

Making A Difference



Core Area Action Plan

October 28, 2019



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Our Thanks

Over several weeks, City staff interviewed people living in, working in, and visiting the Core Area. We would like to thank them for their invaluable insight and perspectives.



Introduction

Our Core Area represents the heart of our city. It holds our greatest concentration of employment, many of our heritage properties, our largest community gathering places, our primary stage for music and entertainment, and the majority of our tourism infrastructure. The health, vitality and resiliency of the Core Area is key to any successful economic development strategy for London and sends an important message to the world about London as a place to live and do business.

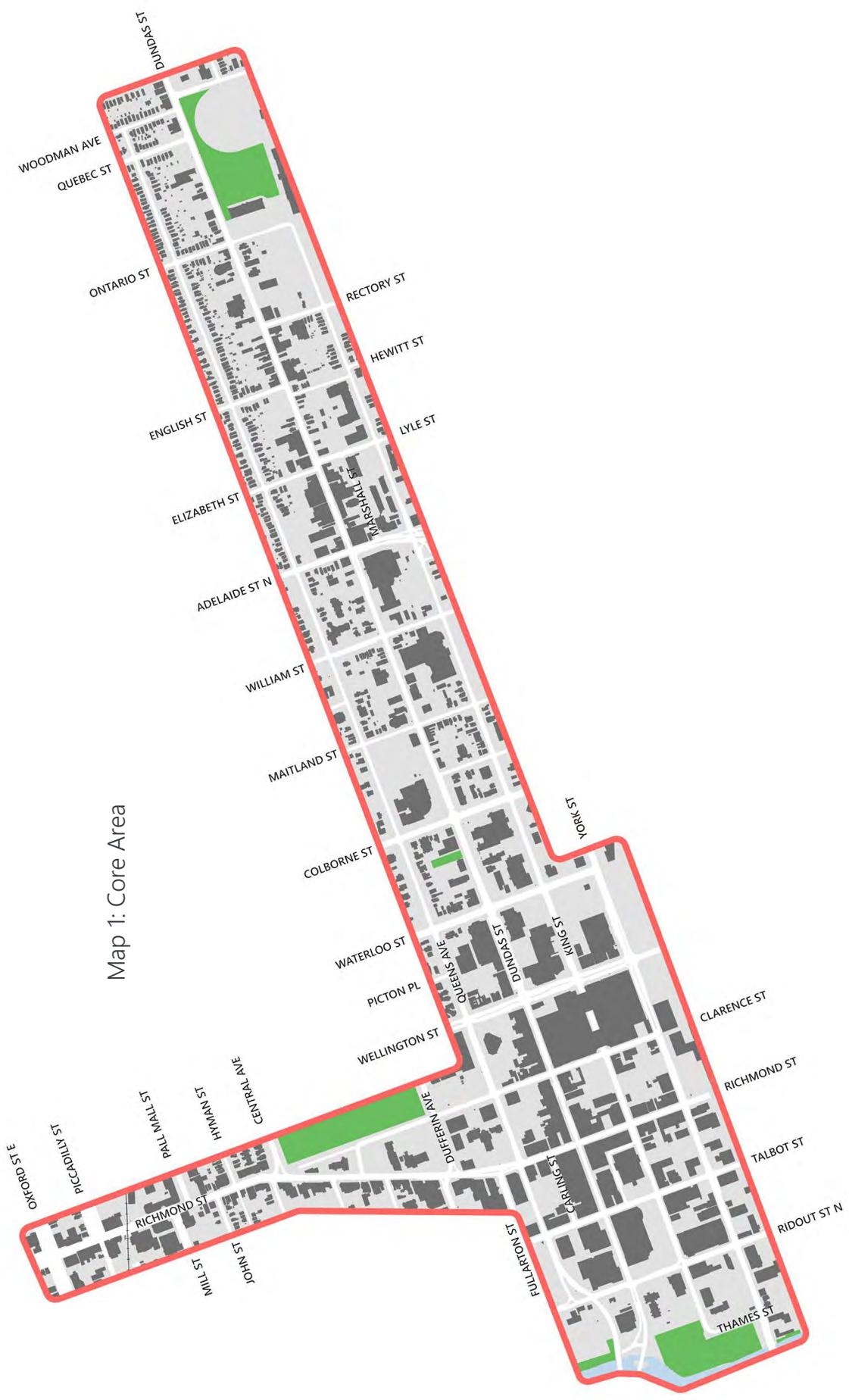


Our Core Area

Map 1 shows the Core Area for the purposes of this Action Plan. While there could be many different ways to define the Core Area, it is important to:

- Cover those inner urban areas that are most acutely experiencing the issues identified in this plan.
- Ensure that the area is not so large that it diffuses our resources to the extent that our actions cannot be effective.
- Allows for the surrounding urban neighbourhoods to receive spin-off benefits from improvements to this defined Core Area.

The Core Area includes the Downtown, Richmond Row and the Old East Village and encompasses most of the London Downtown and the Old East Village Business Improvement Areas (BIA).



Map 1: Core Area





Our History of Investing in London's Core Area

London's Core Area was thriving until about the 1970s. Like most cities across North America, our Core Area declined throughout the following decades as everyday commercial uses spread into the suburbs, residential neighbourhoods grew strong outside the core, and congestion, urban decay and disinvestment made the Core Area less attractive to many Londoners.

Recognizing these trends, London has made many municipal investments in the Core that have slowed this decline and even generated new growth and private investment. The *2017 State of the Downtown Report* shows many positive business and economic signs for the Downtown as does the *Old East Village Progress Report*.



A sample of municipal investments made in the Core Area over the past decades includes:

- Budweiser Gardens
- Covent Garden Market
- Central Library
- Queens Park improvements
- Dundas Street streetscape improvements east of Quebec Street
- Fanshawe College Downtown Campus investment
- Dundas Place Flex Street
- A variety of infrastructure improvements, increasing the capacity for new Core Area development
- Financial incentives programs in the Downtown and Old East Village to encourage: building façade improvements; upgrades to meet present-day Building Code requirements; and new residential and mixed use development.

Together, these projects and programs represent an investment in the order of \$200 million.



Our Vision

At the root of this Action Plan is a vision for our Our Core Area to be a place that:

- Signals our city's economic vibrancy and attraction;
- Helps us to attract and retain talent and investment;
- Tells the story of who we are as a city;
- Serves as a canvas for culture, arts, music and entertainment;
- Is safe, secure and welcoming for a broad diversity of people;
- Offers strong local and tourist attractions;
- Provides opportunity for business success;
- Offers compassionate care for those who need it;
- Is buzzing with activity at all times of the day and night; and,
- People can proudly identify as their home and neighbourhood.



Our Experience

To understand our Core Area's current state more fully, City Planning staff interviewed people over a period of several weeks. People shared their insights and experiences in the Core Area. Those interviewed included property owners, business owners, employees, resident associations, agency leads, building operators, City managers, London Police Services staff, and other Londoners who frequent the Core Area.

What We Heard

We asked people to share their perspective on what is preventing the success of London's Core Area. Here is what we heard:

People struggling with homelessness and health issues need help.

- More people are sleeping rough on the streets, in storefronts and on private property
- Tents and encampments are showing up throughout the Core Area
- Many people do not seem to have a place to go throughout the day
- There are no mechanisms in place for multiple social service agencies to coordinate effectively
- There is a lack of housing, including shelters, public housing, and affordable housing
- The number of people struggling with mental health issues, drug addiction and homelessness is growing dramatically
- Many people with mental health issues and addictions are not receiving the help they need

People need to feel safe and secure.

- People often feel threatened and intimidated walking on Core Area streets
- Unpredictable and threatening behaviour occurs frequently and is on the rise
- There is a lack of regular police presence, as well as other security personnel to give a feeling that help is nearby
- Panhandlers are often aggressive and intimidating
- Criminal activity is openly evident (e.g. drug trafficking)
- Those who commit crimes and are caught doing so are often back on the street within days
- Violence, or the threat of violence, is evident and is perceived to be on the rise
- Vandalism of property is commonplace
- Theft occurs regularly

Businesses need an environment that allows them to be successful.

- People are sleeping in storefronts
- Needles, feces, urine and garbage are often left present in storefronts and other areas that customers are exposed to
- Unpredictable and threatening behaviour is losing customers and employees for Core Area businesses
- Ground-floor retail, service and restaurant uses are leaving the Core Area, leading to high vacancies in some areas
- High vacancies are persistent in many office buildings, particularly Class B and C space
- Multiple construction projects are creating challenges for businesses and there are several more projects on the horizon
- There is a significant concentration of social services in the Core Area
- Some businesses feel that the way nearby social services are operated and managed can have negative impacts on their business
- On-street parking spaces have been lost in the Core Area affecting customer convenience
- Various regulatory processes are uncoordinated, non-standardized and time-consuming
- Sidewalks are often dirty and stained and power washing occurs very infrequently
- Litter and garbage is commonly scattered on public and private property
- Public infrastructure, such as sidewalks, signs, and street furniture, are often damaged
- In some cases, private properties are neglected and buildings are left vacant to deteriorate and decay

The Core Area needs to attract more people.

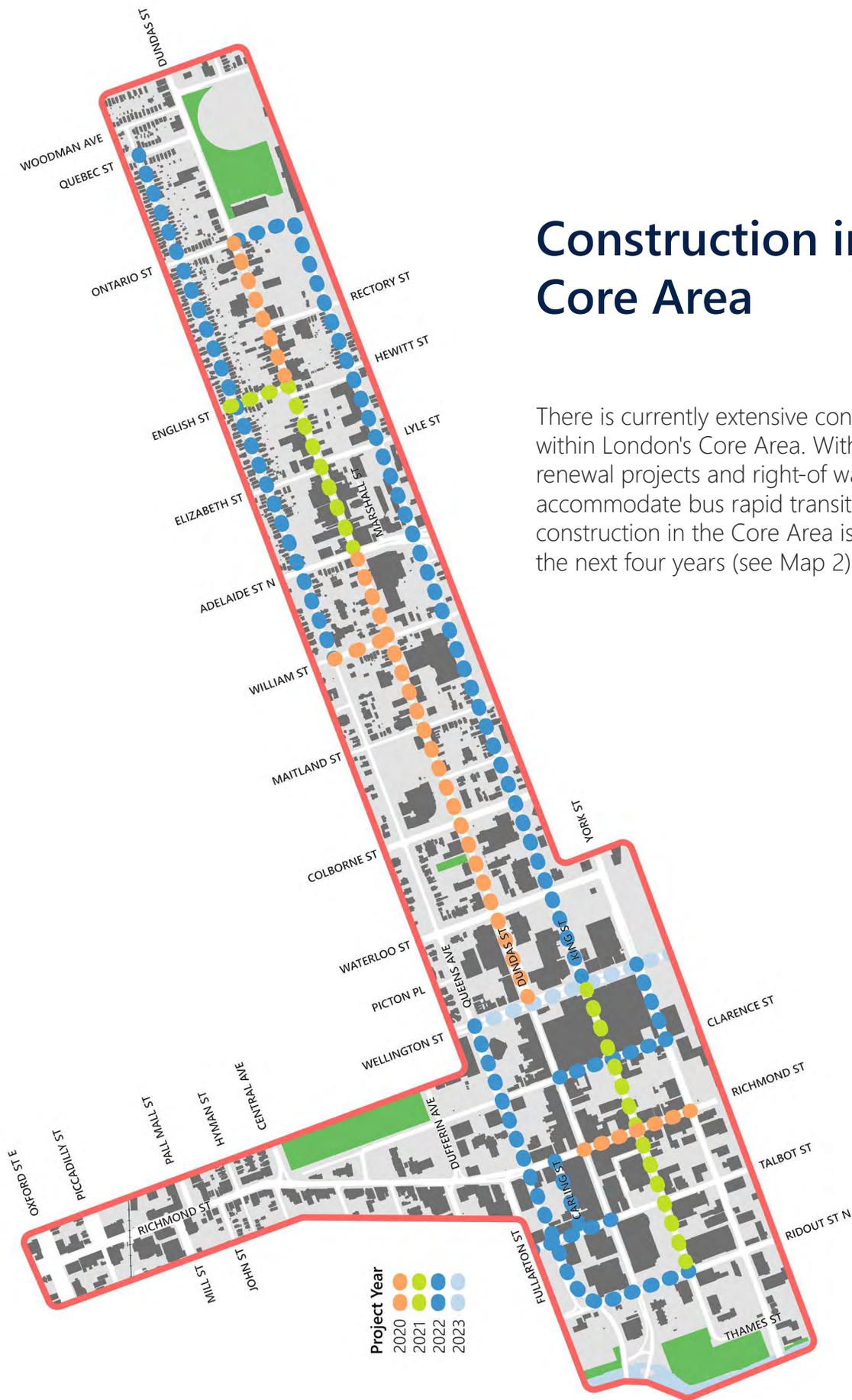
- There is a lack of regular programming in the Core Area, beyond certain key amenities (e.g. Covent Garden Market, Victoria Park, Old East Village Market)
- There is a lack of public art in the Downtown
- There are lots of "dead times" in the Downtown when nothing is happening
- There is a lack of interesting and creative civic spaces
- There is no central source to find out what is happening in the Core Area at any given time

Coordinated Informed Response Pilot Program

The Core Area Informed Response program, now known as the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) pilot program, was initiated in 2018. Between April 15th and August 15th of 2019, the CIR has:



Map 2: Core Area Construction 2020-2023



Construction in the Core Area

There is currently extensive construction underway within London's Core Area. With infrastructure renewal projects and right-of way reconstruction to accommodate bus rapid transit service, significant construction in the Core Area is anticipated over the next four years (see Map 2).



Our Problem

Despite extensive investment in London's Core Area, issues persist that threaten its long-term success.

What's at Stake?

Our Core Area is important to all Londoners and its decline affects us all. If we do not address those problems that are threatening its long-term success, we stand to:

- See a significant decline in our Downtown assessment base, leaving a greater tax burden on property owners in the remainder of the City;
- Send the image of a declining city to prospective new businesses, undercutting our economic competitiveness with other cities;
- Weaken our competitive position for attracting and retaining a talented workforce in London and innovation that follows them;
- Undermine our significant municipal investments in the Core Area;
- Portray London as an unattractive city to live and work in;
- Lose existing businesses in the Core Area, leading to job losses and a reduction in local economic activity;
- Damage our Core Area's residential neighbourhoods;
- Reduce the viability of important cultural heritage resources and neighbourhoods that define our city's history;
- Undermine our city-building strategy to grow more inward and upward in the future; and,
- Weaken our City's music, entertainment, culture and arts offerings.





Our Approach

Understanding the risk of a declining Core Area, it is important that we act quickly as a community. Each action identified in this Action Plan is to be implemented within the:

- Short-term: immediate to 6 months
- Medium-term: 6-12 months
- Long-term: 1-2 years

Over 75 people were interviewed during a short period of time leading up to this Action Plan. While we covered many perspectives, to provide a more exhaustive public consultation approach would have extended the preparation of this plan by months. It is our intention to continue to engage all Core Area stakeholders as the plan unfolds, allowing us to monitor progress, identify what is and what is not working well, and to adjust our course accordingly.

As noted, this is a plan that emphasizes short-, medium-, and long-term action over the next two years. It focuses on issues specifically as they relate to the Core Area. However, it is very important to understand that there are broader scoping and/or longer-term strategies, plans and programs that are underway that set the foundation for this Action Plan. They include such things as:

- **The Housing Stability Plan**

Currently in progress and due to be completed by early 2020, this Plan addresses the full spectrum of housing throughout the city, including shelters, public housing, affordable housing, special needs housing, etc.

- **The Middlesex-London Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy**

This strategy addresses prevention, treatment, harm reduction and enforcement of drugs and alcohol.

- **The London Plan**

This plan establishes planning policies and a regulatory framework for development, urban design, infrastructure, parks and public spaces, and planning programs in the Core Area.

- **Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan**

This plan establishes a series of transformational projects that are either completed or underway.

- **Old East Village Dundas Street Corridor Secondary Plan**

This plan guides the design of the upcoming streetscape improvements along Dundas Street and policy for future development along the corridor.

- **Rapid Transit Master Plan**

This plan outlines the need for rapid transit in London and defines where the Bus Rapid Transit system will run.

- **Downtown Parking Strategy**

This strategy includes a review of existing parking conditions and future development potential, including the City's future role in the provision of shared public parking resources.

- **Downtown and Old East Village Community Improvement Plans (CIP)**

These CIPs identify municipal actions to support improvement and redevelopment within the Downtown and Old East Village.

- **Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan**

This Plan identifies the collective character of the downtown and provides guidance when undertaking restoration, renovation and redevelopment within the downtown.

- **Core Area Construction Program**

This Program identifies the staging of multiple infrastructure renewal projects occurring within the Core Area.



Our Plan of Action

The actions within this Plan are separated into four needs that must all be addressed to achieve Core Area success in London.

- People struggling with homelessness and health issues need help;
- People need to feel safe and secure;
- Businesses need an environment that allows them to be successful; and,
- The Core Area needs to attract more people.

Figure 2 illustrates how these needs work together. For example, we cannot expect to attract more people to the Core Area if people are not feeling safe and secure.



Figure 2: Core Areas Needs

SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

1. Strengthen delivery of Coordinated Informed Response Program

Responding to the challenges experienced by individuals sleeping rough or urban camping is a main focus of the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) Program. The program's intent is to compassionately work with individuals to find safe locations for them to rest and focus on their needs to maintain housing stability. Housing First and rapid housing models are being used for participants who choose to work towards transitioning from the street to housing stability. Individuals who do not choose to seek rapid re-housing are connected with various services and supports depending on their needs in the moment. Additionally, the program focuses on proactive as well as responsive by-law enforcement of encampments on public and private property. Roadside Operations and Forestry work closely with By-law Enforcement and the Coordinated Informed Response team to provide support by cleaning and maintaining public space in the Core Area. This includes garbage clean up, syringe pick-up and storage of individuals' personal belongings.

The program was established by Council on a pilot project basis and, until recently, was not staffed by a dedicated manager. With the hiring of a dedicated manager in September 2019, the CIR Program's outreach and communication strategy will be advanced and partnerships with stakeholders strengthened. Outreach and engagement with Core Area businesses is key to developing positive relationships and ensuring the program is successful. Partnership with London Police Services has helped to coordinate CIR efforts to collaborate on creating a safer environment for everyone.

2. Implement Housing Stability Week pilot project

This project is intended to provide intensive and focused support for those suffering from homelessness. During a one week period, an intensive attempt will be made to invite those who are homeless to a large resting area (consistent with the approach used for other crisis events), where they can have a rest, have a shower, receive a meal and shelter. Multiple social service agencies will be on-site to provide a variety of intensive supports and assistance in a coordinated and direct manner. The ultimate goal will be to connect each person to the health and housing services they need. This pilot will occur in October/November, when the



weather gets colder and people who have been sleeping rough need to move indoors. If the Fall pilot is successful, another will be implemented in early 2020.



3. Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program



The Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) Program currently begins during regular working hours (7:30AM). This action would see CIR Outreach staff begin at 7:00AM or earlier, to help those who are sleeping rough or in need of assistance early in the morning. This will allow for supports and assistance at the very beginning of the day, before negative influences may impact those needing help. This action ties into the breakfast program also included in this Action Plan.



4. Implement breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program



This action would see a new breakfast program start as part of the Coordinated Informed Response Program. Breakfast would be offered to those that need it, such as those who are suffering from homelessness, extreme poverty, mental health issues, etc. Social services and assistance would be offered to those who arrive for the breakfast, with the intent of providing them sustainable supports to help them alter the course of their day in a positive way. Referrals will be made to health providers, counsellors and housing providers using the CIR Program approach and network.



5. Establish Headlease Program



Many of London's most vulnerable population cannot meet the requirements necessary to sign a lease – due to their history, health condition or background. For this reason they can find themselves unable to obtain housing. This action would establish a program whereby the City or a partner agency signs the headlease to secure the housing unit for the participant. This can help to get more people in London, and the Core Area, into the housing they need.



6. Double foot patrol officers in Core Area for a discrete period of time



This pilot project would see the doubling of the London Police Services (LPS) foot patrol in the Core Area for a period of one to two months. The intent of the program would be to increase the police presence in the Core Area, develop intelligence on crime in the Core Area and allow LPS to develop positive relationships with those who work, live, and utilize the Core Area. The program would allow LPS to gain significant visibility, more rigorously enforce the law in the Core Area, and work to effectively deter criminal behaviour. This pilot program would be achieved by re-deploying police resources to focus on the Core Area on a temporary basis.

7. Create new Spotlight Program

The intent of this program is to raise the visibility and awareness of security cameras in the Core Area. More eyes on a public space tend to make it feel safer, and with would-be criminals understanding the extent of the cameras located in the Core Area, they may choose to not commit a crime they would otherwise consider. Highly visible Green Light Signs would be created to post in Core Area storefront windows, where private security cameras exist.



8. Enhance Service London Portal to allow for complaints, concerns, and enquiries on Core Area issues

The Service London Portal provides residents, businesses and visitors with an easy and convenient way to initiate non-emergency City service requests. In the short-term, the Service London Portal will be enhanced to include additional functionality to address Core Area concerns, including:

- Litter;
- Drug paraphernalia;
- Urban camps;
- Graffiti; and,
- Maintenance and cleanliness issues.



9. Install kindness meters to directly support Core Area social service agencies

Contributions to panhandlers in the street generally is not the most effective way to assist those asking for money. A much more effective way to help someone in the Core Area who is experiencing homelessness, mental health, or addiction issues is by donating to a specific charity, program, or service that can help them. This initiative will see kindness meters installed in several Core Area locations where people can contribute change that will go to specific charities, programs, or services that will help the vulnerable population in the Core Area. Once developed, a digital way to donate will also provide an easy means for people to donate to specific charities, agencies and services using mobile technology.



10. Stage police command vehicle in strategic locations

Police visibility can act as a deterrent to crime and a facilitator of public order. London Police Services will stage their command vehicle in strategic locations – for example, within parking lots where there have been significant issues. The vehicle would be occupied by existing police officers undertaking their regular work.





11. Issue request for proposals on Queens Avenue parking lot

The Queens Avenue parking lot is municipally-owned and located within a high-priority zone in need of additional parking spaces as identified by the *Downtown Parking Strategy*. A procurement process will be undertaken to seek out a mixed-use residential/commercial development proposal that includes 200-300 public parking spaces, built to the City’s municipal parking specifications. The intent is to leverage the development potential of this well-located site to obtain public parking at this strategically important location.



12. Explore new ways to support Core Area property owners to dispose of found syringes

The City of London works in a variety of ways to collect and dispose of found syringes in public spaces – river banks, parks, civic spaces, streets, public parking lots, alleys, etc. However, due to a variety of legal issues, the City is not able to collect and dispose of syringes that have been found on private property. This action will explore new ways to equip private property owners in the Core Area with the knowledge and equipment to dispose of syringes that they find on their property. Potential solutions include: Core Area group training sessions, one-on-one training, heightened educational programs, and distribution of disposal kits.



13. Conduct three-week Core Area By-law Enforcement blitz

Complaints are common relating to property standards infractions in the Core Area. Such complaints often relate to buildings left to decay, unsightly litter on property, or inappropriately-stored garbage and other containers. Existing resources will be implemented to operate a three-week enforcement blitz – identifying infractions, working with property and business owners to address the infractions, and enforcing accordingly. The intent of the blitz is to raise the expectations for the maintenance of Core Area properties and establish the understanding that municipal by-laws will be enforced.



14. Prioritize Core Area building and sign permits

Staff reviewing building and sign permits will expedite applications located within the Core Area at no additional cost. This will prioritize business and property owners investing in their buildings in Downtown, Old East Village and Richmond Row, and will allow them to make improvements faster, creating a more supportive business environment.

15. Streamline event processes

It is important to make the planning and production of events as simple as possible in the Core Area. A Core Area Event Team should be established within the City to deliver a highly-responsive and coordinated event permitting process. The team should have a lead representative that coordinates and shepherds all of the City-related event matters. Furthermore, information should be packaged to make event requirements easy to understand and respond to. Opportunities to reduce or remove fees for events should be explored.



16. Provide incentives for installing uplighting on privately-owned buildings

Council recently approved an uplighting program to provide financial incentives to property owners for uplighting Downtown buildings. Uplighting can create an attractive, colourful vibrancy at night and can animate the Downtown during the longer nights in our winter months.



17. Proactively recruit food trucks in dedicated area along Dundas Place

Dundas Place has been designed to support a row of food trucks, between Ridout Street North and Talbot Street. This space is close to Covent Garden Market and could provide a complementary draw to the west end of Dundas Place. It will be important to recruit food trucks that augment and not duplicate those restaurant uses that are in “bricks and mortar” locations nearby.



18. Identify opportunities for new parking spaces in the Core Area

An assessment of all public rights-of-way, parking lots, and publicly-owned lands in the Core Area will be undertaken to identify where new parking spaces may be created.



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19. Establish permanent Coordinated Informed Response Program

Responding to the challenges experienced by individuals sleeping rough or urban camping is a main focus of the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) Program. The program's intent is to compassionately work with individuals to find safe locations for them to rest and focus on their needs to maintain housing stability. Housing First and rapid housing models are being used for participants who choose to work towards transitioning from the street to housing stability. Individuals who do not choose to seek rapid re-housing are connected with various services and supports depending on their needs in the moment. Additionally, the program focuses on proactive as well as responsive by-law enforcement of encampments on public and private property. Roadside Operations and Forestry work closely with By-law Enforcement and the Coordinated Informed Response team to provide support by cleaning and maintaining public space in the Core Area. This includes garbage clean up, syringe pick-up and storage of individuals' personal belongings. The program was established by Council on a pilot project basis. This initiative would establish the program permanently.



20. Establish more daytime resting spaces

Multiple daytime program places have been removed in the recent past. This has meant those who could previously access dedicated daytime program indoor spaces are forced to find other locations to spend their day. Public spaces, such as parking lots, underneath bridges, public streets, parks, riverbanks, and alleys are some of those spaces where people have chosen to rest throughout the day.

This initiative looks to allocate up to \$1.1 million to expand the current resting space initiative to allow for the purchase and capital costs associated with expanding this initiative. It is expected that 40 resting space beds will be available for both daytime (8AM-5PM) and overnight (9PM-7AM) use. These spaces will be allocated through a referral process as part of the 24/7 Coordinated Informed Response initiative. Four or five support staff for this space will be funded as part of the case management request included in this plan. It is expected that the



remaining support staff requirements for the program will be funded as part of the Provincial Community Homeless Prevention Initiative and/or Federal Reaching Home program.

21. Establish Core Area stabilization spaces

Those experiencing in-the-moment drug-induced incapacitation can be a risk to themselves and to others. Two mid-term stabilization (24-96 hour) locations would allow spaces where participants who are experiencing in-the-moment drug-induced incapacitation can be referred to by London Police Services. This space is intended to operate 24/7, provide up to 20 total beds and have appropriate supports on site to support individuals connecting to addiction services including treatment.



22. Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements

This initiative will allocate up to \$5 million to create upwards of 30 new supportive housing units where participants who need a supportive living arrangements can be housed. Partnerships identified through the Housing Development Corporation's incubation process will be utilized to implement this funding so that units will be available for housing as soon as possible.



23. Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations

The Housing First Model emphasizes the need to focus on each individual, assess their housing needs and concurrently assess and understand their additional requirements for personal health and prosperity, such as mental health support, drug addiction counselling, physical health needs, etc. Many that we interviewed suggest that this approach is not pervasive and individuals are often referred from one social assistance provider to another, with very little coordination between them. This approach often leads to specific elements of a person's health being overlooked or not addressed.



This action would see the City lead a collaborative effort between agencies to establish a case management approach to coordinating the treatment and support of the vulnerable population in the Core Area. This approach would require that agencies show flexibility to try new methods of strategizing, collaborating and integrating care between organizations that may have different operational and funding priorities. While sorting through logistical and operational issues will likely be difficult, the gains in efficiencies, effectiveness and outcomes will ultimately make this approach well worth exploring further.

This program will support capital investments in resting spaces, supportive housing, and stabilization locations.



24. Complete and implement *Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan*



Staff are currently preparing an *Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan* (CIP) to support and incent the development of affordable housing units. The CIP includes financial incentives for the private sector and non-profit groups to construct new affordable housing. These incentives will meet the requirements for a Municipal contribution necessary to access significant Federal funding that is available for affordable housing development.



25. Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program



This program will establish Core Area Ambassadors who will wear uniforms, making them easily identifiable as people who can provide assistance. They will walk throughout the Core Area, surveying a regular beat, offering information, assistance, and a welcoming perspective. They will be trained to understand and address many issues that occur in the Core Area. They will identify issues that they encounter and connect with the Coordinated Informed Response team to get people the help and care they need. They will be able to identify garbage issues, by-law infractions, and the need for clean-ups within the Core Area. They will engage and advise the police as appropriate. Ambassadors will clean up litter. They will work to prevent the damage and theft of movable street furniture (such as bistro tables and chairs) set out to activate public spaces. The Ambassadors will seek to develop strong relationships with property owners, business owners, residents, and regular patrons of the Core Area.

There may be opportunity to partner with a non-profit group or organization to operate this program, with the added goals of providing employment and providing work experience and training to help unemployed Londoners gain future employment outside of the program. This opportunity needs to be explored further.

To be effective, Ambassadors will be present in the Core Area from 7AM until 11PM, seven days per week, to address the issues that occur in the mornings, evenings, and on weekends, as well as the core daytime hours. The program would be put in place for four years, after which it could be continued if found to be effective or discontinued if it is not meeting its intended goals.

26. Undertake Core Area safety audit

A safety audit will be undertaken for the entire Core Area to determine those public and private spaces that pose dangerous environments. Such spaces may include alleys, parks, civic spaces, storefronts, rear entrances, stairwells, narrow passages, etc. The audit will flag places and spaces of concern and provide detailed recommendations to address the safety of these spaces through such things as building and landscaping redesign measures, lighting, cameras, fences, and gates.



27. Establish new storefront space for foot patrol, By-law Enforcement Officers and public washrooms

The ongoing operation and maintenance of Dundas Place requires the establishment of a “fieldhouse” to store such items as movable furniture, bollards, planters, and equipment. This space will also serve as a highly-visible storefront office for the Core Area foot patrol and possibly By-law Enforcement Officers. In addition, this space will provide a hub for the Ambassador Program. This initiative will provide an important storefront presence in the central Core Area location and will help to maintain a safe environment for the public washrooms to be housed in this same space.



28. Increase London Police Services foot patrol

A previously listed action calls for a doubling of the Core Area foot patrol on a short-term basis (one to two months), accomplished through the re-deployment of officers from other locations within the city. This is not appropriate nor sustainable over the long term.



To create a sustainable model for increasing food patrol, this medium-term action will add four additional foot patrol members – three Constables and one Sergeant. The intent of the program will be to increase police presence in the Core Area, to deter crime, to support social order and to address violence and threatening behaviour occurring in the Core Area. In addition, the foot patrol will develop relationships with Core Area business owners, employees, patrons, residents and other Core Area users. This will help to create a familiarity between these groups and the police and contribute to a sense of order and security.

29. Enforce loitering regulations

London regulates loitering through the *Streets By-law*. However, it is not proactively enforced due to resource constraints. Furthermore, there is no signage in the Core Area that makes it clear that loitering is not permitted. This action calls for adding two new By-law Enforcement Officers to our existing complement so that Enforcement staff can proactively enforce our existing



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loitering regulations as well as our *Property Standards By-law*. These two new By-law Enforcement Officers would be part of the Coordinated Informed Response team, so that social services are present to offer help and supports for those that need any form of assistance. This action also calls for appropriate “no loitering” signage in the Core Area.



30. Develop and deliver safety training for business owners, employees and residents



Regular training sessions will be offered to Core Area business owners, employers and their employees as well as residents to help them address Core Area concerns. Such training would include matters such as: how to best deal with someone exhibiting unpredictable behavior in the street or in your premise, how to guard against vandalism and theft, how to deal with syringes and other hazardous substances, and who to call for help on a variety of issues. It is envisioned that such training would be delivered through a collaboration involving City of London Corporate Security, London Police Services, London and Middlesex Health Unit, neighbourhood associations and the BIAs.



31. Utilize existing Façade Improvement Loan Program to incent decorative gates through existing Community Improvement Plans



In some cases, decorative gates at residential or storefront entrances in the Core Area can help to secure space and prevent vandalism, urination, drug use, and other improper activity. Existing façade loan programs within Community Improvement Plans for the Downtown and Old East Village can be modified to make it clear that such gates, meeting specific design criteria, will be supported.



32. Undertake safety blitz for aggressive driving in the Core Area



During our engagement process, we heard many reports of unsafe and aggressive driving in the Core Area. Most complaints related to car/pedestrian conflicts at intersections. An information and enforcement blitz will help send the message to drivers in the Core Area that pedestrians have the right-of-way and need to be respected when crossing streets.



33. Proactive enforcement of *Property Standards By-law*



This action calls for adding two new By-law Enforcement Officers to our existing complement so that we can proactively enforce the *Property Standards By-law*. These two new By-law Enforcement Officers would be part of the Coordinated Informed Response team, so that social services are present to offer help and supports for those that need any form of assistance.

34. Package Core Area patio, signage, licensing and other regular business processes



A review will be undertaken of all processes that a typical Core Area business needs to go through in order to locate a new business or expand an existing business. An information and application package will be created that makes it easy for businesses to coordinate the required processes that are most often relevant to Core Area businesses. Service London will establish one or more Core Area Specialists who will work with Core Area applicants or the BIAs through start-up and expansion processes – delivering a shepherding role and a single point of contact for coordinating processes and concerns.

35. Brand uniforms and equipment for all City staff providing service in the Core Area



It is important to raise the visibility and recognition of all those City staff who are delivering services in the Core Area. Doing so demonstrates that there is a constant presence in the Core Area, a pride in being strong stewards of the Core Area, that it is a safe place for all, and that people are being cared for. This can be done by branding uniforms and equipment – giving clear recognition of Municipal workers in the Core Area (Community Informed Response team, maintenance and horticultural staff, Parks staff, By-law Enforcement staff, and Core Area Ambassadors). Such branding is to be applied to equipment, select vehicles such as street sweepers, and staff clothing. While all uniforms may not be exactly the same for all workers (based on different staff functions and needs), they would provide a consistent and easy-to-recognize brand that is identifiable to the public.

36. Establish, implement and regularly monitor a higher clean standard for the Core Area



The condition of a public space plays a large role in dictating who will use the space and how they will use it. The Core Area requires a higher standard of cleanliness to offer the business community the kind of environment that it needs to attract employees and customers. Currently, maintenance and cleaning is completed by a crew from 5AM to 1PM seven days a week, and from 1PM to 11PM on Tuesday through Saturday. A new standard is recommended to deploy a cleaning crew from 5AM to 11PM, seven days per week with additional staff. This would increase operating costs by approximately \$900,000 per year. In addition, a one-time equipment cost would be required of \$240,000 for another street sweeper and other maintenance equipment.

It will be important to document the new standard with specific measures of cleanliness and to develop a specific monitoring and reporting program to assess whether this standard is being met.



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37. Implement new pressure wash program for sidewalks and civic spaces

Currently, approximately \$30,000 is spent annually on pressure washing Core Area sidewalks and civic spaces. Pressure washing is necessary to clean stains from leaking garbage, urine and feces, food and other dirt, oils and general wear-and-tear from sidewalks and civic spaces. The intention of this program is to keep Core Area sidewalks and civic spaces, spaces that are generally more heavily used than any others in the city, clean and vibrant to convey a positive image for Core Area employees, visitors and customers.



38. Provide incentives for installing plumbing and hose connections on storefront through existing Community Improvement Plans

Property and business owners need to have access to water to properly clean their storefront windows, walls and exterior floor areas. This program would provide a grant of up to \$5,000 or 50 percent of the cost of installing plumbing and a hose connection on any privately-owned storefront in the Core Area. This program would be added to existing Community Improvement Plans in the Downtown and Old East Village.



39. Implement Core Area infrastructure monitoring program

Core Area infrastructure includes such things as street pavers, concrete sidewalks, curbs, signage, streetlights, hydrants, utility boxes, street furniture and street trees. This infrastructure is heavily used and often needs repair. This program will establish a specific and regular monitoring system to document the condition of our Core Area infrastructure and identify needs for improvements and repairs. Through the enhanced Service London Portal and other digital solutions, Londoners will also be able to easily submit complaints or identify issues relating to Core Area infrastructure.



40. Encourage shipping container pop-up retail uses during construction

Shipping containers will be established at suitable locations around civic spaces and parks to offer space for retailers within construction areas to use for sales at an alternate location during the construction period. These containers will provide an alternative means for generating business and may open up new market opportunities that emerge through a new format and location.



41. Provide incentives for installing awnings through existing Community Improvement Plans

Awnings create a positive sense of depth and enclosure on Core Area streets, add colour, provide shade, and offer shelter from rain. They also create a unique look and vibrancy. Small grants that enhance the existing Façade Loan program, will encourage Core Area storefront owners to install retractable awnings that will improve our Core Area streetscapes.



42. Fund four-year Core Area “construction dollars” pilot program

To ease the inconvenience of Core Area construction on customers, this action will provide funding for the London Downtown BIA and the Old East Village BIA to make available Core Area “construction dollars” to their merchants (retailers and restaurants); the merchants can in turn offer the “construction dollars” to their customers who have visited and supported the business despite the construction. It is hoped that the Municipal contribution to this program will be augmented by the relevant BIAs.



43. Experiment with temporary free municipal parking

Municipal parking is offered within the Core Area in on-street spaces as well as within City parking lots. All of these spaces use Honk Mobile – an app that patrons use to pay for their parking space for a specified time. This action would see free parking offered in different locations, for different times, for different purposes. For example, it may be used in areas where construction is occurring, to provide greater convenience for customers. Alternatively, it could be used in coordination with businesses for sales events, or on days that are traditionally slower than other days. Methods to monitor the impact of free parking will be explored – for example, requiring completion of a three to five question survey to activate the Honk Mobile code for free parking. This will allow for a fact-based understanding of parking in the Core Area and how it relates to the business environment.



44. Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area

Londoners should know that there is always something interesting and engaging happening in Core Area. There needs to be significantly more regular and diverse programming. A very deliberate and coordinated program of events for the Core Area will allow for a strategic approach which blends large-scale celebrations, with more regular medium- and small-scale events and activities. Event series encourage people to come back over and over again. Catering to different demographics is also important through this deliberate programming approach. Various organizations in London have access to networks of musicians



and other artists that can provide content for regular animation of the Core. It is important to foster strong collaboration with these groups to encourage regular performance and exhibition of music, arts and culture.



45. Activate spaces and places with bistro chairs and tables



Bistro chairs are used in many successful civic spaces throughout the world. They allow for ultimate flexibility, can be taken away in areas where they may be attracting negative behavior, and they offer a very welcoming atmosphere. While they require the measures identified for a safe and clean environment, they can be powerful support tools for programming and animation. It will be important to have adequate staff in place to set up and take down this flexible furniture throughout the Core Area. Core Area Ambassadors will help to avoid theft of this flexible furniture.



46. Create a projection art program

This action calls for a collaboration with the London Arts Council to project art onto buildings at appropriate times and in appropriate locations. This can add light, colour and animation to the Core Area in the evening.



47. Create an infrastructure art and beautification program

The Core Area is occupied by a significant amount of infrastructure. In appropriate circumstances, this infrastructure can be painted, wrapped or otherwise turned into art or beautification elements. Infrastructure that may serve as a canvas includes such items as traffic control boxes, utility access covers, bicycle racks, and utility boxes.



48. Engage Core Area businesses to lead, volunteer or fund initiatives

There are many good examples of cities where a Downtown business community takes the lead in resolving issues and improving the business environment. In these examples, the members of the business community often lead specific initiatives, volunteer their help or expertise or fund specific projects or programs that they believe will have meaningful impact. The Core Area business community will be brought together and engaged to explore potential and facilitate their involvement in this way.

49. Explore partnership opportunities with educational institutions for immersive learning in Core Area

Various educational facilities in London provide education and training for healthcare, social services delivery, security and enforcement. This action seeks to explore opportunities for collaborating with such institutions to coordinate immersive learning experiences in the Core Area. In such a scenario, students might learn and practice in the Core Area as part of their course curriculum. They may shadow, or work with, healthcare, social service, security or enforcement service providers in the Core Area. This would provide for an immersive learning environment, while also helping to contribute to the safety, health and well-being of those within the Core Area. Efforts will be made to facilitate this concept with educational institutions who would ultimately operate such programs.



MEDIUM-TERM
ACTIONS

LONG-TERM ACTIONS



50. Establish new Core Area garbage and recycling collection program

Garbage is put out by Core Area commercial and residential tenants in the early evenings, often on the wrong day, and at times that negatively impact the cleanliness in the Core Area when it is being used for restaurants, events, etc. At times garbage is often ripped open by scavengers (to remove items of value) or by those suffering from mental health issues. Garbage is often strewn on sidewalks and streets. Alternative container types and collection systems will be examined, coupled with tools for enforcing rules on when recycling and garbage can be put out for collection and the types of materials that can be collected. The outcome of the work will be a proposed new collection program for both recycling and garbage collection.

The timing for this initiative can be broken into two categories:

- Program evaluation, design and engagement: November 2019 to March 2020
- Implementation: Winter/Spring 2021



51. Regenerate London and Middlesex Housing Corporation housing stock

The London and Middlesex Housing Corporation (LMHC) delivers social housing in the London region. Their recent annual report emphasized the urgent need to regenerate their housing stock – with the average building age in their portfolio being over 50 years old. The report indicated that hundreds of millions of dollars in repairs are required over the next decade to achieve an acceptable facility condition. This is a significant housing issue that will require long-term solutions, including a significant sustainable funding source.



52. Complete and implement the *Housing Stability Plan*

It is understood that the long-term solution for many of the social issues being addressed in this plan relate to housing. Providing housing that is safe and secure is the first step in solving an individual's social and health issues. The *Housing Stability Plan* is being updated to establish a path forward for the next five years



of homeless prevention and housing work in London. The ultimate goal of the plan is to move towards housing stability across London for both individuals and families. The plan is expected to be completed in the short term with implementation occurring thereafter on a long-term basis.

53. Open permanent supervised consumption facility in appropriate location and close existing temporary facility



Council has established Official Plan policies and specific zoning to plan for supervised consumption facilities in London. These policies direct such facilities to locations that are accessible for those who will use them (people suffering from addictions) and where they are removed from busy commercial areas that are more likely to generate conflicts with business owners, customers, tourists and employees. Such locations also help to respect the privacy of those who use supervised consumption facilities. Council approved a planning application to allow for a supervised consumption facility on a site that conforms with those new policies. Both the approved policies and the approved planning application have been appealed to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and await hearings and final decisions. Regardless of the outcome of the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal decision on the current site under consideration, the relocation of the existing facility should continue to be pursued.

54. Provide grants to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan*



The safety audit conducted for the Core Area will reveal spaces on privately-owned lands that could be improved to create safer conditions. This will be focused on those privately-owned spaces that interface with the public realm (rather than the interior of privately-owned buildings). The audit will produce recommendations to specify what improvements should be made. A new program will be established to offer private property owners and businesses grants of up to \$10,000 per property and up to a maximum of 50 percent of the cost of the safety improvements. The program will specify what type of improvements would quality (for example, cameras, lighting, gates, etc.).

55. Implement safety audit recommendations on public property



The safety audit conducted for the Core Area will reveal spaces on publicly-owned property that could be improved to create safer conditions. The audit will produce recommendations to specify what improvements should be made. This action will result in a deliberate program to make these improvements over time, beginning with those that are most problematic.



56. Implement Core Area digital solutions

A short-term initiative in this plan relates to enhancing the Service London Portal to include additional functionality for complaints, concerns and enquiries on Core Area issues. This longer-term initiative is to create a solution for the Core Area that builds upon this work and creates a digital space for enhanced communication and collaboration. This will include:



- Business to business communication;
- Business to BIA communication;
- Public communication with on-duty Ambassadors;
- Live event tracking;
- Event and business promotion;
- Kindness donations to Core Area social service agencies; and,
- Access to Service London Portal to report complaints, concerns and enquiries.



57. Use CityStudio to explore innovative approaches to addressing Core Area social issues

CityStudio is a new organization that systematically brings real-world city issues to the classrooms of our post-secondary education institutions. Schools such as Western University, Huron College, King’s College, Fanshawe College and others review the issues presented to them by the City, and select those that they can integrate into their curriculum. They then offer an immersive learning experience which often generates new and innovative solutions to difficult city problems. CityStudio will be utilized to explore solutions to specific social issues, with the intent of discovering new ways that vulnerable populations in the Core Area can be supported.



58. Work with surrounding communities to establish a regional strategy for addressing vulnerable populations

Vulnerable populations often move between municipal centres within the Southern Ontario region and, in doing so, lose continuity and contact with their necessary supports. It would be helpful to have a regional strategy that can serve to coordinate the supports and assistance of those who make such moves. It would also help to coordinate the approach that service providers use to recommend moves to local and regional centres.



59. Explore opportunities to partner with agencies to provide a Core Area Resource Centre

The Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre is an excellent example of what would be very beneficial within the Core Area. Such a centre could include programs relating to community development, community support,

youth programs and food and prosperity programs. A resource centre such as this could be of great assistance above and beyond the many services already provided in the Core Area, but with a community and neighbourhood perspective connecting those services.

60. Prioritize Core Area for public art

London's Core Area suffers from a lack of public art. This action serves to make an impact by prioritizing the Core Area as the focus for major public art installations over the next four years. Additional funds are also identified to augment the existing program and allow for meaningful art installations that improve and enhance the vibrancy of our Core Area and thus the image of our city.



61. Explore opportunities for additional public washrooms

There is a lack of clean, safe and convenient public washrooms in the Core Area. Such facilities are necessary for events and activities in public spaces. They are also important in creating a more inclusive and accessible space. The opportunity for providing public washrooms in the Dundas Place fieldhouse should be explored.



62. Eliminate encroachment fees for patios, signage and awnings in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan

Currently, those who install patios, signs and/or awnings on or over the public right-of-way are charged an encroachment fee. An encroachment agreement is entered into which establishes the nature of the encroachment, responsibility for liability, and an annual fee for the opportunity to encroach on City-owned land. This process can be time-consuming and also poses an irritant for businesses who are trying to establish a positive environment for their restaurant, retail store or service. This action would eliminate these encroachment fees from the Core Area. This program would be established through the *Core Area Community Improvement Plan*.



63. Eliminate application fees for encroachments, signage and patios in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan

To incent more business in the core, it is important to simplify processes and minimize start-up costs. This action will eliminate application fees for encroachments, signage and patios in the Core Area. The program would be established through the *Core Area Community Improvement Plan*.





64. Eliminate fees for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan*



The Downtown has seen several examples of temporary patios constructed in on-street parking spaces for the Spring, Summer and Fall season. This is allowed through a permitting process and a fee that approximates the forgone revenue that the City would have collected if the parking space was operational. This fee is significant and acts as a deterrent for such patios that can help restaurants to expand business revenue opportunities and also add vibrancy and street life to the Core Area. This action will eliminate fees associated with the lost parking revenue of on-street parking spaces due to temporary patios.



65. Discourage perpetual extension of temporary surface parking lots in Core Area



The London Plan establishes a policy that discourages the ongoing extension of temporary surface commercial parking lots in the Downtown. The policy allows for the evaluation of applications for such extensions, through a zoning amendment, considering the demand/need for parking in that part of the Downtown.



66. Continue to enhance transit service to the Core Area



Council’s plans for the Core Area will provide significantly improved transit service to and throughout the Core Area. These efforts should be built-upon over the long-term by enhancing transit services to the Core that can reduce automobile congestion and improve the convenience and ease of getting to and within the Core Area.



67. Continue to improve cycling infrastructure in the Core Area



The Core Area is relatively large, taking in Richmond Row, the Downtown, and Old East Village. It is important to connect these areas with convenient and safe cycling infrastructure, including a quality network of protected bicycle lanes and secure lock-up facilities. A proposed bike share program would help to allow customers, employees and residents use businesses and services in the Core Area more effectively, helping to connect and enhance the Core Area’s business environment.



68. Plan and save funds for a public parking garage



The *Downtown Parking Strategy* identifies priority zones for the construction of a future parking structure. In accordance with the strategy, a program and budget should be established to plan for such a facility and the saving of funds to construct it. Various models will be explored.

69. Inventory social services in the Core Area

During our conversations, many business owners emphasized the concern that there was an over-concentration of social services within the Core Area. They suggested that many of these services did not truly need to be located in the Core Area, but there was a default expectation that such services would locate there. Furthermore, there are concerns that some social services are operating without concern for the impact that they may be having on the surrounding business area - for example long line-ups along main streets are creating congested and inhospitable walking environments that keep customers away. This could possibly be avoided simply by altering the operational approach of the service. This action calls for a full inventory and mapping of all the social service agencies in the Core Area, an understanding of the numbers they serve and their need for a Core Area location. Where services are being operated in a way that may negatively impact the surrounding business environment, potential solutions will be identified that could mitigate this impact.



LONG-TERM
ACTIONS



Making it All Happen

This Action Plan involves a wide range of complex actions to be undertaken by a broad range of Core Area stakeholders – some of which are outside of the Corporation of the City of London. It will be necessary to establish a coordinating mechanism, whereby all stakeholders come together on a structured and regular basis to collaboratively track progress, monitor results, and strategize on next steps. Such a structure needs to be established in the short term.

Over the long term, the need for a permanent organizational structure should be explored for the Core Area. This could be in the form of a Core Area Management Organization (CAMO) that implements some functions directly, coordinates other functions delivered by the municipality, and partners with various organizations who will deliver services within the scope of their mandates (e.g. BIAs).

Deliberate, coordinated and effective communications will be very important to realize success in implementing this Action Plan. Such communications range from those between implementing organizations, to those who have businesses, residences, and property in the Core Area. A communication strategy should be developed to engage Londoners in the Core Area regeneration effort, giving them meaningful opportunities to help improve their city.

