
Design District's lifeline to London creatives: workspace for £5 per square foot

Across-the-board rent reduction to support creative businesses of every size



According to recent projections, the UK creative sector could be hit twice as hard by the effects of Covid-19 as the wider economy. A new report by Oxford Economics, commissioned by the Creative Industries Federation, has projected a combined £77bn turnover loss over the course of 2020 compared to 2019 (-31%). This is expected to translate into a GVA shortfall of £29bn in 2020 compared to 2019 (-26%), over half of which is in London.

London's creative industries are one of the city's biggest cultural and economic assets contributing £111.7bn GVA to the UK economy – more than automotive, aerospace and oil and gas industries combined¹ – but the pandemic has put them under threat, and for many businesses, the future is uncertain.

¹ <https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/statistics>

In the hope of relieving pressure on the sector and kick-starting the capital's creative recovery, Design District – launching in spring 2021 – has announced a 12-month across-the-board rent reduction to just £5 per square foot for every creative business taking up tenancy in any space across its 16 buildings, which total 150,000 sqft.

“One in eight jobs in London is in the creative industries, and we know that many of these people have seen their livelihoods impacted massively by the pandemic. With the need for affordable space for creative practitioners greater than ever, this is a fantastic initiative from the Design District that will enable creatives to have access to one of the main things they need to create: affordable space. This initiative will not only help support livelihoods, but play an important role in the rebuilding of London's creative economy.”

– Caroline Norbury MBE, CEO, Creative Industries Federation and Creative England

Cultivating a diverse creative ecosystem

One of the Design District's founding objectives is to provide permanent and affordable workspace to creative businesses of every scale. To achieve this, the management team is working closely with the Mayor's Office to ensure that the Design District meets the affordable-workspace needs of London.

Typically, rents will range from £7 per square foot, up to around £45, depending on the workspace to be rented and the size and needs of the tenant, which will be reviewed regularly. With the new initiative in place, however, all tenancies will start with a flat £5 psf across the entire Design District for the first 12 months.

Larger organisations will be able to occupy buildings at commensurate rents that will reduce the rental burden on smaller businesses. This is designed to create an ecosystem of businesses of varying sizes, each contributing according to its means, and ensure that any individual or organisation that wishes to be part of the district can afford to find a home here and benefit from this unique creative environment, opening in spring 2021.

“Whilst the creative sector has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic, the industry has a key role to play in the economic recovery of our city. It will require imaginative thinking about space, investment and a plan for growth. It is more important than ever that we support our thriving creative sector with initiatives like Design District, which will secure vital affordable workspaces in the capital and provide a much-needed lifeline for London’s creative community.”

– Justine Simons OBE, deputy mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries

The discounted £5 offer could therefore represent a saving of 80% – potentially more – to creative enterprises looking to secure workspace in 2021, for the first year of their tenancy.

This will not only give creative enterprises of every size an opportunity to secure a workspace in one of London’s most architecturally significant developments in recent years, the rental saving also gives businesses scope to reinvest in themselves, by using the money they save to support employee salaries, freelance commissions, marketing, making and other business-development initiatives.

“Wow, if I could have had a studio space for a year at this price when I first came to London it would have been such a great opportunity to help my career along! Young people especially now have to deal with expensive studios, less opportunities, student debt and things getting more expensive. I think it’s important to help all creative people to stay and work in London – they are what makes this city full of magic and energy!”

– Camille Walala, London-based artist and designer

By allowing creative businesses to focus their resources on restoration and growth rather than worrying about rent, Design District hopes its own incentive will play a role in getting London’s economy back on track – fast.

“It was the right thing to do. The creative industry is the lifeblood of our city – it’s what makes London the vibrant international hub that it is and we wanted to give back to the creatives how we could, to ensure we can keep London creative for future generations.”

“Throughout the Coronavirus crisis we have been reviewing our launch strategy to see how we could best support the communities that we have created Design District to serve. Our proposal to enable significantly reduced overheads to businesses at Design District will enable them to reinvest in their growth and in turn boosting the creative industries’ contribution to rebuilding the economy.”

– Helen Arvanitakis, director of Design District

Notes to editors

For more information about this announcement, please contact Rupert Evans-Harding at designdistrict@zetteler.co.uk.

Design District

At the heart of Greenwich Peninsula, Design District is London’s first permanent, purpose-built hub for the creative industries.

Conceived and developed by Knight Dragon, and designed by eight leading architects, the Design District’s collection of 16 unique buildings supports an ecosystem of 1,800 creatives, encompassing individual makers, ambitious start-ups, ground-breaking enterprises and industry leaders.

The closest Tube station is North Greenwich (30 metres). The Jubilee line (24-hour on Friday and Saturday), gets you to London Bridge in eight minutes and Waterloo in 11.

designdistrict.co.uk