

ISSUE 36 FREE

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# where are we now?

UNI TOWN / BEN GUMMER / FANTASY IPSWICH / PARK MORONS

# FANTASY IPSWICH

Imagine Ipswich is a blank canvas. The shops and landscape are yours to play with, sculpt and change for the better. Our fantasy Ipswich goes a little like this – with so many empty spaces to choose from, we thought why not Photoshop our imaginations into them?



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# SPACE INVADERS



How do you feel about transforming an empty local space into something amazing? Could an ex-Poundland become a cutting edge art gallery? Could an old charity shop become a new music venue or a bohemian craft studio? **Jessica Bell** explains what it takes to get your transformation started...

## Ideas

First off you need to discover a niche in the market – what is your town in need of? Slack Space, an artistic initiative based in Colchester, witnessed their local retail industry suffering from a recession that caused more empty shop spaces than ever before.

They first used Facebook to circulate their artistic ideas and soon a group of supporters began to meet and discuss positive ways of using the empty spaces. They coupled together both what Colchester was lacking and their own personal passions and came up with an art gallery. One of the key ingredients to their continued success is motivation, so your project needs to reflect what you love, be it vintage clothing or a boho art café.

## Teamwork

One must-have is an enthusiastic and motivated team dedicated to the project, whatever it might be. This will form an important collective decision-making base. Besides the core members, it's best to get a lot



The next vintage clothing store?

of people involved: the more the better, as this will simply expand your resources.

It's vital to have a range of skills within your team, from the creative to the curatorial. This diversity of skills can help make your project more manageable, with individual members each taking care of the graphics, internet or business side of things. As a central part of the project, you'll need to be flexible in your ideas and initiatives, as well as responsive to others. All the while, you must keep a realistic focus on potential ideas.

A second must-have is a limitless amount of energy and determination, from creating the aim of the project to overcoming any obstacles that are bound to arise. A key aspect is to secure professional support, to aid and guide you through the legal processes. Slack Space convinced stakeholders firstsite to act not only as their legal entity but also as mentors, offering support and advice and playing a key role in the project's success.

## Legality

When it comes to the legal aspects, it's most beneficial to have support from a variety of organisations. Try and find funders, supporters and institutions that are especially interested in supporting upcoming local projects.

These organisations can help to manage and organise legal necessities such as leases and licenses for properties. With their help it's possible to rent properties and window space to get your enterprise off the ground. Once an empty space is acquired, your team will have to undertake the practical task of revamping it. If a premises has pre-existing shop fittings, often these can be recycled and reused for your purpose to save you valuable amounts of money.

An essential aspect of any property is that the health and safety requirements are up-to-date – this is where having a health and safety expert on board your team would be valuable to help draw up risk assessment plans.



... Or maybe a boho art café?

## Promotion

Make effective use of local magazines, websites and other local media. These are sure to be highly useful for publicising your project in order to gain vast amounts of local interest and enthusiasm.

Despite the current economic downturn, locals are sure to support fresh projects aimed at injecting some vitality into a town, and their support will prove to be a useful tool. In time, you will no longer have to search for art to fill that gallery of yours. Instead, the interest will flood in from talented and passionate artists striving to get their work noticed.

Seize the power of social networks and blogs to get everyone talking about your project, whatever it is. And don't forget to get creative: plaster your town with posters, leaflets, flyers and just about anything that screams 'exciting new initiative NOW OPEN!'

[iheartslackspace.blogspot.com](http://iheartslackspace.blogspot.com)