a compelling offer for investors, residents, tourists and students alike.
Connectivity

Assets such as the Port of Belfast, George Best City Airport and Belfast International Airport place West Belfast at the heart of the logistics industry.

- Belfast is served by two modern airports with regular flights to London, Manchester, Paris, Barcelona, Amsterdam and New York.
- In 2011 the city’s airports carried over 8 million passengers.
- Belfast is only 100 miles or 160km north of Dublin City and is easily accessed via the M1/A1 motorway and is served by regular train services (Enterprise Express).
- The port of Belfast is currently the second largest port on the island of Ireland handling 17,664 million tonnes in 2011, 1.26 million passengers and 60+ cruise ships due in 2013.
- Belfast is one of 10 UK cities to become a Super Connected City by 2015 offering speeds of at least 80Mbps, with high speed ultrafast capacity of at least 100Mbps for businesses.
- Telecom costs in Belfast are among the lowest in Europe. There is a fully fibred backbone of up to 100GB per second. There is dual and triple routing and fully digital switching ensuring the highest levels of resilience and reliability.
What West Belfast has to offer

With a high level of entrepreneurial skills, nearly 80% of participants from West Belfast on Invest NI’s Enterprise Development Programmes started a business.

Over a third of Belfast’s total population live in West Belfast & 60% of its population is under the age of 40.

High quality education and training facilities in West Belfast include:

- 49 schools comprising of 15 pre-schools, 25 primary schools, 9 post primary schools
- 4 Training & Employment Organisations
- St Mary’s University College (Queens University, Belfast)
- Belfast Metropolitan College has 3 sites in West Belfast including the new E3 campus which is the highest spec innovation centre to be found anywhere in the city

Top class industrial infrastructure includes 5 industrial parks (155 acres) and 7 small business parks (400,000 sq. ft. of workspace). West Belfast is the preferred location of some of Northern Ireland’s leading companies including Andor, Caterpillar, APT and Icemos Technology.
Tourism: A key growth sector

West Belfast Tourism offers a rich mix of built heritage, natural countryside and a warm ‘céad mile fáilte’ to the emerging, vibrant Gaeltacht Quarter.

Must Do’s when visiting West Belfast

Take a tour and learn about the recent conflict and socio economic history of West Belfast including a visit to the world famous murals and enjoy a tour of St Peter’s Cathedral, Clonard Church & Monastry.

Visit the emerging Gaeltacht Quarter, the largest urban gaeltacht in the island of Ireland.

See the newly renovated Cultúrlann McAdam O’Fiach which includes a vibrant Irish language centre, theatre, gallery, exhibition space, café and a book and gift shop.

Take in one of the many events at Féile an Phobail, which has grown to be one of the largest community festivals in Europe. The carnival parade annually brings together over 20,000 participants for a colourful, musical procession with specially-designed floats representing a chosen theme, dancers and children in costume and face-masks or just take in an art exhibition, play or concert.
Creative Industries

The creative industries sector is one of Belfast’s fastest growing sectors with over 1,000 creative businesses based in the city, employing over 17,000 people with growth projected at 104% between 2010 and 2020.

The HBOs series ‘Game of Thrones’ is filmed in Belfast and on locations throughout the north of Ireland.
West Belfast has established itself as a hub for the creative sector

**Cultúrlann** is a focal point for the development of Irish language TV and radio programmes, theatre and dance productions.

**The E3 Campus** provides industry standard facilities including: an animation and digital editing suite, TV and radio production studios, a hospitality training facility and manufacturing and engineering facilities for product innovation.

**Conway Mill** is a hub for creative industries in West Belfast that includes arts & crafts, small business units and leisure services.

**The Andersonstown School of Music**
Formed in 1991, it provides a range of services which include music classes, performance opportunities, workshops, music tourism packages and a full Irish Traditional Orchestra.

**Raidió Fáilte**
Belfast’s only Irish radio station, broadcasting in the city on 107.1fm. Raidió Fáilte provides top-class radio broadcasting from its base in West Belfast, helping to support and spread the Irish language in Belfast and around the world.
Life Sciences

Life Sciences are one of the priority sectors that will drive the future growth of Northern Ireland’s economy.

The Northern Ireland Life Sciences sector as a whole comprises approximately 60 businesses employing 4100, with sales of £600 million of which exports account for 95%.

Minister Arlene Foster, DETI speaking at the UK Life Sciences Roadshow event in Belfast 2010 stated “Invest NI and Matrix, the Northern Ireland Science and Industry Panel identified life sciences as a priority sector that can encourage innovation, stimulate R&D and drive a shift in sectoral focus towards high-value economic activity”.

The new £250 million University of Ulster campus at York Street, Queens University Belfast and the Royal Victoria Hospital creates an axis for the development of life sciences through Belfast.

A first rate business location

West Belfast can provide you with your every business need. In respect to property costs Belfast compares favorably to other cities; £12.50 per sq.ft in Belfast, £30.65 per sq.ft in Dublin and £52.50 per sq.ft in London.

With exciting new plans for the development of a new 12 acre Innovation Centre at Forthriver Business Park, West Belfast has five industrial business parks across 155 acres in prime locations with something to match your every business need including:

- Whiterock Business Park
- Springvale Business Park
- Springbank Industrial Estate
- Kennedy Way Industrial Estate
- Tully Business Park

A thriving enterprise culture is demonstrated by the 7 enterprise parks located in West Belfast providing over 400,000 sq.ft. of flexible workspace, access to a small business loan fund and business support services.

West Belfast can provide your business with a competitive advantage in respect to:

- Operating costs up to 38% lower than similar locations across Ireland and the UK
- Telecoms costs are among the lowest in Europe
Case Study - Andor Technology

Andor Technology are global leaders in the development and manufacture of high performance scientific digital cameras for academic, industrial and government applications. Andor Technology operates from its purpose built 50,000 sq. ft. HQ in West Belfast. The premises include state of the art optical, electronic and mechanical workshops, a 3000sq. ft clean room, vacuum and electronic processing facilities. Andor was set-up in 1989 out of Queen’s University in Belfast and now employs over 300 people in 16 offices worldwide and distributes its products to 10,000 customers in 55 countries.
Community & Lifestyle

The heartbeat of West Belfast is the thriving, vibrant community which make it an attractive place to live in, work in and to visit. A strong and flourishing community sector demonstrates the drive and determination of local people to proactively shape a better future for themselves and their neighbours.

- Gaelic Athletic Games is the most popular sport throughout Ireland and there are 17 local clubs in West Belfast including a number of Ireland’s premier club sides
- West Belfast has its own Irish League Soccer team, Donegal Celtic.
- There are 3 Leisure Centres in West Belfast including Andersonstown, Whiterock and Falls Road.
- Divis & the Black Mountain – a National Trust asset resting in the heart of the Belfast Hills and providing a backdrop to the city’s skyline.
- Slievnacloy Nature Reserve – an Ulster Wildlife Trust asset which is a 125-hectare site and an Area of Special Scientific Interest
- Colin Glen Forest Park – a beautiful wooded river glen comprising 200 acres of scenic woodland, river, open grassland, waterfalls and wild flower areas as well as a 9 hole golf course & driving range
- Bog Meadows Nature reserve – an Ulster Wildlife Trust and UNESCO award winning local nature reserve which is an urban oasis with over 3km of ‘access for all’ paths
- 6 local parks - Falls Park, Dunville Park, Glencairn Park, Lenadoon Millennium Park, Springfield Park, Springhill Millennium Park
Location of the finest sports stadium in the North of Ireland – Casement Park

A new £78 million pound, 38,000 capacity, all-seated stadium is planned at the site of the existing Casement Park. It is worth up to £15 million to the local economy and will create 1,500 construction jobs during development.

The 38,000 all seated stadium will include restaurants, conference facilities, community facilities, commercial units, ticket office and an Ulster GAA merchandise shop which provides further job opportunities in the local area. The new stadium was designed by London based company Mott MacDonald Ltd who designed the Olympic Stadium and will hold up to 6 major games per annum plus other events and concerts.

Opening is planned for 2016/17 with massive potential for spin-off business, job creation, tourism development and event promotion in the new premier sports and leisure complex in the north of Ireland.
“This key redevelopment for the GAA will bring a range of sporting, social, economic, health and community benefits to the area”.

Minister for Culture, Arts and Leisure Carál Ní Chuilín.
Gaeltacht Quarter

The core of an Cheathrú Ghaeltachta provides a mix of a distinct residential neighbourhood with unique cultural and educational resources on its doorstep. In an area that boasts St Mary’s University College, the Royal Victoria Hospital, an Chultúrlann, Coláiste Feirste and a community with resilience and resourcefulness, Gaeltacht Quarter is a project of national importance.

Key projects include:

- Spórtlann na hEireann – handball courts, climbing wall, hurling practice, kinesiology clinic, fitness suite, running track and floodlit pitches and games areas
- New housing with community and cultural spaces over a landscaped garden
- Aras na bhFál – community led office development project for Irish language agencies with ground floor cultural space
Regeneration of West Belfast

West Belfast will benefit from significant investment opportunities, with much work underway to regenerate and revitalise an area that has been identified as having significant economic, cultural and tourism potential.

In 2012 £150 million of investment was announced for Belfast, to further the regeneration of a city that has become one of the most dynamic cities in the world. West Belfast will benefit from much of this investment.

Recent investment commitments to West Belfast include:

- £100 million upgrade of the Westlink providing a dual carriageway through pass connecting the M1 to the M2 and M3 motorways.
- £18 million development of the Belfast Metropolitan College’s E3 campus providing industry standard facilities in animation and digital editing, TV and radio production, hospitality, manufacturing and engineering facilities for product R&D.
- £5 million restoration of Conway Mill providing a multi-functional workspace in one of Belfast’s oldest mills.
- £1.5 million environmental improvement scheme on the Andersonstown Road.
- £78 million redevelopment of Casement Park as the premier GAA stadium in the north of Ireland and home of the GAA in Ulster.
- £8 million innovation centre at Forthriver Business Park
- £8 million regeneration of the old St Comgall’s Primary School into a conflict resolution centre and community tourism project.
- £12 million development of Colaiste Feirste as the North’s first Irish medium post primary school.
- £25 million investment in Super Connected City across Belfast City which will result in Belfast becoming a world class digital city by 2015.
- £100 million to be invested in establishing the Belfast Rapid Transit network which will help to connect the city centre with East and West Belfast.
- An investment package to develop the unique Gaetacht Quarter as an important part of the city wide tourism and cultural product.