

# PLANNING POLICIES

The following planning policies provide direction for future public and private development within the downtown. Additionally, these policies will ensure public projects and the public realm are used to promote a positive city image.

## 1.0 Make Dundas Street the most exciting place in London

- 1.1 Ensure downtown planning and development decisions support and grow Dundas Street's role as a destination public space.
- 1.2 Foster the use of Dundas Street for a wide variety of activity and events appealing to a broad cross-section of demographic groups.
- 1.3 Maintain the essence of Dundas Street's unique character and streetscape while being responsive to change and accommodating a wide variety of uses in its right-of-way.
- 1.4 Ensure Dundas Street maintains its appeal as a public space during all hours and in all seasons.
- 1.5 Create and manage a Dundas Street streetscape that is attractive, interesting, well-maintained and comfortable for pedestrians.
- 1.6 Target funding programs which support property owners on Dundas Street to improve the street appearance, heritage character, and usability of their buildings.
- 1.7 Consider the function, placement, and planting methods of street trees simultaneously with the management, repair, and improvement of other Dundas Street municipal infrastructure, in order to optimize the healthy growth of street trees.
- 1.8 Finalize the *Dundas Street Scoping Study* to further define the scope of future improvement initiatives related to Dundas Street.
- 1.9 Work with the Downtown BIA and other potential partners to create excitement about Dundas Street through place-based investments such as pedestrian-oriented infrastructure and event programming.



High-quality streetscaping materials along a pedestrian-oriented retail environment.

## 2.0 Reconnect with the Thames

- 2.1 Plant trees in strategic locations within open spaces along the river's edge in order to maintain views.
- 2.2 Where possible, encourage and/or maintain public rights-of-way that promote access and views to the river corridor.
- 2.3 Ensure view corridors are maintained or opened to the Thames River and Harris Park.
- 2.4 Use public art as strategic land marks that attract people in the downtown to the Forks of the Thames.
- 2.5 Establish civic spaces at strategic locations that offer gathering and passive recreational opportunities along the Thames River.

## 3.0 Forge connections with the downtown neighbourhoods

- 3.1 Undertake a Downtown Transportation Assessment to evaluate the impacts of the Strategic Directions and Transformational Projects on the overall transportation network within the downtown.
- 3.2 Ensure that the selected rapid transit corridor provides a high-quality pedestrian environment.



Old South/Wortley Village.

- 3.3 Ensure future transit routing supports connections from surrounding neighbourhoods, such as Talbot North, Woodfield, Old East, SoHo, Old South/Wortley Village, Riverforks, and Blackfriars/Petersville to the downtown.
- 3.4 Ensure future rapid transit routing provides high-quality pedestrian access to education and office employment areas.
- 3.5 Ensure pedestrian priority is provided along the Clarence Street corridor to connect SoHo to the downtown and Victoria Park.
- 3.6 Encourage end-of-trip facilities for cyclists in new and existing office buildings including secure bicycle parking, showers, and change rooms.

## 4.0 Green our downtown

- 4.1 Protect and incorporate natural elements, especially those along the Thames Valley Corridor, into the design of new development.
- 4.2 Improve the standards of planting methods and materials to provide better planting zones and longer tree survival.
- 4.3 Coordinate utilities and tree-planting zones through proposed streetscaping plans and/or capital investments to enhance tree growth.
- 4.4 Encourage the use of stormwater management technologies to assist with landscape irrigation and tree survival and to reduce overall water usage.



Planted median on York Street at Clarence Street.

- 4.5 Promote Low Impact Design (LID) to provide drainage improvements.
- 4.6 Whenever practicable, plan new developments to be “future ready” to accommodate the future use of solar energy, electric vehicles, and district energy systems.
- 4.7 Encourage the use of district energy facilities and infrastructure for large-scale redevelopment within the downtown to mitigate power outage disruptions.
- 4.8 Promote opportunities to use green roof technologies and incorporate green spaces into developments to assist with greening the downtown and reducing the heat island effect.

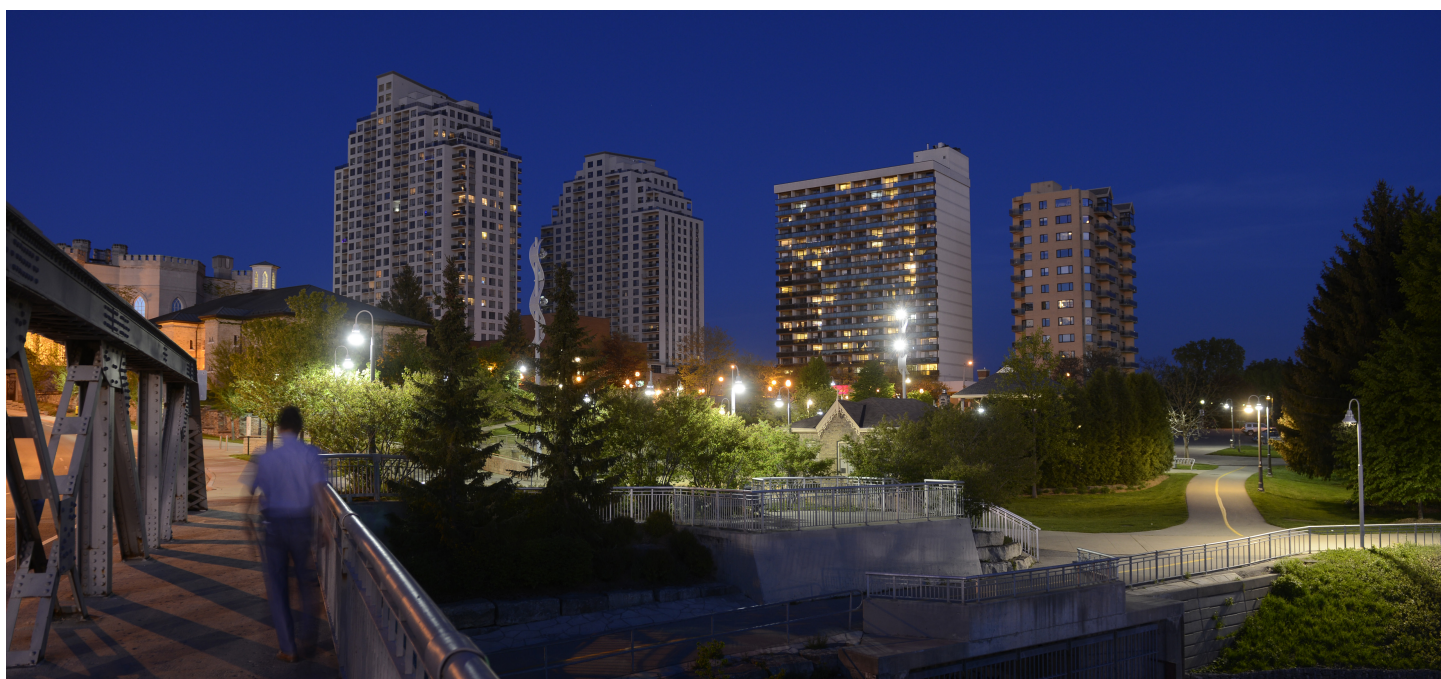
- 4.9 Encourage the reuse of historic buildings and their materials to reduce the requirement for new materials.
- 4.10 Encourage new and retrofit buildings to aim to achieve a sustainability threshold equal to LEED gold rating.
- 4.11 Encourage enhanced pedestrian crossings in preparing streetscape plans or through capital investments. This can be achieved through bump outs at intersections, using alternative materials for crossing areas, removal of channelized right hand turns or raised intersections.
- 4.12 Encourage wide sidewalks in all locations throughout the downtown to promote a safe and active pedestrian environment.

- 4.13 Ensure the public realm provides adequate shelter and resting areas for pedestrians and transit users.

## 5.0 Build a great neighbourhood

- 5.1 Encourage the construction of a variety of dwellings within the downtown that can accommodate residents at various life stages.
- 5.2 Encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites to increase the resident and worker population downtown by discontinuing temporary-use zoning on these sites.
- 5.3 Ensure that new development contributes positively to the image of the downtown, taking into consideration landmarks, the skyline, natural features and gateways.
- 5.4 Undertake a study to define and protect important downtown views consistent with the Downtown Heritage Conservation District.
- 5.5 Create developments that add to the quality of the area and provide a high standard of amenity for all users.
- 5.6 Address the needs of all users, including those with disabilities.

- 5.7 Direct public transit, walking and cycling as close as possible to meeting areas, family attractions, public spaces and activity centres.
- 5.8 Ensure the tower portion of tall buildings are appropriately slender to allow sunlight access to the public realm.
- 5.9 Establish a high-quality pedestrian-oriented street environment that is visually interesting, comprehensive, varied and well-connected.
- 5.10 Design appropriately for location, function, local climate and terrain.
- 5.11 Design and construct buildings that are flexible enough to accommodate a range of uses over time.
- 5.12 Foster natural surveillance, or 'eyes on the street,' by providing buildings with active frontages oriented to streets, squares and parks.
- 5.13 Ensure the design of the public realm provides open lines of sight, clearly identified entry and exit points, and alternative means of exit.
- 5.14 Provide good lighting and visibility to create an environment that helps people to find their way easily.
- 5.15 Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the *Downtown Design Manual*.
- 5.16 Ensure that vehicular driveways and laneway access points along streets are minimized to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- 5.17 Ensure an adequate balance of public parking on- and off-street.
- 5.18 Encourage development of smaller 'pocket parks' that function primarily as places downtown for residents to socialize, such as venues for pet exercise and quality places for young children to play.
- 5.19 Integrate features, such as play areas, splash pads and other family-oriented elements into public spaces.
- 5.20 Retain and reuse heritage buildings to strengthen the distinct identity of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District.



Residential towers as viewed from Kensington Bridge.



A light show projected onto Budweiser Gardens during the 2013 World Figure Skating Championships.

5.21 For recognized heritage buildings, encourage their conservation, restoration and rehabilitation in accordance with the *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Guidelines* and encourage the use of interpretive signage.

5.22 Ensure that all future public works implement the Values identified in this Plan.

5.23 Ensure that the replacement and/or maintenance of public realm features are consistent with the *Downtown Design Manual* and *Heritage Conservation District Guidelines*.

5.24 Wherever practicable, coordinate development projects with infrastructure upgrade projects to minimize costs and disruption.

5.25 Coordinate underground and above-ground infrastructure during the design and construction of capital projects.

## 6.0 Create the buzz

6.1 Maintain and enhance the downtown as the major focus for employment and economic activity within the city and the region.

6.2 Maintain the downtown as the primary and preferred location for office buildings exceeding 5,000 square metres.

6.3 Encourage federal, provincial and municipal governments to maintain and expand their downtown office facilities.

6.4 Incorporate public art as a component of all major downtown construction projects.

6.5 Continue to develop the downtown as an international, national and regional education centre.

6.6 Incorporate the initiatives and recommendations of the *Cultural Prosperity Plan* as they relate to the downtown.

6.7 Design new buildings within the downtown to take advantage of their unique environment through distinctive and innovative architecture.

6.8 Ensure new buildings are consistent with the *Downtown Design Manual* and the *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Guidelines* and reviewed by the Urban Design Peer Review Panel.

6.9 Design tall buildings to function as landmarks to create a distinctive downtown skyline.

# FINANCIAL INVESTMENT & REVENUE GENERATION

## A Solid Foundation

Downtown has proven its resiliency over time when faced with the threats posed by rapidly changing economic forces and societal trends. Its decline in assessed property value at the end of the last century has since seen a dramatic rebound. Its reputation as a desirable destination has been significantly enhanced by the cluster of day-to-day and special events venues that were constructed after adoption of the *Downtown Millennium Plan*. A large measure of this success so far achieved is due to the creative and strategic approaches to financial investment that have been made. This legacy provides a solid foundation for evaluating revenue generation options and financial models and programs that both can sustain gains already made and leverage further investment.

Having good information available is important when evaluating the costs and benefits of investment opportunities. It can help the City spot trends and shifts in market conditions, and be ready to adapt to emerging challenges or to respond to investment funding partnership opportunities that may arise through orders of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors. The biennial

*State of the Downtown* report has been undertaken six times. It tracks the downtown's progress in many dimensions, using a variety of indicators. The report is an implementation tool of this Plan that should to be refined and used to further the Plan's recommendations.

## Return on Investment

The City of London's financial investment in a suite of development incentive programs, authorized via the adoption of the *Downtown Community Improvement Plan*, has leveraged

the initiation of and/or otherwise enhanced the quality of private development undertaken during the years since they were first introduced. These development incentive programs addressed conditions prevalent before the *Downtown Millennium Plan* was prepared. The programs should be reviewed to determine if/how they relate to current conditions.

Assessed property values have stabilized downtown and are increasing overall. This situation offers an opportunity to explore how revenue generated in the downtown might be captured



Downtown building renovations in progress and supported through City Loans and grants.

to help pay for new downtown public capital investments and/or programs. Tax increment financing is one method, whereby bonds are issued to generate funds for public projects which are then financed using the increased property tax revenues generated by adjacent development on private property that is most directly benefitting from the improved public realm. A similar funding outcome may be possible through City-budget setting, by deliberately “sequestering” a portion of the revenues generated downtown for those projects and activities Council deems to be of the highest strategic value in delivering on this Plan’s aims.

The provision, management, and siting of downtown parking is an area of special relevance to the successful implementation of *Our Move Forward*. The more vibrant downtown streets become, the more competition there is to use the space available in their rights-of-way. Acknowledging that this Plan anticipates more ample sidewalk space for pedestrian movement and occupancy, and for choice transit amenities, there may at times be less street space available for parking vehicles. However, motorists also need to be accommodated when enticed to a downtown with multiple attractive destination venues, or that is itself a destination. The construction of a City-owned and operated parking garage could serve both as a response to this situation and act as a catalyst for

other projects. Revenues gained can be put back into the downtown and the added parking available in weather-protected, secure, lit parking structures can encourage temporary surface parking lots to be developed.

Municipal parking decisions and funding allocations also can support the success of public transit operating as the preferred mode of commuter transport to the downtown. They can establish minimum or maximum amounts of parking required for particular uses, leading to the shared use of parking facilities where daytime

and nighttime parking demands complement each other. A large inventory of parking spaces can be operated to influence parking rates that favour multiple occupants [car-pooling] and can provide linkages to bicycle infrastructure.

The *Downtown London Parking Study* is in the process of being updated to reflect the current conditions of the downtown and new policy directions. The updated study will provide further direction on what roles related to parking that the City of London and others could play within the downtown.

## ACTIONS

1. Continue to prepare the biennial *State of the Downtown* report, ensuring it continues to measure outcomes based on achieving the Values of this Plan, using a variety of indicators, and where necessary refining, adding to, or discontinuing measures.
2. Review the *Downtown Community Improvement Plan*, and particularly the programs offered through it, to determine their appropriateness and applicability in furthering the Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.
3. Undertake research to determine what level of revenue generated in the downtown can be captured for further investment in the downtown, and the costs and benefits, and risks and rewards associated with the various methods available.
4. Following the conclusion of the *Downtown London Parking Study*, undertake a downtown parking strategy that is consistent with and furthers the Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.

# ORGANIZATIONAL & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Great places benefit from constantly paying attention to what needs be done and striving to organize those tasks in ways that maximize the effective use of available resources. With a multitude of property owners and investment interests, serving numerous clients and meeting diverse social expectations, downtowns are typically more complex than other destinations where these factors are not present to the same extent, or not present at all.

Where government funds alone cannot achieve the performance expectations necessary to sustain and grow downtown development, operations and programming, coalitions can come together or new entities can be formed and charged with the task of overcoming obstacles to success. Beyond what may be allocated from tax-based funding, it also can be useful to link the accountability of delivering projects and programs with their ability to generate funds in other ways. Considering such options for downtown London is consistent with this Plan's stated Value in Partnership.



A downtown development corporation office.

## Purpose-Based Organizations

Lessons learned from other jurisdictions may be adaptable to help finance the projects and initiatives in *Our Move Forward*. There are successful organizations in other communities with responsibilities in managing assets, generating revenues, and making investments that should be studied to determine whether and how

they might be applicable in London to advance the implementation of this Plan.

Downtown Development Corporations (DDCs) and Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs), for example, can be set up with strategic and focussed mandates to partner municipal equity or property contributions in public-private partnerships that can link to,



and leverage, the construction of public improvements with private development ventures. Their mandates can also include a focus on offering assistance to maintain and grow start-up and small businesses, to recruit new businesses to fill gaps in essential products and services, and to cluster or relocate businesses that are complementary and stronger when in close proximity. These development-focused organizations were explored in the background research prepared twenty years ago as possible ways of implementing aspects of the *Downtown Millennium Plan*.

Given the progress made since then in recovering the vitality of downtown, a fresh look at their potential to advance *Our Move Forward* is worth consideration.

Place-specific organizations can be established to design, build, finance and maintain new and/or unique public assets. These tend to fill a role that may not be as effectively or feasibly delivered by departments, agencies, boards and commissions who already have multiple tasks associated with maintaining many facilities.

### Operating at Peak Performance

Top-tier downtowns are managed well. This requires organizational models, purviews of activity, and execution of tasks that aspire to a reputation for excellence and then routinely deliver on it. Downtowns that can best protect and increase the value of original capital investment often have

organizations serving focused purposes, and/or see coalitions cooperate to achieve common interests and avoid duplicating tasks or working at cross-purposes.

London's downtown may be at a stage in its evolution where a Downtown Management Organization (DMO) could expand the traditional Business Improvement Area (BIA) model to take the lead on program delivery and potentially some aspects of operations management for the downtown. There are models elsewhere in which private financing and management of public places can supplement what the public sector can deliver in the features and experiences found downtown.



The Downtown Business Improvement Area recently expanded its boundary northward to include Richmond Row.

Examples of responsibilities that may be appropriate for a DMO could include festival production and “clean and safe” programing. The latter would focus on maintaining personal and property security through increased police presence, either through private security or separately funded downtown police patrols, and maintain premium order landscaping, sidewalk washing, and litter, trash and graffiti removal.

A DMO would work much like a private shopping centre management organization. The City, in partnership with Downtown London, has already tested aspects of this type of model in ad-hoc partnerships struck to present London at its best for major national and international events.

Operational excellence downtown can be a chief consequence of organizational excellence. Since downtown profiles the whole city in a small “snapshot” area of it, downtown must establish and sustain the highest levels of service in all operational matters that define its attractiveness. This direction is as important as the orientation to high quality design and compelling development. Building operational expectations into the early stages of project design, including methods for financing those expectations, ensures that what is well built stays that way over the life-cycle of the project. *Our Move Forward* must adopt a “whole-cost” approach to secure the value of investing in downtown.

## ACTIONS

1. Review the potential of a purpose-based downtown development organization to advance Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.
2. Establish a standing downtown coordinating committee of City/agency/BIA staff to regularly set targets and measure progress on them in a variety of operational areas where mandates overlap.
3. Undertake a study of the costs and benefits associated with initiating a DMO that could operate in this manner on a day-to day basis.



The “Clean Team” in 2014 keeps sidewalks in the downtown litter-free during the summer.