Report to Planning and Environment Committee

To: Chair and Members Planning and Environment Committee

From: George Kotsifas, P. Eng

Managing Director, Development & Compliance Services and

Chief Building Official

Subject: London Community Recovery Network – Ideas for Action by

Municipal Council

Date: February 8th, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Development & Compliance Services and Chief Building Official the following actions be taken with respect to the London Community Recovery Network:

- a) The implementation plans for the following ideas for action submitted from the London Community Recovery Network and received by Municipal Council BE APPROVED:
 - 1.3 A Break in the Clouds
 - 2.5 Increase grant funding/building code for façade upgrades
 - 2.6 Appoint a downtown lead at City Hall
 - 2.7 Create a business concierge service
 - 2.8 Create a core area champion at senior level
 - 2.9 Create an integrated economic development blueprint
 - 3.5 Provide better market data to attract new businesses
- b) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to execute the implementation plans for ideas for action in support of London's community recovery from COVID-19;
- c) That \$440,000 **BE APPROVED** to implement the ideas in this report as set out in the business cases included in Appendix A, noting that Municipal Council previously authorized \$5 million to be contributed to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures;
- d) Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to waive the requirement of having all City property taxes paid in full for property owners eligible to receive grants in 2021 under the City's Upgrade to Building Code Loan, Façade Improvement Loan and Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Tax Grant Community Improvement Plan programs, provided all other requirements have been met; it being noted that any grant funding will first be applied against outstanding property taxes owing.
- e) This report **BE RECEIVED**.

Executive Summary

1.0 Executive Summary

Over the past few months, the COVID-19 pandemic has radically altered how Londoners work, learn and participate in the community. COVID-19 has challenged the community in an unprecedented way, with long-lasting economic and social impacts likely to continue. In response, London City Council quickly established the London Community Recovery Network in partnership with leaders from London's business, industry, non-profit, academia sectors as well as communities that have experienced disproportionate impacts from COVID-19.

Network members acknowledge that collective efforts toward London's community recovery will require a long term commitment by the community. However, in the first phase of its work, Network members identified 70 ideas for action that included 37

immediate recovery ideas for the City of London to lead in the short term. Twelve (12) of these short term ideas are already underway by Civic Administration. The remaining 25 ideas have been received by Municipal Council with Civic Administration being directed to determine implementation plans for consideration by the appropriate standing committee.

On January 12, 2021, Council resolved that:

- "b) The recommended short term ideas for action to support London's COVID-19 community recovery, as submitted by the London Community Recovery Network (the Network) **BE RECEIVED**;
- c) Civic Administration **BE DIRECTED** to determine implementation plans for ideas in Table 2, excluding those included in Table 1, and return to the appropriate standing committee for approval in early 2021, noting that with the report to SPPC on September 20, 2020 (2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts) Council authorized \$5 million to be contributed to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures"

For transparency and ease of reporting, Civic Administration has developed a single report that includes ideas for action for each of the appropriate Standing Committees. This report to the Planning and Environment Committee includes the following Network ideas for action for discussion and direction from the 25 ideas received for implementation by the City of London:

Idea Ref. #	Idea for Action
1.3	A Break in the Clouds
2.5	Increase grant funding/Building Code for façade upgrades
2.6	Appoint a downtown lead at City Hall
2.7	Create a business concierge service
2.8	Create a core area champion at senior level
2.9	Create an integrated economic development blueprint
3.5	Provide better market data to attract new businesses

Standing committees of Council will consider reports regarding ideas for action that overlap with the mandates of each particular committee. For a full list of the 25 ideas moving forward for the consideration of Municipal Council, please refer to the December 16, 2020 SPPC report.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

The community-driven work of the London Community Recovery Network touches on numerous key areas of focus under the City of London Strategic Plan:

Strengthening our Community:

- Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful
- Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighbourhoods and across the city

Building a Sustainable City

- London has a strong and healthy environment
- Londoners can move around the city safely and easily in a manner that meets their needs

Growing our Economy:

- London will develop a top quality workforce
- London is a leader in Ontario for attracting new jobs and investments
- London creates a supportive environment where entrepreneurs, businesses and talent can thrive

Creating a Safe City for Women and Girls

- London has enhanced the potential for women and girls to live safe lives Leading in Public Service
 - The City of London is trusted, open, and accountable in service of our community
 - Londoners experience exceptional and valued customer service

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- London Community Recovery Network Immediate Ideas for Action to Support London's COVID-19 Community Recovery – December 16, 2020, SPPC
- 2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts - September 20, 2020 - SPPC
- First Report of the London Community Recovery Network July 14, 2020, SPPC
- COVID-19 Financial Impacts Update June 23, 2020, SPPC
- Second Report from the Mayor's Economic and Social Impact and Recovery Task Forces – May 8, 2020
- COVID-19 Financial Impacts and Additional Measures for Community Relief April 28, 2020, SPPC
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response and Funding Overview, Community and Protective Services Committee, April 28, 2020, Consent Item # 2.3
- Property Tax Deferral Options April 14, 2020, CSC
- First Report from the Mayor's Economic and Social Impact and Recovery Task Forces – April 9, 2020

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

Idea for Action #1.3 - A Break in the Clouds

Idea for Action - Community Request to the City of London

This Idea for Action suggests the City work with businesses and BIAs to create an action plan to support patios in the city. This includes investigating the use of public property, providing financial support, and amending by-laws and regulations to be more permissive of patios in general.

Action taken since receipt:

Several programs and initiatives are already in place and underway to support patios, both in the municipal right-of-way and on private property. The following outlines existing initiatives being undertaken:

- In 2018, Council approved making the Sidewalk Patio program permanent and city-wide after a 3-year pilot project. This allows business owners who have limited outdoor space to be able to rent a portion of the public right-of-way adjacent to their business to provide a patio, through a license agreement. In 2020 and up to April 2021 (as of the date of this report), patios fees for applications and license agreements have been waived city-wide to support businesses during the pandemic.
- In 2019, the Core Area Action Plan was received by Council and budget was approved in March 2020 to eliminate patio fees within the Core Area. Staff are currently developing the Core Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to implement this grant program. A report back to approve the CIP is expected in March 2021 to introduce this program.
- As part of the Back2Business (B2B) task force in 2020, Civic Administration implemented a temporary process to allow businesses to expand or create new patio space on their private property, often in parking lots. This initiative has been well received by businesses and staff are undergoing a city-initiated Zoning By-

- law amendment (Z-9300) to develop a more permanent solution and process for patio expansions. The amendment is anticipated to be before Council for decision in March or April 2021.
- When the Sidewalk Patio program was made permanent in 2018, a design guideline and process manual was developed. At the time, winter patios were not anticipated. The B2B task force has been gathering more information around winterized patios and have allowed patios to stay open this winter. Based on learnings throughout the pandemic, Civic Administration will be reviewing and updating the Sidewalk Patio Manual in 2021 to reflect a more flexible and 4-season approach to sidewalk patios. Consideration for patios in public parking lots and parks will be part of this review and update. A report back is anticipated in Q2/Q3 of 2021.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

One consideration from the Idea for Action that has not yet been explored fully is providing financial support for the actual purchase and construction of sidewalk patio enclosure materials, furniture, and fixtures. This has been identified as a significant barrier for small businesses to expand capacity, particularly in core neighbourhoods with smaller interior dining spaces.

Civic Administration is recommending funding be allocated to the Downtown and Old East Village BIAs to create and administer a Patio Materials program. The City will work collaboratively with the BIAs to establish the program; however, it would be best administered by the BIAs for efficiency and flexibility. Financial support would be capped at a maximum amount per business to an upset limit for the entire program. The program would cover new patios, upgrades to existing patios, as well as furnishings (tables, chairs, lounge furniture, umbrellas, patio lighting), fencing/boundary materials, decorative planters and planting, and heaters. Ongoing maintenance would be the responsibility of the businesses and/or the BIAs.

Financial Implications of Action:

The LCRN Business Case for Idea #1.3 included in Appendix A recommends a \$100,000 one-time expenditure in 2021. If approved, this initiative could be implemented within 1-3 months.

Idea for Action #2.5 – Increase grant funding/Building Code for façade upgrades

Idea for Action – Community Request to the City of London:

This Idea for Action suggests the City increase the forgivable (grant) portion of the Upgrade to Building Code and Façade Improvement loan programs. As the programs currently stand, businesses receive a grant back of 12.5% and 25% of the loan amount for Upgrade and Façade programs, respectively, if they maintain a targeted use tenant on the ground floor.

Action taken since receipt:

By way of Council resolution on March 3, 2020, Civic Administration has allowed for businesses to defer their incentive loan payments during road construction projects. Similarly, Council has permitted all loan-holders, including outside of construction zones, to defer much of their 2020 and 2021 loan payments as a business support measure during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a significant help to some businesses; however, the grant amount is determined by the loan payments from the previous year. Businesses who defer their loans, are not eligible for grants and therefore increasing the grant amount will not provide a great benefit. Grants are also only available for targeted uses, and sometimes within targeted areas of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), which limits the number of eligible businesses and potential impact. The idea for action submitted also suggests the grants be provided within the Downtown and Old East Village CIPs, however the Hamilton Road, SoHo, and Lambeth CIPs also have access to the Upgrade and Façade programs.

In addition to the above, in 2021 staff have noticed that a larger than normal proportion of businesses who are typically eligible for grants have not met the incentive program

requirement to have all City of London property taxes paid in full, even though all other requirements have been met. This inconsistency could be a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and financial impacts on businesses.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

Due to the above restrictions, and in the spirit of this Idea for Action, Civic Administration is recommending a new grant program be established with a cap on total funding available. A new Recovery grant can be established through a minor amendment to the incentive program guidelines. The Recovery grant would provide up to \$5,000 to businesses to help with pandemic-related property improvements, including interior modifications to address public health concerns such as social distancing, and exterior improvements such as repairs to address vandalism or beautification. This grant is being recommended for all CIP areas with access to the Upgrade and Façade programs. The grant will be available to both property owners as well as tenants.

Civic Administration is also recommending that staff be directed to waive the requirement of having all City property taxes paid in full for property owners eligible to receive grants in 2021 under the following incentive programs:

- Upgrade to Building Code Loan
- Façade Improvement Loan
- Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Tax Grant Program

Property owners would still be required to fulfill all other requirements to be eligible for a grant, and those who do have outstanding property taxes will have the grant funding first applied against any property taxes owning. This initiative is represented in recommendation d) above and can be implemented immediately upon Council approval. This relief from the full requirements will only be applied for grants being issued in 2021.

Financial Implications of Action:

The LCRN Business Case for Idea #2.5 included in Appendix A recommends a \$250,000 one-time expenditure in 2021. If approved, this initiative could be implemented within 1-3 months through a report back to Council to approve the amended program guidelines.

There are no additional financial implications for waiving the requirement to have fully paid property taxes to receive 2021 grants under the City's financial incentive programs, as these grants are already included in the City's budget projections.

Idea for Action #2.6 - Appoint a downtown lead at City Hall

Idea for Action – Community Request to the City of London

This would be a position similar to the Business Liaison role, but downtown specific – this person would also coordinate with the London Police Services on downtown safety issues.

Action taken since receipt:

Newly established and led by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, the City's Core Area Steering Committee oversees three teams that coordinate the major areas of work in the Core:

- The People Team delivers programs, projects and services aimed at achieving housing stability and other social supports for individuals and works to address safety and the perception of safety in the Core.
- The Places Team delivers projects and services aimed at creating a cleaner, more welcoming physical environment in the Core with infrastructure to support all residents, businesses and visitors.
- The Economy Team delivers projects, services and events aimed at supporting businesses and increasing activity and awareness of all the Core has to offer.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

Each team will work together to coordinate and deliver the appropriate elements of the Core Area Action Plan, the Downtown Plan, actions from the London Community Recovery Network, the Back 2 Business Team, Coordinated Informed Response and other projects, programs, services and events. The team chairs will report to the CASC. Monthly stakeholder meetings ensure regular engagement between the CASC members and leaders in the business, institutional and not-for-profit sectors in the Core.

This action will also be combined with Idea for Action #2.8.

Financial Implications of Action:

This work will be completed within existing budgets.

Idea for Action #2.7 - Create a business concierge service

Idea for Action – Community Request to the City of London

Create a Business Concierge service at City Hall to help facilitate business (both new businesses and existing) that includes a dedicated role to the Downtown and Core area.

Action taken since receipt:

The Business Hub, housed within Development & Compliance Services is the ideal starting point to address this particular idea. The Business Hub currently has two Business and Zoning Coordinators who help businesses navigate through City processes and applications while feeling supported and aware of any requirements. This role regularly makes presentations to groups such as Fanshawe College and the Small Business Centre to educate owners on how to open a business in London. There is a desire to have this role expanded to include the promotion of City programs and strengthen the communication and relationship between municipal staff and BIAs.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

Future reports will capture how business concerns can be facilitated and expedited through existing channels and how the Business Hub can improve support to the Core.

Financial Implications of Action:

This action will be completed within existing budgets.

Idea for Action #2.8 - Create a core area champion at senior level

Idea for Action - Community Request to the City of London

Create a Downtown and Core Area Senior Level Champion at City Hall focused on helping to create the vision and strategy of the downtown and core areas

Action taken since receipt:

This action will be combined with Idea for Action #2.6. Please see Idea for Action #2.6 above for additional information.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

This action will be combined with Idea for Action #2.6. Please see Idea for Action #2.6 above for additional information.

Financial Implications of Action:

This action will be completed within existing budgets.

Idea for Action #2.9 - Create an integrated economic development blueprint

Idea for Action - Community Request to the City of London

Create an economic development blueprint that integrates downtown and core area into the strategy. As part of the next Economic Development Strategy ensure it includes an overall Vision and Strategy for the downtown and core area

Action taken since receipt:

Newly established, the City's Core Area Steering Committee oversees three teams that coordinate the major areas of work, one of which will be The Economy Team, which delivers projects, services and events aimed at supporting businesses and increasing activity and awareness of all the core has to offer. This team will work to ensure that strategies for the downtown and core area are coordinated across the City as well as community.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

The Economy Team under the City's Core Area Steering Committee will work to expand upon this idea for action as it delivers on its mandate. The Core Area Steering Committee will continue its work to coordinate and deliver appropriate elements of key civic plans and strategies relating to the core area.

In addition, the London Community Recovery Network will be exploring long-term strategies that could contribute to economic opportunities in the core and across the City. As part of the London Community Recovery Network's next phase, Civic Administration will be engaging in strategic conversations, developing a common understanding of recovery across the community, and establishing strategies that support long-term community and economic recovery.

Financial Implications of Action:

This action will be completed within existing budgets.

Idea for Action #3.5 - Provide better market data to attract new businesses

Idea for Action – Community Request to the City of London

Provide better market data collection and assessment to support local decision making and attraction of new businesses

Action taken since receipt:

Civic Administration has completed a review of current market data that is collected internally, as well as subscriptions and external partner collections such as the London Economic Development Corporation, the Conference Board of Canada, Statistics Canada Community Data Consortium and Environics Analytics. Many of these such resources are publicly available on request and often for a fee, and enhancements will be made for the community to be able to make use of civic data, such as adding to the Open Data Portal when possible.

Next Steps to Implement Idea for Action:

Recently, the City of London has partnered with Environics Analytics Canada for demographics information. Environics Analytics Canada can also provide the level of detail market data that was requested as part of Idea for Action #3.5 through Mobilescapes software, primarily:

- Pedestrian, cyclists, cars and transit data in the downtown (and citywide)
- Seasonal data for the above variables
- Residential population demographics in the downtown (and citywide)
- Office population and demographics in the downtown (and citywide)
- Vacancy of commercial (office and retail) space in the downtown (and citywide)
- Market analysis for the downtown trade are (and citywide)

The recommendation would be to invest in the additional data that can be provided by Environics Analytics Canada.

Financial Implications of Action:

The LCRN Business Case for Idea #3.5 included in Appendix A recommends a \$30,000 annual investment in 2021, 2022, and 2023 for a total of \$90,000. If approved, this initiative could be implemented within 1-3 months.

Given the need for further consultation with Environics Analytics to ensure they will meet all deliverables, there is the possibility that Mobilescapes software is not appropriate to address Idea for Action #3.5. If it is determined that the Environics Analytics solution is not the appropriate investment, the \$90,000 will not be required.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

On September 20, 2020, the 2020 Mid-Year Operating Budget Monitoring Report & COVID-19 Financial Impacts report was presented to SPPC. Civic Administration reported that after applying the Safe Restart Agreement funding and prior to the recommendations in the report, the Property Tax Supported Budget projected surplus would be \$15.3 million. One recommendation was, notwithstanding the Council approved Surplus/Deficit Policy, that Civic Administration be authorized to allocate \$5 million of the surplus to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures.

As the implementation plans for short term ideas for action from the Network that require municipal implementation are developed, Civic Administration will track the estimated financial impacts. If the total amount exceeds the \$5 million allocation, options for addressing the shortfall will be presented. As the individual implementation plans return to the appropriate standing committee for approval, recommendations to access funding to support the plans will be included.

Conclusion

This report was prepared as part of the City of London's response to the ideas for action identified by the London Community Recovery Network focused on accelerating community recovery from COVID-19 in the short term. If directed, Civic Administration will begin the implementation of the plans listed herein to execute on these ideas for action.

The Network's idea generation and prioritization process has drawn on the insight and expertise of a wide variety of individuals and has led to valuable discussions related to recovery within our community. The prioritized list of community recovery ideas would not have been possible without the efforts and contributions made by a large number of business and community partners, Members of the London City Council, and all Service Areas across the City of London. The City of London would also like to thank local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament for providing valuable insights to members throughout the course of this phase of the work.

Prepared and Submitted by: Chris Green, Manager, Economic

Partnerships

George Kotsifas, Managing Director, Recommended by:

Development & Compliance Services

and Chief Building Official

Members of the London Community Recovery Network CC. City of London Senior Leadership Team Community Recovery Working Group

Appendix A

London Community Recovery Network Ideas for Action – Business Case

Idea #: 1.3

Idea Title: A Break in the Clouds

Business Case Deliverables & Impact

In collaboration with the Downtown and Old East Village BIAs, a Patio Materials grant program would be established and then administered by the BIAs for efficiency and flexibility. Financial support would be capped at a maximum amount per business to an upset limit for the entire program. The program would cover new patios, upgrades to existing patios, as well as furnishings (tables, chairs, lounge furniture, umbrellas, patio lighting), fencing/boundary materials, decorative planters and planting, and heaters. Ongoing maintenance would be the responsibility of the businesses and/or the BIAs. This initiative would impact the Core Area business community by removing financial barriers to building and furnishing a sidewalk patio, as well as increasing capacity in core neighbourhoods with smaller interior dining spaces. Additional benefits for the community are an increase in street-level activation, passive surveillance with more eyes on the street, and spin-off economic benefits for surrounding businesses. An additional benefit is the ability to coordinate materials and furnishing to create a sense of place and better aesthetic appeal in the Core Area.

Business Case Financial Impacts

Capital Budget Impacts (\$000's)	2021	2022	2023	2021- 2023 Total
Total Expenditure	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$100
Existing Sources of Financing:	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)
Net Request	\$100	\$0	\$0	\$100

Business Case Metrics

Metric Description	Current	2021	2022	2023
# Sidewalk Patios (Core Area)	36	40	42	44
# Grants Provided (cumulative)	N/A	15	25	30
Public:Private ROI for Sidewalk Patios	N/A	1:1	1:1.3	1:1.5

What are the risks of not proceeding?

Core Area businesses will continue to have limited capacity and not be able to provide alternative outdoor seating. Businesses will continue to bore the financial cost of patios enclosure materials and furnishings.

London Community Recovery Network Ideas for Action – Business Case

Idea #: 2.5

Idea Title: Increase grant funding/Building Code for façade upgrades

Business Case Deliverables & Impact

This initiative would establish a new Recovery grant program through a minor amendment to the incentive program guidelines for the Upgrade to Building Code and the Façade Improvement Loan Programs. The Recovery grant would provide \$5,000 to businesses to help with pandemic-related property improvements, including interior modifications to address public health concerns such as social distancing, and exterior improvements such as repairs to address vandalism. Funding would be available on a first-come-first-serve basis to the upset amount of \$250,000 for the program. This initiative would impact the Core Area business community by removing financial barriers to adapting and repairing their physical spaces post-pandemic. This benefits the general community by providing for attractive and safe buildings, and investing in the longevity of the City's heritage assets and historic building stock. Additional benefits for the community are the repair of unwelcoming or dangerous storefronts and an enhanced perception of safety and vibrancy in our mainstreet commercial districts.

Business Case Financial Impacts

Capital Budget Impacts (\$000's)	2021	2022	2023	2021- 2023 Total
Total Expenditure	\$250	\$0	\$0	\$250
Existing Sources of Financing:	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)
Net Request	\$250	\$0	\$0	\$250

Business Case Metrics

Metric Description	Current	2021	2022	2023
# Recovery Grant Applications	N/A	25	45	50
Public:Private ROI for Façade Program	1: 2.5	1:2.6	1:2.6	1:2.7
Public:Private ROI for Upgrade Program	1: 2.7	1:2.8	1:2.8	1:2.9

What are the risks of not proceeding?

Businesses will continue to deal with financial barriers to adapting and/or repairing their buildings. Some businesses will be required to remain closed or may close permanently. Less people will be inclined to patronize local businesses.

London Community Recovery Network Ideas for Action – Business Case

Idea #: 3.5

Idea Title: Provide better market data to attract new businesses

Business Case Deliverables & Impact

Environics Analytics offers a software solution called Mobilescapes. MobileScapes is an anonymized, permission-based data service, which combines data collected from location-enabled mobile devices. Users can identify devices observed within a defined area, such as a store, public square or on a roadway for a given date and time range. The main sources of data are opt-in location-enabled applications on mobile devices and ad exchange platforms. At present, there are approximately 100,000 mobile applications that contribute data to MobileScapes.

Mobilescapes can also provide the level of detail market data that was requested as part of Idea for Action #3.5, primarily:

- Pedestrian, cyclists, cars and transit data in the downtown (and citywide)
- Seasonal data for the above variables
- Residential population demographics in the downtown (and citywide)
- Office population and demographics in the downtown (and citywide)
- Vacancy of commercial (office and retail) space in the downtown (and citywide)
- Market analysis for the downtown trade are (and citywide)

Additionally, the investment in Mobilescapes can be used by multiple service areas to assist in data collection and reporting. There is potential for the Mobilescapes data to cease the need of other current forms of data collection, such as traffic counts. In such a scenario this could result in enterprise level savings.

Business Case Financial Impacts

Operating Budget Impacts (\$000's)	2021	2022	2023	2021- 2023 Total
Total Expenditure	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$90
Existing Sources of Financing:	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)	\$(0)
Net Request	\$30	\$30	\$30	\$90

Business Case Metrics

Metric Description	Current	2021	2022	2023
Investment in annual subscription	0	1	1	1

What are the risks of not proceeding?

Given the need for further consultation with Environics Analytics to ensure they will meet all deliverables, there is the possibility that through discussion and negotiation that it may be determined the Mobilescapes software is not appropriate to address Idea for Action #3.5. If it is determined that the Environics Analytics solution is not the appropriate investment, the \$90,000 will not be required.