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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
FROM:	JOHN M. FLEMING, MCIP, RPP MANAGING DIRECTOR, PLANNING AND CITY PLANNER
SUBJECT:	DRAFT DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN MEETING ON TUESDAY, June 18 2013

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Planning and City Planner, the following actions regarding the Downtown Master Plan **BE TAKEN**:

- A. The attached report **BE RECEIVED** for information and circulated for public review and comment, it being noted that a public participation meeting to adopt the Downtown Master Plan, as may be revised following the public consultation process, will be scheduled at a later date; and,
- B. Staff **REPORT BACK** regarding the implementation strategy for the Downtown Master Plan including an identification of projects that are currently identified and funded or currently identified and planned to be funded in future budgets, and those projects that will require funding through future budget deliberations.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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| 1. | Monday, July 19, 2010 | Deciding on the Downtown Vision/Completion of the Downtown Master Plan Background Study/Update on the Downtown Heritage Conservation Plan Study/Draft New Ideas, Options, Recommendations and Implementation Report |
| 2. | Monday, November 8, 2010 | Draft Downtown Heritage Conservation District Background Study |
| 3. | Monday, November 15, 2010 | Final Downtown Vision |
| 4. | Monday, February 28, 2011 | Final Downtown Heritage Conservation District Background Study |
| 5. | Monday, December 12, 2011 | Draft Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan |
| 6. | Monday, March 26, 2012 | Final Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan |

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BACKGROUND

Downtown Master Plan and Economic Prosperity

The Downtown Millennium Plan, prepared in November of 1998, was the last significant Downtown Plan implemented by London City Council. Approximately \$100million was invested in Downtown London through that plan for a series of projects and initiatives that included:

- i. The creation of Main Street London (now Downtown London)
- ii. The establishment of the Upgrade to Building Code Loan Program
- iii. The new Central Library
- iv. The new John Labatt Centre (now Budweiser Gardens)
- v. Forks of the Thames parks and urban spaces project
- vi. The new Covent Garden Market
- vii. New street lighting

The success stemming from these investments has been tremendous. The Millennium Plan noted that Downtown assessed value had declined by over \$60million within the span of 1992 to 1996 in just 1/3 of the Downtown Area. The City has been tracking assessed value since the Plan was developed and implemented. Most recently, the 2011 State of the Downtown report identified an increase in Downtown Area assessed value of \$335 million between 2002 and 2011. This is an astounding “turning of the curve” from a declining Downtown value to a dramatically climbing investment base and assessed value.

Its important to understand that the Downtown Master Plan that is attached hereto is similarly intended to set the context for private sector investment. The plan focuses on setting the environment for residential development and business investment. These will create a host of jobs in the core and also spur further increases in assessed value.

But that is not where the value of an successful Downtown ends. Rather, as the “calling card to the world” our Downtown sends a message to investors. A successful Downtown sends the message that our economy is vital and our City is vibrant, diverse and exciting. A successful Downtown shows potential investors that they can attract and retain labour force in our City and that investment in London is sound, sustainable, and rewarding. A weak or failing Downtown sends the opposite messages – messages that could detract from London’s economic attraction.

The Downtown Master Plan Process

The Downtown Master Plan process has included a long and extensive process of public outreach and engagement. One of the most important products of this process was the completion of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and Heritage Conservation District Plan and Guidelines. Until this Plan was completed and adopted by Council, the final Downtown Master Plan was not brought forward. The Downtown HCD Plan was approved by Municipal Council in April 2012; however, because the Plan is under appeal, it is not yet in force and effect. It is anticipated that the appeals to the Plan will be resolved during the summer of 2013.

The master planning process for the Downtown began with the adoption of the Terms of Reference on February 2, 2009. The following is a brief overview of the process that has been undertaken for this Plan.

Public Workshops were held on July 29, 2009 and November 24, 2009. A Draft Downtown Master Plan Background Study and a separate Downtown “Vision” Report were reviewed by Planning Committee on November 16, 2009 and direction was given to circulate those reports for public review, and the notice of the Draft Background Study completion was given to landowners on November 25, 2009.

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Following the release of the draft background Study, staff incorporated the public comments, and on July 10, 2010, the final Downtown Master Plan Background Study was accepted by Committee as the background for the Master Plan. Arising from the Background Study was the “New Ideas, Options, Recommendations and Implementation” Report. This report was intended to discuss issues raised by the public through the Downtown Master Plan public process, reconsider issues raised in previous Downtown-related reports but not implemented and provide new ideas. Planning staff also reviewed the Official Plans of other municipalities, as well as Zoning By-laws and Downtown documents to identify new ideas, different approaches or processes which the City could employ to assist Downtown revitalization. Implementation measures were also identified.

The final Downtown Vision was adopted by Council on November 15, 2010, and on February 15, 2011, the final public workshop was held. This “Big Ideas” workshop was the follow up to the “New Ideas, Options, Recommendations and Implementation” Report, and was the public’s opportunity to identify those projects, actions, initiatives or policies that would best implement the Downtown Vision. On April 27, 2011, a Downtown Summit was hosted by the Mayor and Council to build upon these ideas, and provide an opportunity for the public and the politicians to come together to talk about the Downtown. Arising from the summit was a “Vision for Downtown London” that pulled these ideas and wished together as a visual expression of what Downtown could be based upon new investments and initiatives in the Downtown.

The degree of public notification and subsequent public involvement throughout the process has been significant. Over 1,300 landowners, agencies, City Departments etc. have been notified of progress on three different occasions. Planning Staff have attended meetings with Downtown London (formerly Mainstreet), London Downtown Business Association (LDBA), Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), Community Safety and Crime Prevention Advisory Committee (CSCP), London Advisory Committee on Heritage (LACH) and Utilities Co-ordinating Committee (UCC). Staff also held meetings with interested individuals and e-mail notifications were sent to over 300 interested individuals on a regularly updated master list for all public meetings. Over 250 individuals filled out the Downtown Master Plan on-line survey on the City’s website and approximately 40-50 individual letters and e-mails were been received providing comments. The Downtown Master Plan page on the City’s website was also a useful tool for providing reports and notices to the public.

This extensive consultation has resulted in both a new Plan for London’s Downtown, but it has more importantly cemented the fact that Downtown is important to Londoners. While there may be some disagreement on what roles the City may play in Downtown revitalization, there was broad consensus that there was a City role. There was also consensus that there was a role for other partners, both public and private, in Downtown revitalization. This is an important point to note-Downtown London’s success is a result of the on-going commitment that both the City and private landowners and public agencies have had to the Downtown. This distinguished Downtown London from many other cities, and this commitment will be key to ensuring Downtown’s continued success.

The reason for doing this is quite simple, and is what Londoners have told us through both the Downtown Master Plan process and through the City-wide conversations as part of ReThink London. The reason is that Downtown matters, and a strong and healthy Downtown is a reflection of a strong and healthy City.

THE PLAN

As is noted above, the Downtown Master Plan is all about setting the context for private sector investment and establishing the image of a successful Downtown that will enhance London’s long term economic attraction. The Plan is built around six actions or strategic directions that will shape the Downtown for the years to come. These actions are a combination of both physical projects and interventions and programs, and involve both public and private investment. While the focus of this Plan is on civic investment, the projects identified all either support future private investment, or can be done in partnership with private investors. This public private partnership has been the basis of, and the reason for, much of London’s past

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success in Downtown revitalization.

The Vision for Downtown London that arose from the Mayor’s Downtown Summit illustrated how new private investments in the Downtown at strategic locations could be implemented to deliver a strong and vital Downtown. This Plan focuses on many of the public investments within the civic realm that would knit, or connect these potential development sites together. As has already been successfully demonstrated in London, targeted civic investment can be an important lever for significant private investment.

This Plan also builds upon the many strengths of the Downtown, and is intended to build on those strengths to ensure that the Downtown remains a vibrant and vital place into the future. Downtowns change and evolve over time, and the process of planning for Downtowns also evolves over time, such that Downtowns can be considered as “a work in progress”. This Plan is intended to move Downtown through its next steps of evolution.

The Actions:

- Action 1-Make Dundas Street the Most Exciting Street in London.
- Action 2-Reconnect with the Thames River
- Action 3-Better Connect Downtown and the City
- Action 4-Green Our Downtown
- Action 5-Build a Great Neighbourhood
- Action 6-Create the Buzz

These Actions are the basis of the policy recommendations of the Plan, and these lead to a series of Transformational Projects that are intended to deliver on the vision for the Downtown. These projects are focused on the public realm, and will set the stage for both public and private investment in the Downtown. This focus on the public realm is consistent with the Actions, and will create the lasting public image of the Downtown.

Each project includes a project description, an identification of why the project is important, and what the project will do for the Downtown. These projects will be implemented over time, and will be subject to future budget deliberations. Some of these projects are already planned or scheduled, and the Master Plan provides the big picture context for each project. For example, the Transportation Master Plan includes the implementation of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system. The Downtown Master Plan describes how this system will be implemented in the Downtown. In the same way, the Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan provides a decision-making framework for how development and redevelopment of Downtown’s built heritage will be conserved, and the Downtown Master Plan sets forth how these projects will fit within the urban structure of the Downtown.

It is also important to recognize that the Downtown Master Plan provides a strong basis for seeking out senior levels of government funding. The Plan shows the vision for our Downtown and how each project levers and advances that vision.

The following is a brief description of the projects, recognizing that the timing of these projects will be based on future budget deliberations.

Dundas Place

This project sets out to create a seamless public right of way that will allow cars and people to share the same space along Dundas Street from Richmond Street to Wellington Street. The street will be designed to serve multiple purposes and uses, and will allow the street to serve as an enhanced pedestrian-only environment for events. This flexible street approach will use design as the means to create an exciting and malleable urban space that will still provide for the movement of goods, people and traffic through the Downtown.

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Forks of the Thames

This is not a single project, but a series of both public and private investments that will energize the Downtown's connection to the Thames. The first step will be creating an urban waterfront edge along the Downtown boundary that will create the public edge between the River and future private investment.

Richmond Walk

Like the Dundas Place project, this will focus on the public right of way. Between Queens Avenue and York Street, Richmond Street will be reduced to three lanes to provide the opportunity for expanded sidewalks, street tree planting, and the BRT connection through the Downtown.

City Gateway

This project will create a public square focus near the Richmond Street underpass into the Downtown and the Viarail train station. This public space will serve as the connection between the BRT system, the Viarail station, and a north/south mid-block connection to Dundas Street.

Market District

This project will redesign Jubilee Square, Market Square and Talbot Street between Dundas and King Streets to create a seamless public space that will create an event space. This project will allow Talbot Street to be closed for events.

Sports Hero Way

Like the City Gateway, this project is intended to enhance Downtown's connections to the rest of the City. This project will include the future transition of the Kensington Bridge to a pedestrian crossing to connect the neighbourhoods to the west and Labatt Park to the Downtown, and redirect traffic across the Queens Avenue Bridge to provide a two-way link into the Downtown.

Clarence Street Pedestrian Corridor

This project will establish Clarence Street as a major pedestrian corridor through the Downtown, and connect the SoHo neighbourhood to the Downtown by linking Richard B. Harrison Park to Victoria Park. A crossing of the CN line would be required for this project.

Alleyway Connections

This project will enhance the alleys in the Downtown to create both pedestrian movement, but to also provide opportunities for building adjacent to the alleys to use the alleys as an additional entrance for new ground floor uses.

Queens Station

This project is part of the Downtown BRT system, and will include a redesign of the Queens Avenue/Richmond Street intersection as a transit transfer station between the BRT and the conventional bus system, and direct vehicular traffic east and west so that the number of lanes can be reduced on Richmond Street south of Queens Avenue.

Performance Venue

This project is currently being considered by the Investment and Economic Prosperity Committee. Much like Budweiser Gardens (formerly the John Labatt Centre), this facility could

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play a significant role in “creating the buzz” Downtown and bringing people to the Core that would not otherwise be attracted Downtown. It could help London boost its reputation as an important cultural centre, thereby creating a stronger attracting for living and working in London and Downtown.

Implementation

The final section of the Master Plan describes some of the Implementation options that are to be used to deliver on the Downtown vision. These implementation tools include planning policies and governance and management options such as a Downtown Development Corporation.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the Downtown Master Plan is to set the context for private sector investment in our Downtown and to breed a successful Downtown image that will encourage people to live and invest in our City. We have seen great success stemming from the last Downtown Master Plan – the Downtown Millennium Plan prepared in 1998. In this way, the Downtown Master Plan serves to support Council’s efforts to create economic prosperity in London.

The Downtown Master Plan brings together the recent plans, proposals, strategies and projects that will shape the Downtown for years to come. Some of these Plans, such as the Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan, are specific to just one part of future Downtown development. Other Plans, such as the Transportation Master Plan (TMP), have a significant impact on the Downtown, and the Master Plan describes how the TMP will be implemented in the Downtown. Other projects, such as Downtown street-tree planting and the Dundas Street reconstruction project will be implemented as part of delivering the Downtown vision.

Overall, the Plan provides a vision of how all of these projects, and others that will be considered in future budget deliberations, will come together to create a successful Downtown that is London’s “calling card” to the world.

SUBMITTED BY:	PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:
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