



Presentation to London City Council: London Plan Public Participation Session June 23rd 2014

In the life of any city there are times of growth and decline, times of plenty and times of austerity, times of uncertainty and times of great potential. In the 4 last years, our city, our beloved London, has faced turmoil and uncertainty. According to Ivey economist Mike Moffat, we experienced a loss of 30% of our manufacturing jobs, we have seen unemployment rise so that our youth unemployment rate is above 20%, and have recently received the body blow of our Mayor being found guilty of 3 charges and resigning. Yet despite all this, and through all of this strife and turmoil, this council made a decision to reach out to the citizens of London and talk with them about what they wanted their city to be.

You could have sat in a back room with experts and special interests but you chose not to do that. You charged our planning department to go out and seek the input, to quote Glen Pearson, of the highest office holders in the land. The Citizens of London.

This was a courageous move and one that went on to set a record in Canadian history. Through the leadership of this Council and the brilliant work of our Planning Department, we have completed the largest public participation in an official plan in Canadian history. This is no small thing. More than 12,000 of us chose to heed your call and we showed up at hundreds of events, large and small, in 10s and by the thousands, to have our voice heard. Through the results of our London Plan we have spoken

clearly. We have chosen to commit ourselves to city building and have clearly articulated a future vision of London.

We at Emerging Leaders believe, unequivocally, that this plan, this London Plan, is the surest way to economic and community recovery both today and for the next 30 years. We believe that the generation we represent says yes to transit and intensification, says yes to walking and cycling, says yes to a greener future, says yes to culture and place-making, and says yes to investing in London now so that tomorrow we can enjoy the fruits of this work.

This council had no control over plants closing, over the high unemployment, over talent leaving our city, because the things that caused this happened outside our city limits. That happened at places like Wall Street, in huge multi national banks, and the decisions to close plants and end the proud work of our manufacturing sector happened in board rooms far away from London.

But from this we can learn and we can take control of our future. A study by the Cleveland Federal Reserve on the weighting of one sector over another they were very clear. This study called “A Decade of Hard Times in Places that Rely on Manufacturing Employment” pointed out that “high-manufacturing-share counties have usually experienced lower employment growth than the rest of the counties in the United States. This was particularly true during the recent recession, when employment losses reached almost 6 percent per year compared to a peak employment loss of only 3.7 percent per year in the rest of the country.” . I share this with you because this London Plan is about changing the nature of our city to diversify our economy and if we want to attract talent to this city we will have to work diligently to make this plan a reality.

We know in London that we saw the population of those 65+ years increased by over 50 percent in the last decade. We also know that London has been losing its 20 to 44 year old demographic. This alarm was first sounded by the LEDC in 2009 when they noted that “In London, 41.73% growth in the 55-64 year old population is significantly different to the

7.36% loss in the 25-44 year old population.” This trend has been happening for sometime in London and is reinforced by our own finding and in our 2nd annual Work in London Survey. We note again that just over 60% of respondents said they were somewhat or very likely to leave London in the next 10 years..

That is why this London Plan is so critical as it directly addresses the kinds of communities that Gen X and Gen Y want to live in. They are not focused on cars but on transit and alternate transportation, they are not focused on sprawl but on intensification, and they look for, as Richard Florida - author of *The Creative Class* and *Creative Cities* said, the Three T's. Talent, Technology, and Tolerance.

Some on this council have said in the past that we need to be careful that we do not have too many legal challenges at the Ontario Municipal Board with the Official Plan. During the presentation of ReThink, while those of us in the gallery were feeling very optimistic, the former Mayor pointed this out. But I would remind this council that some here passed the South West Area Plan, against the recommendation of staff, the community, and the development community who had worked hard on bringing a recommendation forward. That decision brought 19 OMB challenges.

If you were not deterred by the potential of OMB challenges when approving the South West Area Plan against public input and staff recommendations then I am sure you would not be deterred by the London Plan with so much public support and the need to rebuild our community so that we have a strong economic, cultural, and community core. The next generation is not interested in large parking lots and large retail developments. We have those already. If this council wants to reverse the trend of talent loss then we strongly encourage you to fully endorse this plan and more importantly the core principals it represents.

Emerging Leaders held a conference, London X, last March that was directly inspired by the Rethink London. The key recommendations that came from our working groups, presented at London X, was that your timelines for transit and development of this plan were too long. At this conference we also witnessed a remarkable talk given by Grant Oliphant of the Pittsburgh Foundation. He shared with us the story of that city and the challenges it faced. Loss of talent, high unemployment, an industrial sector that had been ravaged. That community decided to re-invest in itself and they began the work of redeveloping their river front. They came together and transformed the very nature of the river and the city. The talent loss reversed itself, they attracted companies like Google and Microsoft, and there is an ongoing renaissance in Pittsburgh. The more than 300 Londoners hearing that talk immediately saw the parallels between London and Pittsburgh, and again and again I heard “Why can’t London do that?” The London Community Foundation boldly stepped forward head that call and to lead a charge to change our river and our city. They stepped up and committed themselves to the principles of the London Plan and are backing this up with a sizeable investment.

Now it is your turn. It is easy to be cynical or to go back to old ways of doing things. I am sure I will hear that it’s all well and good to have dreams and big ideas but reality is something different. But we don't think this is true. Every Londoner was invited to participate in ReThink, and the huge number that chose to participate have spoken clearly. They want to see this dream come true.

Our Board member Glen Pearson wrote in his book about London called A Place For Us, “We’ve merely lost track of the historic narrative we once possessed. Rediscovering it means that inevitably we have to rediscover one another.” Now is our chance to Rediscover London, and we at Emerging Leaders stand ready to serve you and all Londoners on this journey of rediscovery. This plan, this London Plan, creates the path to that rediscovery and we encourage this council and the next to take seriously the input given, to respect the result, and to use this plan to turn our city around.

Further Information: **Emerging Leaders London X eBook** (includes analysis of Downtown Master Plan, SmartMoves, Cultural Prosperity Plan, Economic Development Analysis, Workforce Analysis, and recommendations by Emerging Leaders Working Groups)

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[Grant Oliphants London X Talk](#)

[Work in London Survey 2013](#)