



# THE **LONDON** PLAN

Progress Report 2020

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



# 147

million dollars were spent on commercial and industrial additions and alterations citywide in 2019

# 18.4%

was the downtown office vacancy rate in Q4 2019



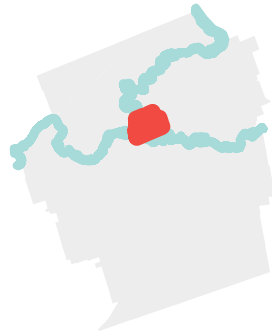
# 61.3%

was the London CMA workforce participation rate in 2019\*

Dundas Place was Completed and

# 16

downtown streets underwent streetscape improvement projects\*



jobs increased by

# 5,400

in the London CMA between 2017 and 2019\*

# 6 km

of sewers were separated between 2016 and 2019 (11 km remain)



**3.14 million tonnes** of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e) were emitted in 2018

## THE LONDON PLAN OUR CITY AT



# 31

urban agriculture sites can be found in London



# 40%

of London households cannot afford average 2-bedroom rent



# 127

Heritage Alteration Permits\* were processed in 2019

# 2,250

People participated in London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership and City Newcomer Events in 2019

Average rent increased by

# 6.34%

for 2-bedroom apartments from 2017 to 2019

# 3,942

properties were designated under the Ontario Heritage Act as of 2019



**71%**

of new housing was in an attached form in 2019

**42%**

was the average intensification rate from 2017 to 2019\*

Of this

**47%**

Was in the Primary Transit Area



**2,335**

census farms existed in London and Middlesex County in 2016.



**50365**

trees were planted by the City of London and community partners between 2015 and 2017



**5 hectare increase**

of maintained parkland and

**7 hectare increase**

of natural parkland per 100,000 Londoners from 2015-2018

# PROGRESS REPORT A GLANCE



**91,000**

cyclists were counted at four bike monitoring locations in 2019

London had **1,552** kilometres of sidewalks in 2019



**12.6%**

of Londoners biked or walked for their daily trips in 2019



Downtown population density increased by

**5** units per hectare between 2016 and 2019



Transit service between London and Sarnia begins in 2020

# LONDON PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## What is the Progress Report about?

The London Plan Progress Report measures the progress we are making towards achieving the vision, goals and key directions described in the London Plan. It asks: *are we on track to achieving The London Plan's vision for 2035?*

The London Plan is our city's framework for how our city should grow and change in the face of new challenges and opportunities. The Plan was built out of the ReThink Process, where tens of thousands of Londoners contributed to conversations about how our city should look in 2035. Through ReThink London, we asked "what kind of city do we want to live in 20 years from now?". The London Plan is the response.

## Executive Summary

The ReThink conversations that led to the London Plan were organized by five themes: How we Move, How we Grow, How we Live, How we Prosper, and How we Green. These broad conversations capture and organize the many issues that are important to our city, and this report is organized around those themes.

This executive summary contains an overview of key changes for each theme. The key changes are based on progress to the goals and measurable objectives that fall under the corresponding theme.

# THEME 1

## HOW WE PROSPER

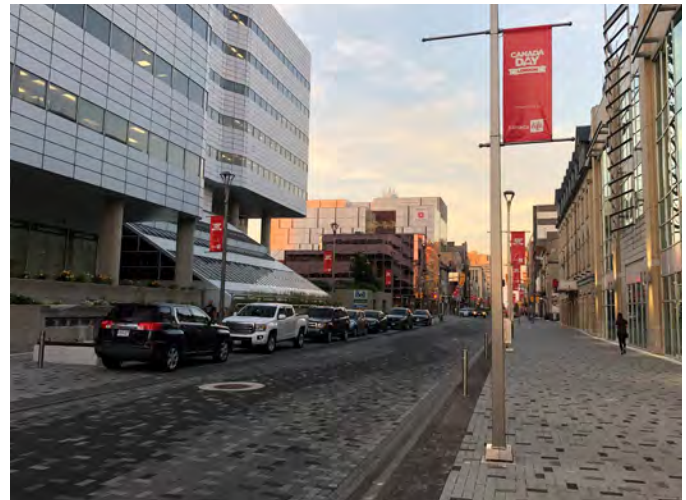
### Goals:

1. Create a Strong Business Environment
2. Create Vibrancy and Livability in our Downtown and Main Streets
3. Ensure a Healthy Mix of Jobs and People
4. Promote the Growth of London's Employment Areas

### What is this theme about?

An important message that emerged during the Re-Think London process centered on economic growth and prosperity. All Londoners want our city to be prosperous so that it can offer opportunity and high quality of life.

The way we build our city over the next 20 years will have an impact on our ability to attract investment and prosperity. And in addition to building a city with an exceptional downtown, and outstanding neighbourhoods, it is important to build our city so that it offers the foundations for a strong economy and commerce.



### What are the findings?

Significant investment has been made in Central London over the reporting period. This includes the completion of Dundas Place and significant streetscape upgrades. Londoners' investment in our city is evident with an increase in commercial and industrial additions and alterations. The Industrial Land Development Strategy (ILDS) has also worked well on retaining and attracting new industrial investment to the City.

Manufacturing, construction, and trade have been key economic drivers over the reporting years and have contributed to a growth in jobs. Nonetheless, the number of jobs in the London CMA are slightly below 2015 levels due to losses before 2017. London's workforce participation rate is also lower than that of other mid-sized cities, and our downtown office vacancy rate has been comparatively high.

The ongoing COVID-19 emergency has resulted in numerous business closures and early reports suggests that a K-shaped economic recovery is taking place, where some parts are recovering quickly and other parts more slowly. The effects of COVID-19 on our economic objectives will be important to monitor and will require creative solutions to ensure we stay on track to reaching our goals.

## THEME 2

# HOW WE MOVE

### Goals:

1. Create Options for Transportation Alternatives
2. Create a City Structure that Supports Rapid Transit
3. Make London More Walkable and Bikeable
4. Connect the Region

### What is this theme about?

Through the ReThink London process, Londoners told us that transportation is a critical issue and Londoners are looking for new ways to connect. Our most recent Transportation Master Plan showed us that we can't afford to resolve our growing transportation needs by focusing on adding and widening roads. Rather we need to build our city to offer real and attractive alternatives to the car, such as walking, cycling, and transit. These alternatives also play a role in reducing our climate change impacts, and it's important to align them with our affordable housing objectives.

How can we best plan for a city that will offer viable, cost-efficient and an attractive options for mobility?



### What are the findings?

Significant investment has been made in transit and active transportation infrastructure. Dozens of pedestrian crossovers have been approved and constructed across the city in each reporting year. Bike lanes have been constructed to better connect our neighbourhoods with Downtown and the Thames Valley Parkway. Construction on the Downtown Loop, which will add infrastructure and dedicated bus lanes to prepare for rapid transit, will begin in 2021.

Our transportation investments have also resulted in changes to travel patterns. Transit use has increased, and the percentage of Londoners completing their daily activities by bike or by walking has increased as well. Monitoring stations have been set up in areas where we have made cycling infrastructure improvements, and tracking the number of users will be valuable for monitoring over the coming years.

The ongoing COVID-19 emergency has resulted in reduced transit ridership and revenue. It will be important to evaluate how this unfolds over time.

## THEME 3

# HOW WE LIVE

### Goals:

1. Protect and Enhance London's Cultural Heritage
2. Welcome our Newcomers and Enhance Diversity
3. Improve Access to Affordable Housing
4. Support Urban Agriculture Opportunities

### What is this theme about?

London is a city of diverse communities and people. London's population is growing, but its makeup is changing as well. About one-in-five Londoners are "new Canadians" and London's population speaks about 100 different languages. We also forecast that 1-in-3 Londoners will be 55 years old or more by 2035. Finally, 2.5% of our population was identified Indigenous (i.e. First Nations, Inuit, or Metis) on the 2016 Census. How can we enhance the quality of life of our diverse population?

*How We Live* looks at ensuring we're providing opportunities for affordable, safe housing for all Londoners, creating vibrant public spaces where we spend our free time, and preserving the heritage that makes our communities unique.



### What are the findings?

London's cultural heritage and urban agriculture programs have seen positive changes. For heritage, there has been increased awareness, and the number of listed and designated properties continues to grow. Urban agriculture is popular with Londoners and more sites have been made available across the city. Policy changes were also approved by Council to more easily enable urban agriculture.

Indicators for 'Welcome our Newcomers and Enhance Diversity' were recently established, and will be important to monitor moving forward.

Affordable Housing has become an increasing challenge despite significant investment. Construction costs and average rents have outpaced inflation. Vacancy rates are low and housing has become unaffordable for an increasing number of Londoners.

Partnerships have been leveraged and new affordable units have been constructed, however, the challenge is ongoing. Several new toolkits and policies have been approved with new methods for achieving our goals, and their implications will be important to monitor moving forward.

# THEME 4

## HOW WE GREEN

### Goals:

1. Improve Our Watershed Health
2. Enhance and Maintain our Parkland and Natural Areas
3. Mitigate and Adapt to Climate Change
4. Protect Our Surface Water Quality

### What is this theme about?

Climate change is considered by many to be the world's biggest challenge. The evidence is clear that Canada's climate is changing, and adapting to a changing climate requires taking action to protect our environment. How can we plan our city to reduce the negative impacts expected from climate change and extreme weather?

In addition to designing our city to mitigate and adapt to climate change, we also aim to create a green city—one that minimizes the consumption of resources, and reduces waste outputs such as air pollution. This also means taking meaningful actions to ensure that our Natural Heritage System, including the Thames River Valley, and the ecosystems it supports, are protected and enhanced for future generations.



### What are the findings?

The reporting period has seen numerous positive changes to our Natural Heritage System. We have been leveraging partnerships to plant more, plant better and protect more than ever. This has resulted in an increase in tree canopy cover from 23.7% in 2015 to 25.6% in 2019. Considerable restoration work has been undertaken in our Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), and the number of hectares of naturalized and maintained parkland has risen per-capita.

We have also made progress in protecting our surface water quality, through uptake in the basement flooding grant program, which can help reduce the strain on wastewater treatment plants. Sewers from the 1890's that combined both wastewater and stormwater continue to be replaced. These negatively affect our water quality when they discharge into our waterways during storms.

With future reports, it will be important to monitor the implementation of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. In response to Council's climate emergency declaration, this Plan will help us move towards net zero community greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and improve London's climate resilience.



## THEME 5

# HOW WE GROW

### Goals:

1. Preserve Our Farmland
2. Improve Access to Suitable Housing and a Mix of Housing Form Options
3. Grow Inward and Upward

### What is this theme about?

London's population will increase substantially over the next 20 years. As our city changes, we need to ensure that jobs are available for Londoners and that there are housing options available to suit different lifestyles and family sizes.

While the addition of new Londoners will make our city more vibrant, we also need to rethink the way we grow in order to protect our agricultural land, and to avoid straining our infrastructure. The London Plan places an emphasis on growing "inward and upward" to achieve a compact form of development.



### What are the findings from the report?

Over the reporting period, London saw unprecedented growth and in 2019, London was considered one of the fastest growing cities in Canada.

42% of this growth was accommodated through intensification, which puts us just below our target. Among this intensification, over 70% was in the Primary Transit Area. This is a positive sign as it means the majority of our intensification is being built in transit-supportive areas.

In terms of how this new growth was accommodated by housing type, 71% of new housing was in apartment or other attached forms. This means that we are vastly exceeding our target. Nonetheless, vacancy rates have become low making it more difficult for many Londoners to find housing that suits their needs.

The London Plan puts forth a city structure that encourages intensification along nodes and corridors, as well as compatible development within neighbourhoods. The implementation of policy projects like the Old Victoria Secondary Plan can help to ensure that the greatest level of intensification is directed to strategic areas in the future.