Creating a Vibrant and Competitive Downtown

Janette MacDonald

Downtown London
CEO and General Manager



Current Situation

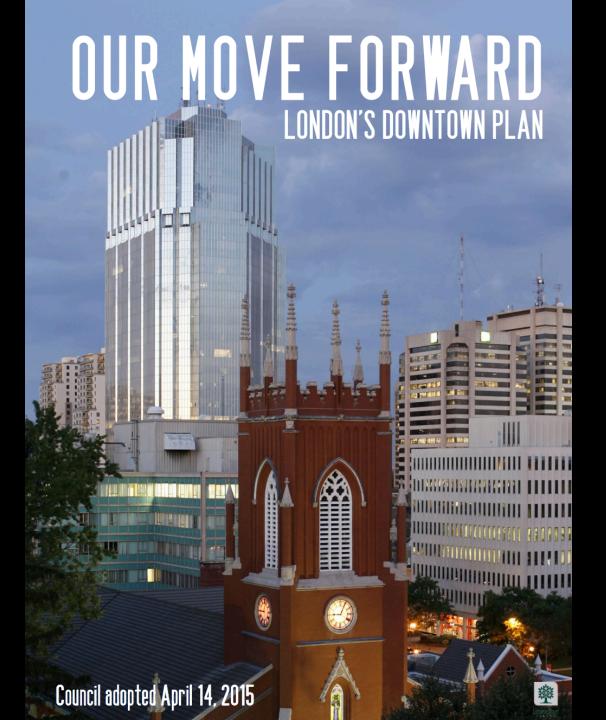
 Historically, the City has given up parking revenue at meters in December. We have no metrics to prove the success of this concession.





Current Situation

 MainStreet London, a downtown revitalization organization, was created by the City in 1998 to participate in strategic leasing along with many other revitalization initiatives.











State of the Downtown

Based on the previous investments the City made through the 1998 Millennium Plan, the downtown residential population grew

37% compared to 8% city-wide.







State of the Downtown

An average of

ÜPE N

new businesses opened each year.



State of the Downtown

Taxable assessment grew from 624 million to more than a billion dollars

between

2004 to 2013.















Return on Investment

More metrics, updates and results will be reported to the City to show the success of the investment.



Return on Investment

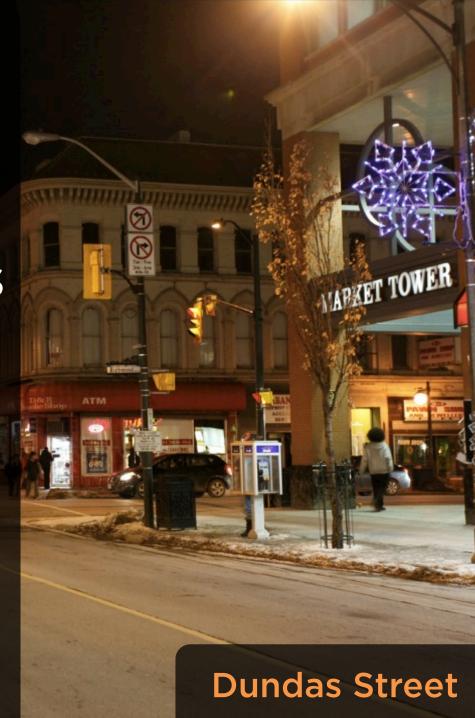
Users of the downtown will invest in game-changing strategic recruitment which will bring tax dollars into the City coffers.





The Gap We Need to Address

 More progress towards urban regeneration in Downtown London.





"FEELINGS MIXED ON ARENA:

MERCHANTS DIVIDED ON HOW MUCH DOWNTOWN WILL BENEFIT"

May 15, 2000 – London Free Press

"ARENA OPPOSITON FIRES UP:

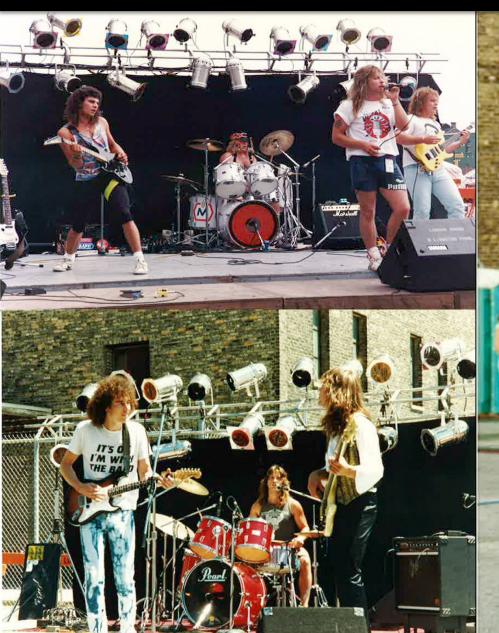
PETITION WILL FORMALIZE OBJECTIONS TO THE TALBOT BLOCK LOCATION"

June 21, 2000 – London Free Press

"TALBOT BLOCK LOCATION WRONG SITE FOR ARENA"

October 16, 1999 – London Free Press

ENTERTAINMENT THEN...





ENTERTAINMENT NOW!





Adapting to new economic structure

By Adrian Cammaert

s any first year geography or urban planning student can tell you, traditional downtowns and main streets historically provided for the daily needs of their local residents. In this sense, they were subsistence downtowns and their form was a direct result of their function.

Without the use of personal automobiles, these were naturally pedestrian-oriented places as people were simply not willing to live too far from where they worked or shopped, thereby assuring their continued commercial success.

However, this pre-automobile era is now over. The automobile boom in the early/ mid-20th century combined with the advent of zoning regulations that separated land uses, fundamentally changed people's spatial awareness by increasing their tolerance to live in a more dispersed manner. It became



Adrian Cammaert

normal to travel greater distances for daily groceries whereas travelling such distances for such an ordinary activity would have been unthinkable in the past.

For better or worse, it is unlikely there will be a full-scale return to the subsistence downtown that previously assured the survival of these commercial areas. The economy has shifted away from this model and as a result it has become exceedingly difficult for many downtowns to remain economically viable. Investment has moved away from traditional downtowns and main streets and into autocentric retail centres and industrial complexes that are father removed from where people live. Meanwhile the traditional main street is left struggling to remain relevant.

But, there is hope. Millennials no not desire suburbia; they desire hip, urban places. Retirees are increasingly fitting into this profile as well; shunning the retirement communities once built in quiet suburban settings for those built in compact urban places surrounded by a variety of accessible activities and amenities. So while there may never again be the functional need for main streets and traditional

downtowns, there is a growing desire for these areas. However, for main streets and traditional downtowns to not only survive but thrive in this new economic reality, they must adapt their function from one that is subsistence-based to one that is amenity-based.

Municipal economic development departments, chambers of commerce and Business Improvement Area boards play a leading role in this adaptation. They provide the required guidance and structure necessary to actively manage these areas. However, downtowns cannot rely on the surrounding residential areas as their only market because their densities are typically too low to support its commercial areas. In short, attracting visitors is essential.

The most successful downtowns have over-arching marketing campaigns, consistent hours of operation, actively controlled retail mixes, planned and managed events that attract visitors, welldesigned pedestrian-based places and strategic parking plans.

Historically, local shopping malls were seen as the foremost competitor of traditional downtowns and today malls are joined by big-box retail plazas, lifestyle centres and online shopping. But these perceived threats can be neutralized by a traditional downtown embracing its new role as a unique pedestrian destination. This adaptation ends the competition and focuses on a different market based on leisure rather than subsistence.

Although specific attributes differ from downtown to downtown, they commonly include outdoor meeting places, boutique-style retail choices and a heritage ambiance. As part of its transformation, it is essential that downtowns develop a unique identity and brand it. They must communicate what makes their community unique and worth visiting.

Downtowns are works in progress and must continually adapt to the changing economic and social context. Creating identity-driven destinations is an effective strategy to keep traditional downtowns and commercial main streets vibrant.

Adrian Cammaert, MCIP, RPP, CNU-A is an urban planner specializing in destination placemaking for traditional downtowns and commercial districts. He is also the chair for the Ontario Chapter of the Congress for the New Urbanism (cnuontario.org).

"The most successful downtowns have over-arching marketing campaigns consistent hours of operation, actively controlled retail mixes, planned and managed events that attract visitors, well-designed pedestrian-based places and strategic parking plans."

- Adrian Cammaert, Main Street Revival



Solutions

- More focus on recruitment of targeted businesses.
- More strategic, specialist approach to recruiting the right mix of businesses and programming.
- Position Dundas Place and Richmond Row as the premier business locations in downtown.
- Live Work Learn Play brings together multiple stakeholders for a targeted leasing and casting program.



MainStreet London Request

- Remove the free on street parking in the month of December (Approx. \$200K per annum) for the next four years. Total \$800,000.00.
- Invest these funds in our new recruiting program with LWLP, estimated at \$540,000 plus implementation, advertising and other costs.
- Semi-annual reports will be provided to the City to demonstrate our progress.



