

The Downtown Context

London's downtown is geographically central to the city and located at the forks of the Thames River. It represents approximately 0.2 percent of the total land area of the municipality, and generates 4 percent of the property taxes which are generated throughout the city.

Surrounding Neighbourhoods

The downtown is surrounded by the distinct neighbourhoods of Talbot North, Woodfield, Old East, SoHo, Old South/Wortley Village, Riverforks, and Blackfriars/Petersville.



The Downtown as a Place to Live

The downtown is home to over 4,000 residents -- more than 50 percent of whom are between the ages of 20 and 34 years old. This relatively young population is well-educated, with 62 percent of the population having attained post-secondary education at a university or college level. Approximately 20 percent of downtown residents are foreign born, the majority of which immigrated from Europe and Asia.

The downtown population has been increasing steadily since the 1990s at a substantially faster growth rate than the city as a whole. Between 1996 and 2011, the downtown's population increased by nearly 60 percent. This trend is not showing any signs of slowing down. In fact, the downtown is currently experiencing a residential construction boom, with the recently completed Renaissance residential towers and several hundred more units planned or proposed for the upcoming years.



6 in 10 downtown residents have post-secondary education.



The Downtown as a Place to Do Business

The downtown has continually maintained its status as the office employment centre of London, with over 80 percent of the city-wide office space and 303 jobs per hectare. Much of this success can be linked to strong City policies supporting the downtown in this role.

The *2013 State of the Downtown* report indicated improvements to the storefront vacancy rates and a stabilizing environment in terms of business openings and closures. As well, over the 2008-2014 period, 22 grants and 75 loans have been issued over the years which contributed to restoring and rehabilitating buildings within the downtown.

Map 2:
Contextual
Analysis

Contextual Analysis of the Downtown

The intention of this analysis is to understand the context in which the downtown currently exists. Establishing this framework allows us to build on the downtown's strengths and provide solutions to possible weaknesses.

The major thoroughfares identified on Map 2 illustrate the primary connections to and from the downtown and the important linkages to the adjacent neighbourhoods. Many of these thoroughfares are also primary commercial corridors within the downtown. As well these corridors generally carry high volumes of traffic and are well served by transit.

The physical barriers identified include the river and train

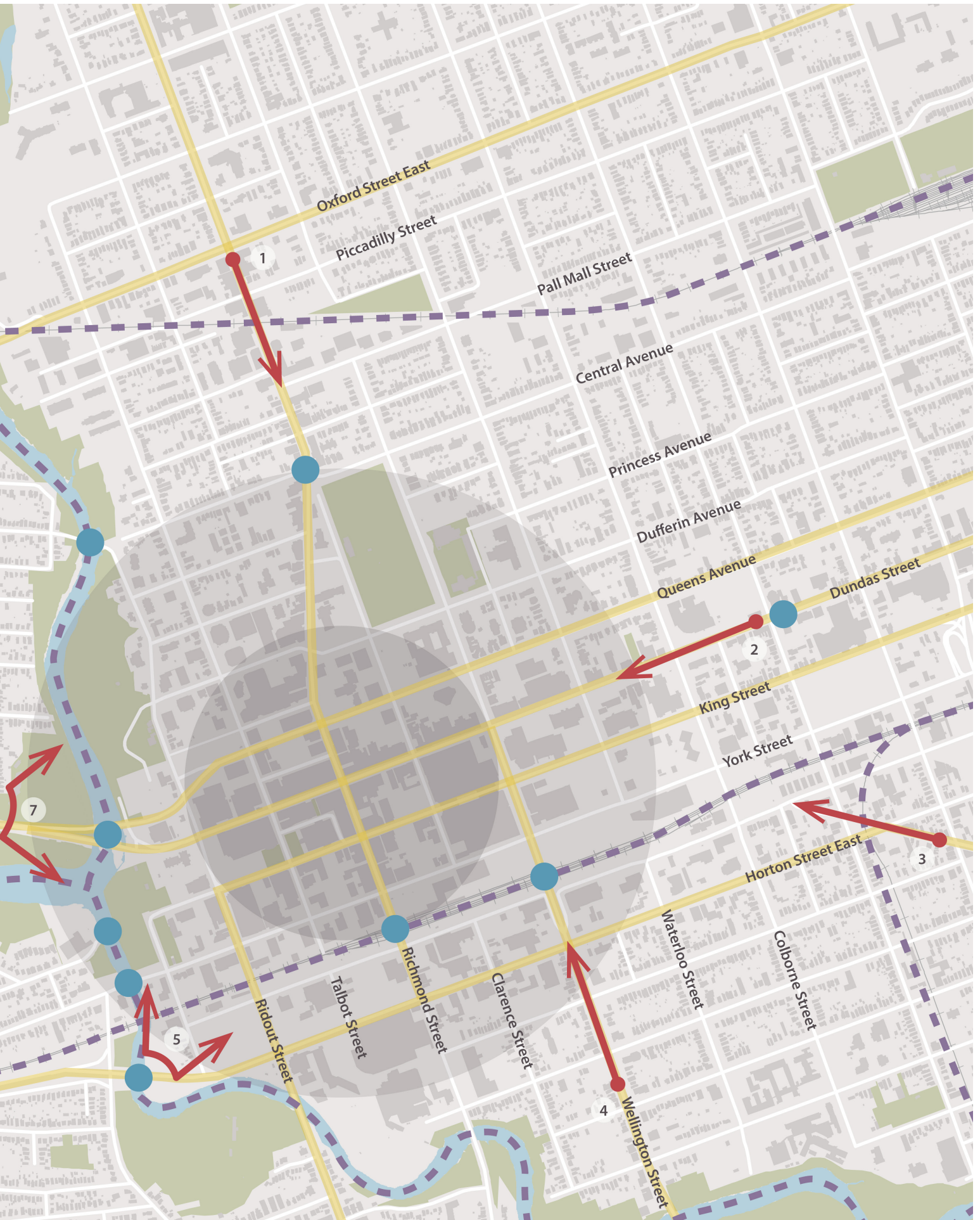
corridors. These are permanent physical elements that may provide obstacles to accessing the downtown.

While there are many points of entry into the downtown, there are only a select few that represent true gateways into the core. These gateways signify a point where there is a distinct change in the environment that indicates entry into the downtown.

The 400 metre and 800 metre walking radii represent approximately 5 minute and 10 minute walking distances, respectively. The 400 metre radius is typically accepted as the maximum distance that people are willing to walk to take transit.

Significant views to the downtown are identified on Map 2 and discussed in more detail on the following page.





Views

Within the downtown area there are both vista and panorama views, identified on Map 2. Vista views are generally views directed down a corridor and originate from a specific point, whereas panorama views are wide-angle that show a larger landscape. These views are important to consider when new development is taking place, as development within these views will be particularly visible when entering the downtown.



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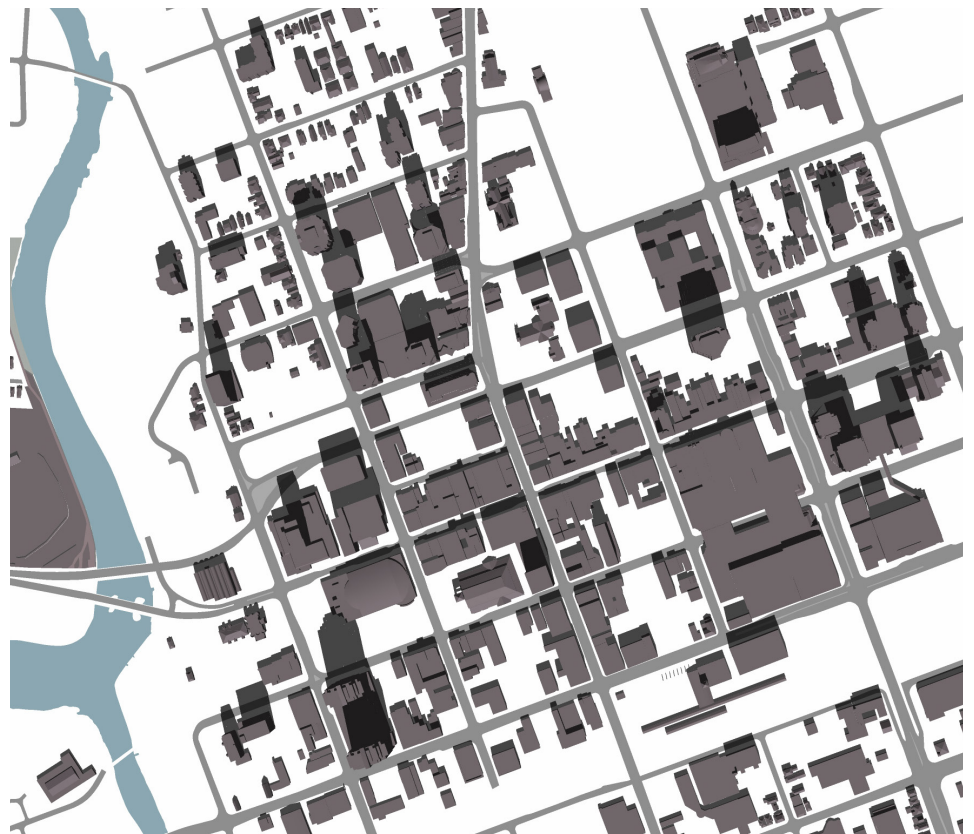
Shadows

Providing a balance of sunlight and shade is an important consideration for sidewalks, parks and other public spaces. Sunlight can change the conditions and experience of a space, directly influencing the usage of a public plaza or the success of sidewalk retail.

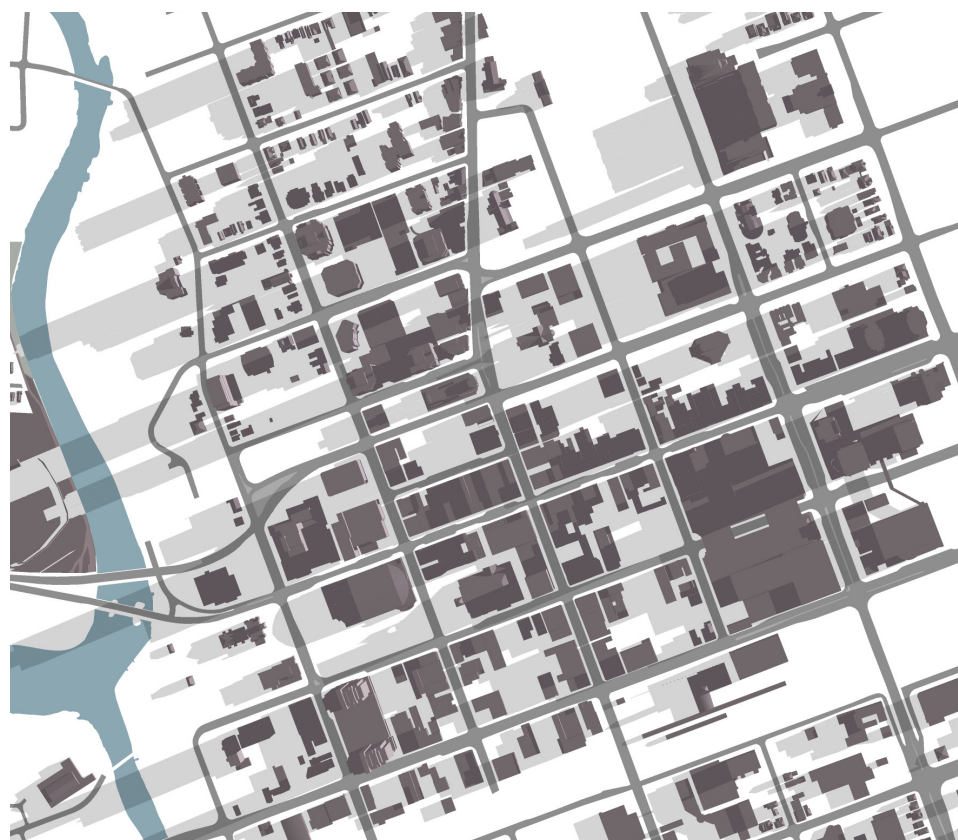
Tall buildings, intuitively, cast the longest shadows and have the greatest influence on sunlight penetration. Simple design measures, such as providing stepbacks, can greatly increase the hours of daylight experienced at grade-level in the adjacent spaces.

The following shadow diagrams illustrate the spring equinox as a baseline for comparison to the summer and winter solstices, which have the longest shadows throughout the year.

Spring Equinox



Summer Solstice



Winter Solstice

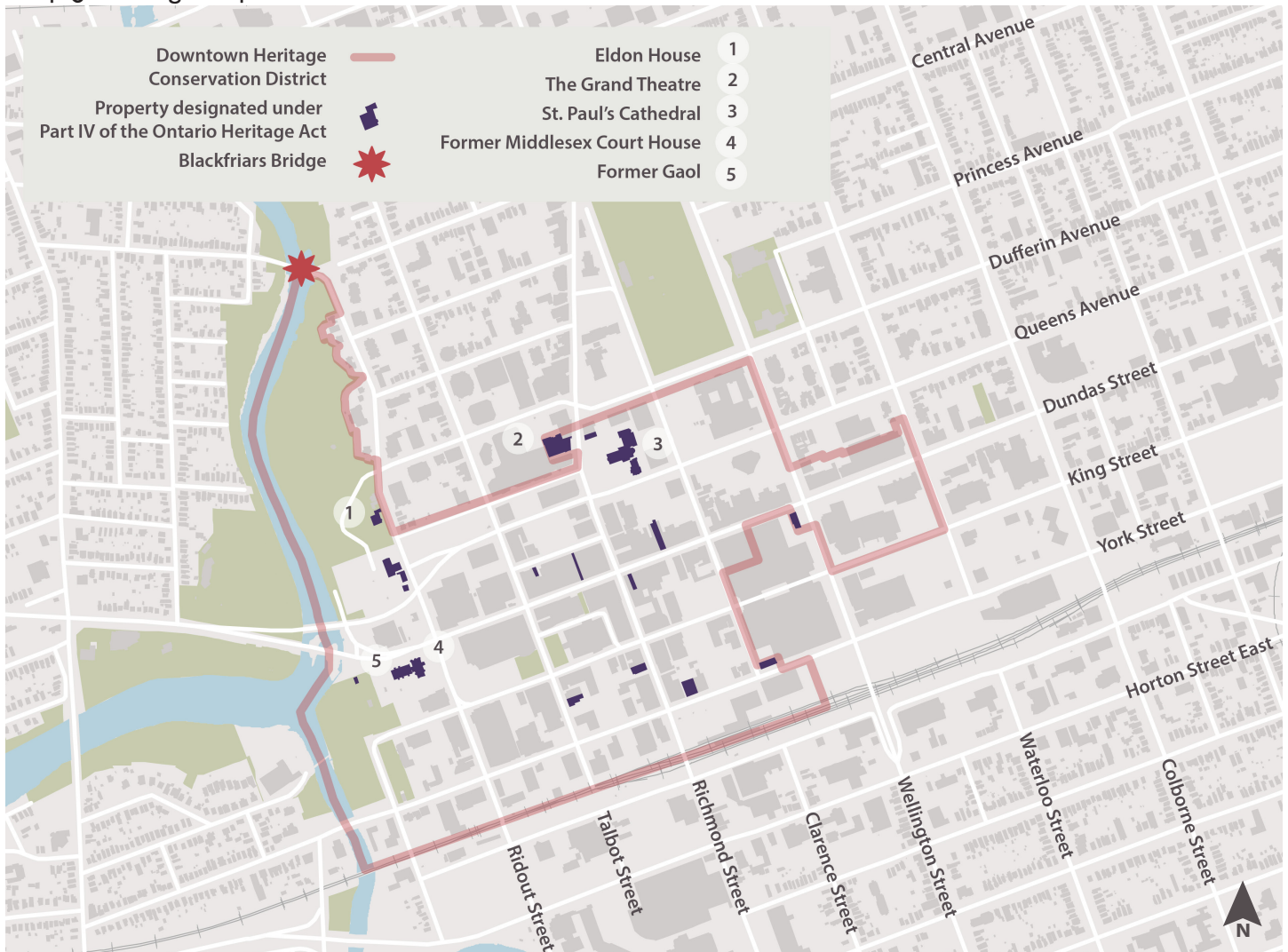


Cultural Heritage

As the birthplace of London, the downtown has a rich history dating back over a century. As illustrated below, a large portion of the downtown is within the Downtown Heritage Conservation District (HCD), which establishes a policy framework to protect, conserve, and enhance the identified cultural heritage value, while allowing for growth and development. Within this area, 18 properties are also individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.



Map 3: Heritage Properties



Activity Generators

Over 80 percent of the city-wide office area is located within the downtown, which provides more than 303 jobs per hectare. This concentration of jobs brings a large number of workers daily to the downtown.

In January 2014, Fanshawe’s Centre for Digital and Performance Arts opened in the downtown and is expected to contribute over \$80 million annually to the local economy and bring over 400 students and staff to the core. Fanshawe intends to attract 1,400 additional students to the downtown at the former Kingsmill’s department store building.

In 2012 and 2013, the downtown held 72 events and welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors. These events included annual festivals in Victoria Park, events at Budweiser Gardens and shows at the Grand Theatre.



Map 4: Activity Generators

