



February 5, 2021

Re: Letter of Support for LCRN Actions Providing Immediate Support to Downtown London

Dear Committee Chair Squire,

This letter is in support of three specific consent items being brought forward to the Planning and Environment Committee on February 8, 2021, where we believe they can be immediate measures providing the most impact and support for downtown businesses during COVID recovery. These items are:

- 1.3: Break in the Clouds
- 2.5: Increase grant funding/Building Code for façade upgrades
- 3.5: Provide better market data to attract new businesses

Item 1.3 builds upon the success of the Business to Business process that City staff implemented last summer to establish a temporary permitting process to allow businesses to expand or create new patio space on their property. The actions outlined in item 1.3 will not only provide needed funding for restaurants to purchase patio materials, but it will allow another revenue generation stream by allowing restaurateurs to expand their space and assist in their financial recovery. This will also add immediate vibrancy in the downtown and provide longer term benefits that will assist in the overall recovery of the downtown.

The downtown has seen a significant increase in vandalism, break-ins and property damage since the start of COVID - a 40% increase in 2020 compared to 2019. This along with the lack of foot traffic in the downtown puts an additional financial strain on downtown merchants who need to repair and cover these costs. Additionally, downtown businesses continue to cover costs for pandemic related interior changes to their property to conform to public health regulations. With a minor amendment to the existing Upgrade to Building Code and Façade Improvement loan programs and guidelines, Item 2.5 will provide immediate support to many merchants who are needing to incur significant costs during this pandemic. Additionally, many property owners and tenants have had to hoard their building to ensure safety and security. This type of funding will provide an incentive to merchants and property owners to remove hoarding, beautify their space and improve perceptions that downtown is open for business and a welcoming environment once the COVID restrictions begin to lift.



Finally, Item 3.5 Environics system and the requested MobileScapes extension will be a valuable and powerful tool for the City and for economic development and helping to attract new businesses to the downtown. This data can also help the City of London and the community make evidence-based policy decisions and develop data driven strategies and plans.

Recognizing there are other recommended actions for implementation in the February 8, 2021 report, this letter is focused on those proposed initiatives that could be easily and quickly implemented within the existing City programs and staff expertise and would provide the most immediate impact on the recovery of the downtown. These three actions are also aligned with Downtown London's current COVID recovery programs and we would be pleased to offer any additional support to assist the City with the implementation of these actions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Barbara Maly", is written in a cursive style.

Barbara Maly
Executive Director - Downtown London

cc. Andrew McClenaghan, Chair London Downtown Business Association
Don McCallum, Chair MainStreet London
Jennifer Pastorius, Executive Director- Old East Village