

Draft October 2020



City of London

# Core Area Community Improvement Plan







# Acknowledgments

This Community Improvement Plan was prepared by the City of London City Planning Division with assistance from numerous other City Divisions and community partners as well as all those who participated in the process and contributed throughout the preparation of this Plan.

# Core Area Community Improvement Plan

## **1 Introduction**

2 Community Improvement Plan Overview

5 The Study Area

6 Core Area Profile

## **9 Community Improvement Needs**

10 Consultation

11 Community Feedback

## **17 Community Improvement Project Area**

18 The Project Area

## **21 Vision & Goals**

22 Vision

23 Goals

## **25 Incentive Programs**

26 Purpose of Financial Incentives

27 Core Area Financial Incentive Programs

30 City-Wide Incentive Programs

DRAFT

## **31 Implementation**

32 Actions Items

## **35 Monitoring & Evaluation**

36 Monitoring

40 Evaluation

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# Section 1

# Introduction

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# Community Improvement Plan Overview

## What is a Community Improvement Plan?

A Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is a strategy that guides redevelopment and improvements within a defined area of need. To achieve the strategy, CIPs allow a municipality to take actions such as:

- Identify changes needed to land use planning policy, zoning, other by-laws and practices;
- Acquire, rehabilitate, and dispose of land;
- Provide grants and loans to property owners that would otherwise be unavailable; and,
- Direct investments made to infrastructure and public space.

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## Purpose of this Community Improvement Plan

In response to increasing concerns received regarding the state of the core area, and acknowledging that there has previously been extensive public and private investment in the Downtown and surrounding areas, the City of London initiated a study to identify the gaps that were potentially hindering the success of the core area. The *Core Area Action Plan* was the result of this study, which identified a number of initiatives that were intended to fill in these gaps. In November 2019, Municipal Council received this plan and directed its implementation.

While there are existing Community Improvement Plans for both the Downtown and Old East Village, the *Core Area Action Plan* identified the need for a specialized community improvement plan that addressed parts of the Downtown and Old East Village, but also bridged the gap between these two areas of the city. The City of London has prepared this community improvement plan for the Core Area, which is intended to result in its revitalization by:

- Establishing a vision and objectives for the Core Area CIP;
- Recording and prioritizing actions for how the Core Area will be improved; and,
- Proposing incentive programs that can be offered to stimulate private sector investment in the revitalization.







## How This Plan Was Prepared

The Core Area Action Plan laid the groundwork for this Community Improvement Plan.

These main tasks were completed to provide a comprehensive foundation for the preparation of this CIP:

- Review of relevant Provincial and City policy documents;
- Review of existing City of London Community Improvement Plans and incentive programs;
- Analysis of the Core Area based on:
  - Secondary information (such as Statistics Canada data);
  - Visual audit and first-hand data collection;
  - Input received from City staff; and,
  - Information collected through individual interviews of those living, working, and doing business in the Core Area.

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# The Study Area

When a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) is being prepared, a Study Area is established to focus the project scope and establish the community which is being considered for potential "improvement" through various means identified under section 28 of the *Planning Act*. From the Study Area, a Project Area is then identified as the specific area requiring improvement. The Project Area is included in the CIP, which is adopted by Municipal Council. Provincial regulations state that the Project Area is based on an area that, in the opinion of Municipal Council, improvement is desirable because of age, dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, unsuitability of buildings or for any other environmental, social, or community economic development reasons.

For the Core Area CIP, the study area is identified below in Figure 1 and can generally be defined by the Thames River to the west, properties fronting Queens Avenue to the north, Woodman Avenue to the east, and properties fronting King Street to the south; it also includes all properties fronting Richmond Street from Fullarton Street to Oxford Street East and properties fronting York Street from the Thames River to Waterloo Street.



Figure 1: Study Area





# Core Area Profile

## Purpose

The profile for the Core Area establishes baseline conditions and identifies characteristics which make this area of the city distinct within London. This comparison can provide insight into opportunities and challenges within the Core Area Project Area. Unless otherwise stated, the data presented was obtained by Environics Analytics and collected in 2020.

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## Population

The total household population of the Core Area is 8,446, which represents two percent of the total population of London. The daytime population of the Core Area, which accounts for those at home and at work, is 40,191 representing approximately 10 percent of the total population of London.

The Core Area has a relatively young population, with 50 percent of the population 34 years of age and younger and a median age of 37. Of this population, 34 percent of residents are married or in a common-law relationship, which is significantly lower than that city-wide at 53 percent.

The Core Area population is 23 percent visible minorities, which is consistent with the visible minority representation city-wide. Approximately 17 percent of the Core Area population is composed of immigrants, while immigrants represent 23 percent city-wide.

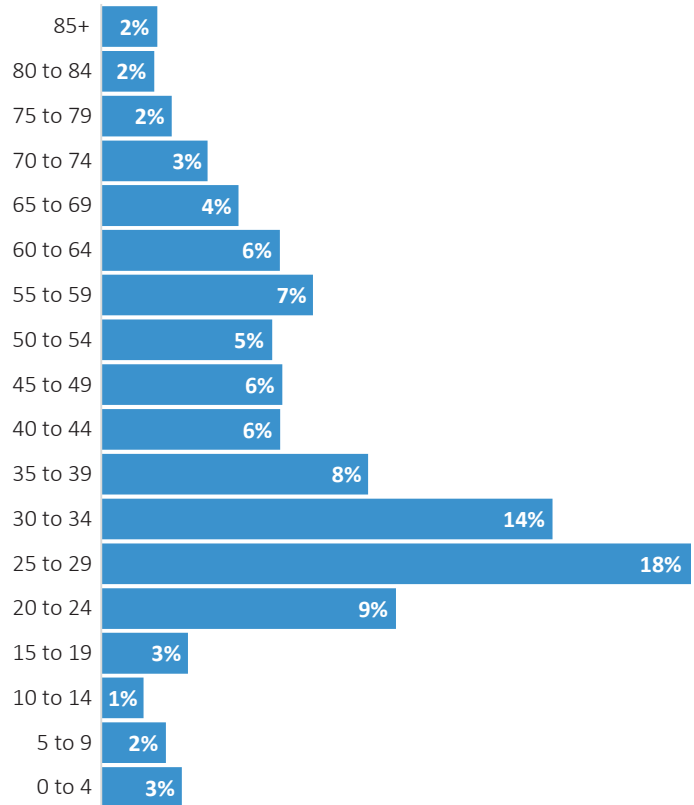
## Household Income

The average annual household income in the Core Area is approximately \$67,323, which is significantly lower than the city-wide annual household income of \$90,741. Approximately 41 percent of the households in the Core Area have an annual income of under \$40,000. In comparison, only 28% of households city-wide have an annual household income of less than \$40,000.

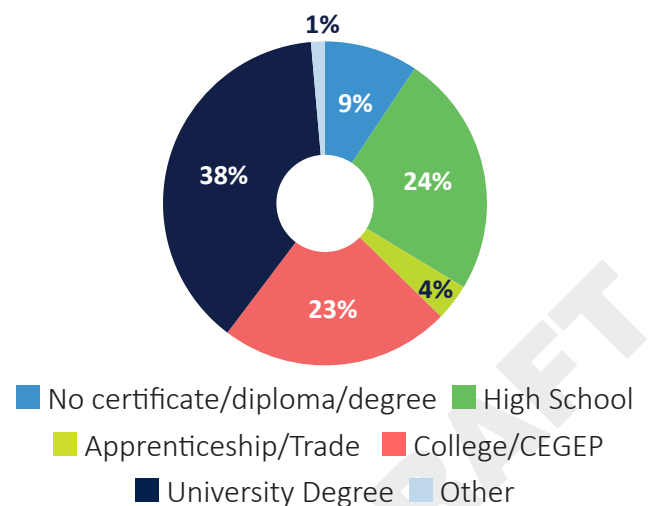
## Education

A higher proportion of Core Area residents have a university degree than that of residents city-wide, with 38 percent and 28 percent, respectively.

## Age Structure



## Education

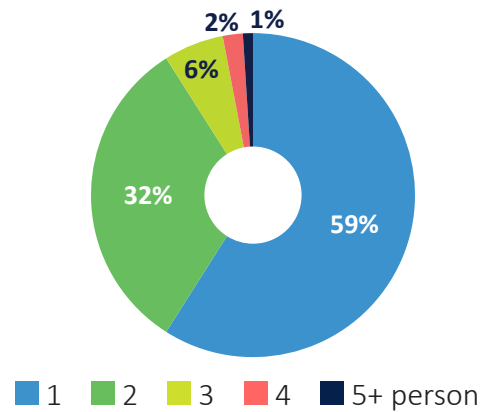


## Household Structure

There are 5,311 households in the Core Area, a the majority of which are one-person households. While only 32 percent of households city-wide are one-person households, within the Core Area 59 percent of households are comprised of one person.

Within the Core Area, approximately 12 percent of households have children, whereas 38 percent of households city-wide are households with children at home.

### Household Structure

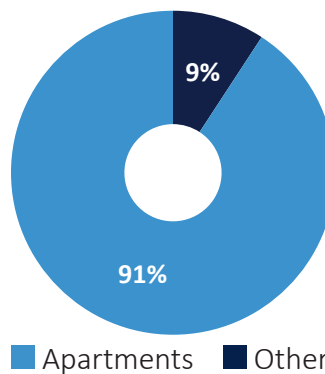


## Housing

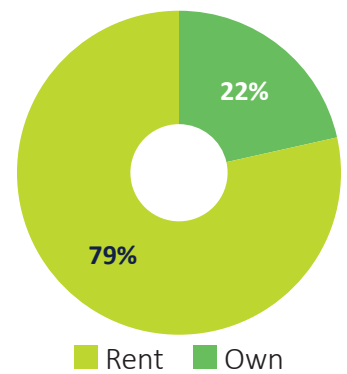
There are 5,311 households in the Core Area, 91 percent of which reside in apartment-style buildings, including high-rise apartments, low-rise apartments and duplex dwellings. The remaining 9 percent of households live in single-detached, semi-detached, and row houses.

Within the Core Area, 79 percent of households rent, while 22 percent own. In comparison, 40 percent of households rent and 60 percent own city-wide.

### Housing Type



### Tenure



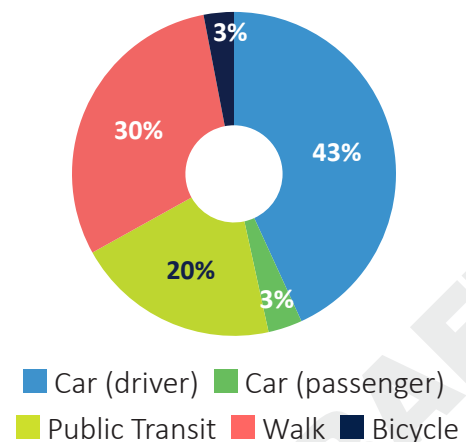
## Employment

The Core Area has a 70 percent labour force participation rate, which is higher than the city-wide labour force participation rate of approximately 60 percent.

The top three employment sectors for Core Area residents include sales and service (17 percent), business finance administration (10 percent) and education/government/religion/social (9 percent).

Core Area residents are considerably less car dependent, with only 46 percent commuting by car (as a passenger or driver) in comparison to 81 percent city-wide.

### Commuting Mode



## Section 2

# Community Improvement Needs

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## Consultation

To gain an understanding of key issues and to identify the gaps that should be addressed by this community improvement plan (CIP), community improvement needs in the Core Area Project Area have been determined using the following methods:

- First-hand observations made during site visits of the area;
- Research and analysis of legislation, policies, regulations and other sources of existing information applicable to the area;
- Consultation with the local community members and organizations; and,
- Consultation across City of London service areas.

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# Community Feedback

The feedback received has been grouped into four categories, consistent with the *Core Area Action Plan*:



**Help those struggling with homelessness and health issues.**



**Create a safe and secure environment.**



**Support businesses.**



**Attract more people.**

This feedback received during consultation with the community is grouped by category and summarized in the following pages. As written, some comments may be seen by some as being insensitive or inappropriate. However, it was important that an accurate representation of the comments received are reflected in this plan.





## **Help those struggling with homelessness and health issues.**

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.

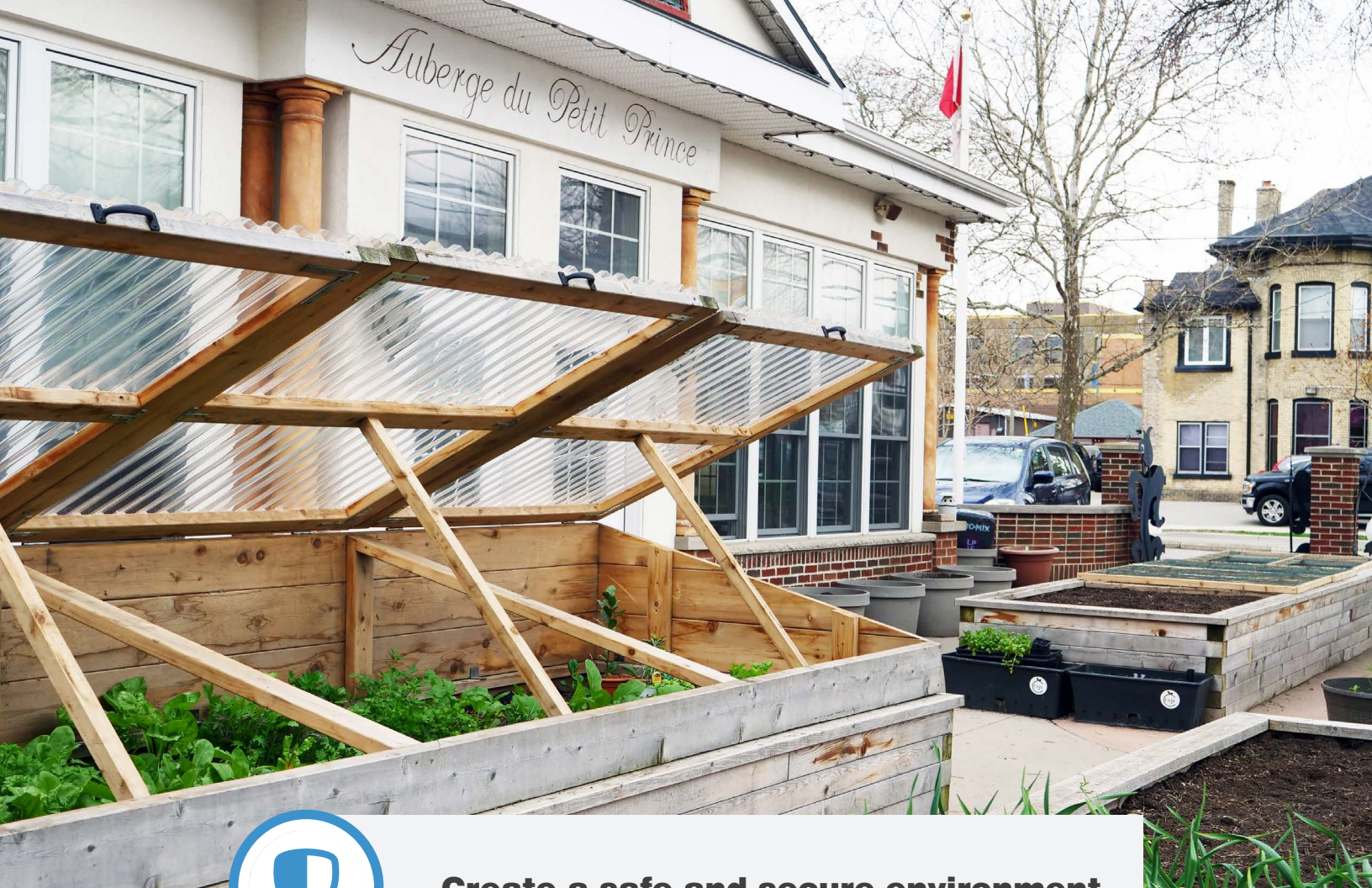
There is a lack of housing, including shelters, public housing, and affordable housing.

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.

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## **Create a safe and secure environment.**

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.

Aggressive driving puts pedestrians at risk.

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.

Criminal activity is openly evident (e.g. drug trafficking).

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## Support businesses.

Some private properties are neglected and buildings are left vacant to deteriorate and decay.

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.

Ground-floor retail, service and restaurant uses are leaving, leading to high vacancies in some areas.

High vacancies are persistent in many office buildings, particularly Class B and C space.

Some businesses feel that the way nearby social services are operated and managed can have negative impacts on their business.

Multiple construction projects are creating challenges for businesses.

There is a significant concentration of social services in the Core Area.

On-street parking spaces have been lost 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.





## 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 no central source to find out what is happening in the Core Area at any given time.

There are lots of "dead times" when nothing is happening.

There is a lack of public art.

There is a lack of interesting and creative civic spaces.

There is a lack of community amenities to support a residential population.

The personal vehicle dominates in the Core Area and enhancements to the cycling and public transit infrastructure are needed to improve the accessibility of the Core Area.

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# ICE CREAM

OPEN

STORE HOURS  
MON-SUN 2-11 PM  
TUESDAY CLOSED

Fresh Hand Rolled Ice Cream.



Fresh Scooped Ice Cream.

COFFEE  
WAYS  
GOOD  
IDEA

THE CHURCH KEY  
RESTAURANT

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## Section 3

# Community Improvement Project Area

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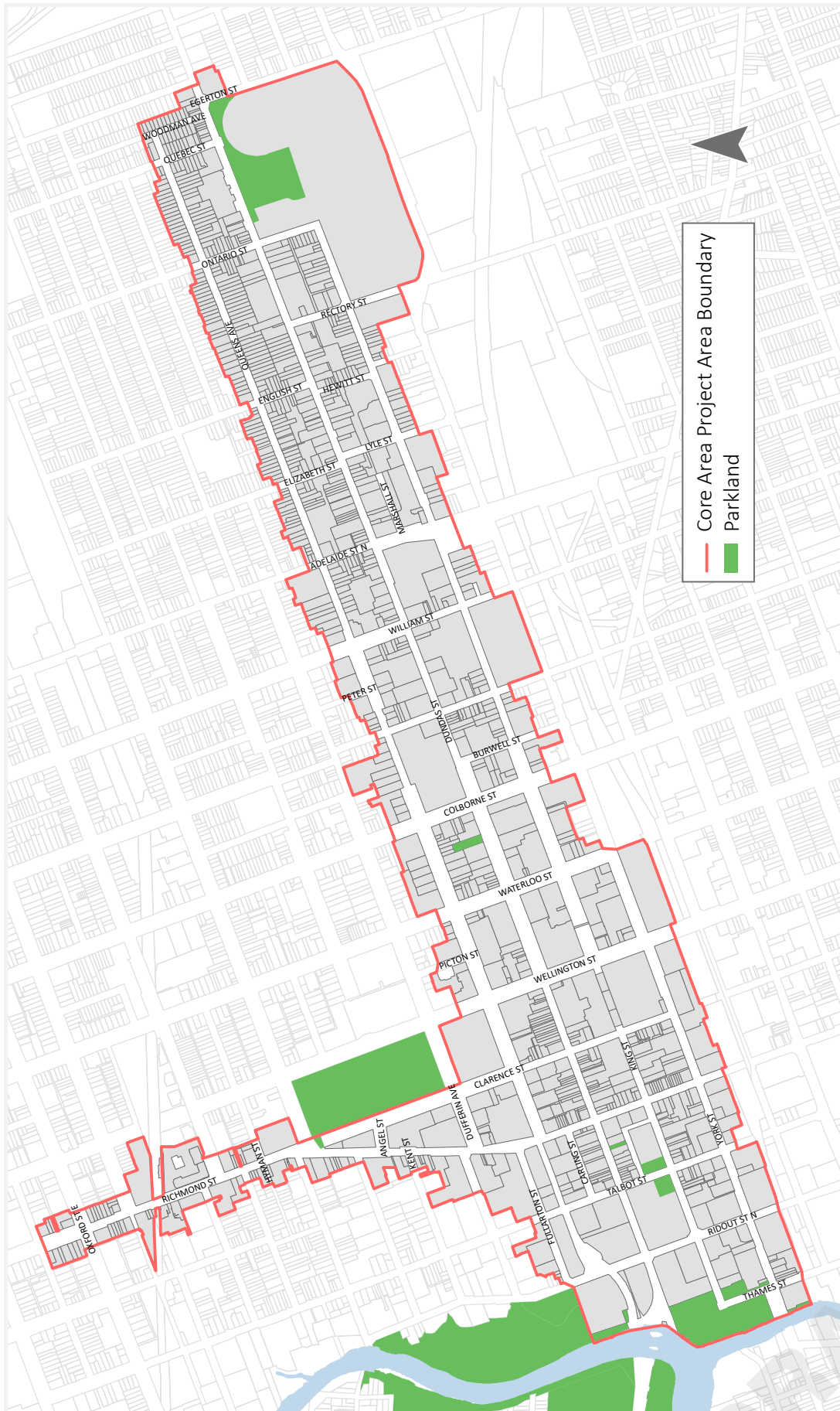


Figure 2: Core Area Project Area







## Section 4

# Vision & Goals

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## Vision

A vision for a community improvement plan (CIP) is a long-term strategic statement that identifies how the community wants to look, feel, and function. The establishment of a vision is a critical component of the CIP process because it provides the overarching long-term foundation for the improvements and incentive programs cited in the CIP. The following vision was created for the Core Area:

By 2030, the Core Area will solidify itself as the primary destination in the city for arts, culture, and entertainment, and be a welcoming urban neighbourhood that establishes a positive image of London.



# Goals

A goal is a long-term and broad aim aligned to achieve a defined vision. Clearly defined goals allow people to see how actions related to the community vision. The following goals have been established for the Core Area:

Create a positive image that is representative of the city as a whole.

Create a welcoming environment that is safe and secure for everyone.

Offer compassionate care for those who need it.

Improve accessibility by active and public transportation modes.

Serve as a destination for locals and tourists.

Expand opportunities for culture, arts, music and entertainment.

Increase activity outside of office business hours.

Remove barriers for small and local businesses.

Attract and retain businesses, talent and investment.

Create great streetscapes that are visually interesting, accessible and clean.

Increase the residential population.

Support local residents and build a sense of community.









## Section 5

# Incentive Programs

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## Purpose of Financial Incentives

Coupled with proposed initiatives identified in the *Core Area Action Plan* that can be undertaken by the public sector, the private sector needs to be engaged in community improvement to achieve this plan's goals. Financial incentives are established to help stimulate private investment in buildings and properties. In accordance with the *Planning Act* and the City's Official Plan, the City may offer grants or loans to property owners to help cover eligible costs and further community improvement goals.

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# Core Area Financial Incentive Programs

## Background

The Core Area CIP financial incentive programs represent a comprehensive ‘toolkit’ of programs designed to help address a number of the key gaps identified during the analysis and achieve the vision and goals of the CIP. The financial incentive programs are designed to encourage private sector investment within the Core Area.

The incentive programs contained in the CIP are referred to as a ‘toolkit’ because once the CIP is adopted and approved, Municipal Council is able to fund, activate, and implement the incentive programs. The programs are however subject to the availability of funding and Municipal Council may choose to implement, suspend, or discontinue one or more programs at a time. It is important to note that the Core Area CIP is an enabling document which means Municipal Council is under no obligation to activate and implement any of the incentive programs.

The programs are also referred to as a ‘toolkit’ because once activated, these programs can be used individually or together by an applicant. In addition to the incentive programs contained in this CIP, the City of London also provides incentive programs in the Brownfield, Heritage, and Affordable Housing CIPs, which may be applicable to property owners within the Core Area Project Area. It should also be noted that the Downtown and Old East Village Project Areas, as identified in the corresponding CIPs, overlap with portions of the Core Area CIP. As such, financial incentive programs in the Downtown CIP and Old East Village CIP may also be applicable to property owners.

Among the various CIPs there may be similar and overlapping incentives a property owner might choose to apply for related to a specific property. Each CIP provides specific program requirements for each financial incentive program.

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## Summary of Financial Incentive Programs

Table 1 summarizes basic program details for each of the incentive programs. The maximum grant/loan available for each program will be determined by City Council when it implements an incentive program and will be based on budget considerations at that time.

Eligibility criteria is available in the detailed program requirements in the Core Area CIP financial incentive implementation information package. An amendment to this Plan is required to add a financial incentive program or alter its description. Changes to detailed program requirements may occur by Municipal Council resolution without an amendment to this Plan.

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**Table 1: Summary of Core Area CIP Financial Incentive Programs**

Program	Description	Program Duration
<p>Core Area Safety Audit Program</p>	<p>A program designed to assist property owners in implementing safety audit recommendations necessary to improve safety within the Core Area. A safety audit will be conducted to identify areas of concern and to recommend safety improvements to public and private space. The program will specify what type of improvements would qualify for assistance.</p> <p>The City may provide grants of up to \$10,000 per property and up to a maximum of 50 percent of the cost of the improvements identified by the safety audit.</p>	<p>As directed by Municipal Council</p>
<p>Core Area Fees Program</p>	<p>A program designed to waive administrative and licence fees related to the operation of a boulevard café, including fees associated with a temporary sound permit and temporary use of the municipal sidewalk and/or on-street parking space related to a boulevard café. This program is also designed to waive administrative and licence fees related to encroachment for boulevard cafés, signage, and awnings in the public right-of-way.</p> <p>The City may provide grants equal to the administrative and licence fees.</p>	<p>As directed by Municipal Council</p>

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# City-Wide Incentive Programs

The City of London provides incentive programs that are contained in the Brownfield Heritage, and Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plans, which may also be applicable to property owners within the Project Area. Table 2 identifies these incentive programs. Specific program information is included in the associated plans.

**Table 2: Summary of City-Wide CIP Incentive Programs**

CIP	Incentive Programs
Brownfield	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contamination Assessment Study Grant Program</li><li>• Property Tax Assistance Program</li><li>• Development Charge Rebate</li><li>• Tax Increment Equivalent Grant</li></ul>
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tax Increment Grant</li><li>• Development Charge Equivalent Grant</li></ul>
Affordable Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Affordable Housing Development Loan Program</li><li>• Additional Residential Unit Loan Program</li></ul>

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## Section 6

# Implementation

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## Actions Items

### Purpose

The intent of an action item is to identify a discrete implementable item that helps in achieving the vision and goals of this plan. Each action item has a corresponding lead, a target date for implementation, and funding information. This creates accountability and establishes expectations with respect to the implementation of the action items. However, the target dates identified are based on the current circumstances and may be subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances or direction provided by Municipal Council.

The ability to complete the actions listed in Table 3 is contingent on available resources and other projects and priorities that are underway or introduced by Municipal Council in the future.

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## Scope

Action items identified in a community improvement plan must be consistent with the definition of "community improvement" found in Section 28 of the *Planning Act*. The *Core Area Action Plan* contains approximately 70 action items; a number of these action items explicitly require a community improvement plan to facilitate their implementation. Therefore, action items identified in the *Core Area Action Plan* and consistent with this definition have been identified in this plan.

While common feedback from stakeholder engagement included the need to help those experiencing with homelessness and health issues, initiatives related to addressing this are largely not within the purview of a community improvement plan and are not reflected in the Action Items Table. However, the *Core Area Action Plan* addresses this gap and provides sufficient direction to undertake initiatives related to helping those experiencing homelessness and health issues.

## Action Items Table

Table 3: Action Items provides a description of the action item, the lead City department responsible for implementation, the target date for implementation and how funding has been allocated to support the implementation of the action item.

**Table 3: Action Items**

	Action Item	Lead	Target Date	Funding
1.1	Undertake a safety audit of the Core Area to identify physical improvements that can be undertaken on both public and private space to improve safety and security.	Corporate Security & Emergency Management	2021	Funded by 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget
1.2	Implement safety audit recommendations on publicly-owned property.	Environmental & Engineering Services; Parks & Recreation	2023	Funded by 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget
1.3	Make available financial incentives to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property.	City Planning	2023	Funded by 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget

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	<b>Action Item</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Funding</b>
1.4	Secure a storefront to establish a multi-functional space to house relevant City staff, Foot Patrol Officers, and public restrooms as well as provide convenient storage for moveable furniture and equipment.	Parks & Recreation	2021	Funded by 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget
1.5	Create an infrastructure art and beautification program to identify opportunities for necessary infrastructure to be visually enhanced through the application of artwork.	City Planning	2021	Within existing budgets
1.6	Regenerate London and Middlesex Housing Corporation (LMHC) housing stock.	Housing; LMCH	2023	
1.7	Explore opportunities for new public washrooms.	Parks & Recreation	2023	Within existing budgets
1.8	Make available financial incentives to waive administrative and licence fees related to the operation of a boulevard café, including fees associated with a temporary sound permit and temporary use of an on-street parking space related to a boulevard café, as well as administrative and licence fees related to encroachment of boulevard cafés, signage, and awnings in the public right-of-way.	City Planning	2023	Funded by 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget
1.9	Discourage the perpetual extension of temporary surface parking lots.	Development Services	2023	Within existing budgets

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## Section 7

# Monitoring & Evaluation

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# Monitoring

## Purpose

The monitoring program has several purposes:

- Identify how the vision and goals of the Core Area CIP have been achieved, to assess which actions and programs in it have been completed and/or can be suspended or discontinued;
- Determine whether any amendments to the Plan are warranted;
- Identify funds dispersed through the CIP incentive programs so as to determine which programs are being most utilized and use this information to adjust the programs as required;
- Gather feedback from applicants to the incentive programs so that adjustments can be made to the incentive programs as required; and,
- Identify the community and economic impact associated with projects taking advantage of the CIP incentives programs.

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## Measures of Success

Community improvement plans are created to provide the opportunity to re-plan, redesign, redevelop, and rehabilitate areas of the city. The success of the *Core Area Community Improvement Plan* is based on the identified improvements being undertaken that can help address a recognized need or gap and can be measured based on the four-year summary report as described further below. The following table provides target success measures for this CIP.

**Table 4: Success Measures**

Indicator of Success	Target
<b>1</b> Residential growth is strong for a protracted period	Number of residential units constructed within a consecutive four-year period exceeds the previous four-year period
<b>2</b> Commercial vacancies are low and storefronts are well occupied	Maximum 5% vacancy rate on ground-level commercial spaces
<b>3</b> Pedestrian activity is present throughout the day and on weekends	Minimum hourly pedestrian counts on commercial corridors
<b>4</b> Safety and security is actively being improved	A minimum number of the recommendations of the Safety Audit are implemented on both public and private property
<b>5</b> The public realm is clean and maintained	Minimum weekly garbage collection and monthly powerwashing (adjusted for seasonal needs)
<b>6</b> Public infrastructure is visually enhanced	Number of art installations and beautification projects within a consecutive four-year period exceeds the previous four-year period
<b>7</b> Surface parking lots are being redeveloped	The surface area occupied by surface parking lots within a consecutive four-year period is less than the previous four-year period
<b>8</b> Sidewalk is active with seasonal boulevard cafés	Number of boulevard cafés permits within a consecutive four-year period exceeds the previous four-year period





## Baseline Conditions

For the indicators identified above, baseline conditions have been identified at the outset of the CIP implementation, so that variables may be compared from year-to-year, beginning with implementation of the CIP. The following provides a list of the baseline conditions for the Core Area Project Area that were established during the preparation of this CIP and from which future information can be compared.

The total population was 8,446 in 2020.

The total number of dwelling units was 5,311 in 2020.

The office vacancy rate was 18.6% in the second quarter of 2020.

A Safety Audit was not undertaken.

Photo inventory of the condition of existing streetscape.

The total area of land covered by surface parking lots was XX ha.

The total number of approved boulevard café permits was 14 in 2019.

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## **Financial Incentive Monitoring Database and Program**

This section provides a list of variables that should be monitored on individual projects which avail of the incentive programs contained within this CIP. Further to these quantitative, economic- based measures, the monitoring should include qualitative measures that characterize social and community benefits. This could include the impact of public realm improvement projects on existing businesses and community pride.

Regular qualitative observations should be undertaken and documented by City Staff of the individual and cumulative impact of both public and private CIP projects on the Project Area. This could include collaboration with and/or comments received from business owners, property owners, and residents. These qualitative measures should be regularly monitored and reported to Municipal Council along with the quantitative measures below.

As part of the Monitoring Program, City staff has developed a database upon which to monitor the number, types, and return on investment of financial incentive programs. Information obtained through the Monitoring Database can be used to allow for periodic adjustments to the incentive programs to make them more relevant and to provide regular reports to Municipal Council on the amount of private sector investment being leveraged by the municipal incentive programs and the economic benefits associated with these private sector projects.

As incentive applications are received and processed, City staff will enter information from applications into the Monitoring Database. For the financial incentive programs available in the Core Area Project Area, the following information will be collected.

### **Core Area Safety Audit Program**

- Number of Applications (approved and denied);
- Approved value of the grant;
- Total value of project;
- Location of improvement (front or non-street front);
- Type of improvement (i.e. lighting, improved sight lines); and,
- Total grant amount.

### **Core Area Fees Program**

- Number of Applications (approved and denied);
- Type of fee(s) approved for grant (administrative and licence fees);
- Approved value of the grant; and,
- Total grant amount.





# Evaluation

## Four-Year CIP Evaluation

Based on the information obtained by City staff, a summary report will be prepared to evaluate the CIP and its individual programs, based on the changes to the baseline conditions established previously, and based generally on the uptake of the programs and any new challenges that have emerged. The report will cover a four-year period. Based on experience administering other CIPs in London, this time span is long enough to:

- Accumulate sufficient information on the uptake and monitoring of CIP incentive programs;
- Start, execute, and assess impacts of most individual capital projects and community actions;
- Incorporate into staff work programs; and
- Complement the four-year municipal budgeting cycle.

The report will recommend any amendments that might be needed to the CIP, and adjustments to incentive programs and/or eligibility criteria. It will also provide



recommendations about the budget of the financial incentive programs based on the performance of the programs.

At least three types of outcomes can be expected based on the four-year summary report, including amendments to the plan, adjustments to the financial incentive programs, and/or adjustments to funding.

### **Amendments to the Plan**

Changes to any content of this plan, including the vision and goals, boundaries of the Project Area, additions, deletions, or clarifications to the Actions Items or to the financial incentive programs will require an amendment to this plan; amendments must follow the process described in the *Planning Act*. Consequential amendments may also be required to the City’s Official Plan and/or Zoning By-law.

### **Adjustments to the Financial Incentive Programs**

Changes to the terms, conditions and processes described in the financial incentive programs may be done without amending this plan and will be subject to approval by Municipal Council.

### **Adjustments to Funding**

Municipal Council has the authority to approve funding for financial incentive programs specified in London’s CIPs, and may approve budgets necessary to carry out other CIP actions. Budgets supporting the implementation of the Core Area CIP will be based on a comprehensive review undertaken by City staff with the assistance of the Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy described in this section. Funding will be timed to occur as part of multi-year budget requests, or any requested amendments made in consultation with the City Treasurer to approved four-year budgets.

