Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

To:　　　　**Chair and Members**
　　　　　　　Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

From:　　　**Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure**
　　　　　　　Scott Mathers, Deputy City Manager, Planning & Economic Development
　　　　　　　Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social & Health Development

Subject:　 **Core Area Action Plan 2021 Review**
Date:　　　**March 8, 2022**

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure, the Deputy City Manager, Planning & Economic Development, and the Deputy City Manager, Social & Health Development:

a) The staff report dated March 8, 2022 entitled "Core Area Action Plan 2021 Review", including its appendices, BE **RECEIVED**;

b) The changes to the status or end dates of the Items included the Core Area Action Plan described in this report and summarized in Appendix A: Core Area Action Plan Implementation Status Update, March 2022 **BE APPROVED** and used as the new basis for future progress reporting;

c) The extension of the "Project Clean Slate" contract with Youth Opportunities Unlimited for a period from April 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022 **BE APPROVED** a cost of $146,760, it being noted that funding is available through the Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Economy (EEE) Reserve;

d) The Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan contained in Appendix G to this report **BE RECEIVED** noting that it will become part of the annual monitoring of the impacts of the Core Area Action Plan and associated report to Council;

e) The Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis contained in Appendix H to this report **BE RECEIVED**; and,

f) Staff **BE DIRECTED** to prepare an updated Core Area Action Plan expanding the current plan to the years 2024 to 2027 inclusive for the consideration of Council in 2023 in coordination with the next Multi-Year Budget and Strategic Plan development processes and based on the general methodology described in this report.

Executive Summary

In 2019, the health of the Core Area was recognized as vital to London's prosperity as a whole and, as such, the City of London set out to develop the Core Area Action Plan (CAAP). The CAAP was received by Council in late 2019 and funding to deliver 68 of 71 actions were either approved through the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget process or available in existing programs. The CAAP is part of a larger suite of programs and projects focusing on the success of the Core area and ranging from the strategic to the operational.

The start of implementation of the CAAP coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in disproportionate negative impacts on urban centres across Canada. Dramatic reductions in the number of central office workers as well as reduced tourism, cultural, recreation and hospitality sector activity added to existing challenges in the Core. Vulnerable and marginalized communities also faced disproportionate effects from the pandemic. City staff and their partners have been working to reduce

these impacts through efforts including the London Community Recovery Network and the CAAP. Impacts from COVID-19 in the Core are also being experienced in other parts of the city and best practices from the CAAP help inform service delivery elsewhere as well.

In late 2020, the staff-led Core Area Steering Committee (CASC) was revised to provide increased role clarity, reduce duplication, and improve communications internally and externally. The new CASC oversees three internal teams tasked with delivering the CAAP and other initiatives in the Core: the People, Places and Economy Teams. The reset also created two teams with external participants as well: the Core Area Action Team that meets biweekly to address short-term issues quickly and includes representatives from the two Core business improvement associations (BIAs), the London Police Service (LPS) and Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST); and, the Core Area Strategy Team that works on longer-term, strategic solutions with senior leadership from the City and the two BIAs. These changes led to a report to SPPC on May 18, 2021 entitled "Comprehensive Report on Core Area Initiatives", which provided an update on progress on the CAAP, while explaining the refreshed approach to its management and launching several new initiatives to augment its effectiveness.

This report provides an overview of progress since the May 18, 2021 report and the recommended next steps to ensure the City continues to support a healthy, resilient, vibrant and sustainable Core Area.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Council and staff continue to recognize the importance of actions to support the Core Area, as shown subsequently in Figure 1, in the development of its 2019-2023 - Strategic Plan for the City of London. Specifically, the efforts described in this report address all five Areas of Focus, including:

- Strengthening Our Community
- Building a Sustainable City
- Safe City for Women and Girls
- Growing our Economy
- Leading in Public Service

The City of London is committed to eliminating systemic racism and oppression in the community. Marginalized and vulnerable communities have faced disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, adding to the historic and systemic barriers that exist in our community. The City of London will undertake deliberate intersectional approaches in the course of implementing the initiatives described in this report.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1   Previous Reports Related to this Matter

The following reports are directly related to the Core Area Action Plan.

- November 30, 2021 - Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee - Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy
- May 18, 2021 - Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee - Comprehensive Report on Core Area Initiatives
- July 14, 2020 - Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee - Core Area Action Plan - 2020 Progress Update
- October 28, 2019 - Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee - Core Area Action Plan

Please note that the May 18, 2021 report contained an extensive list of other reports related this matter in Appendix A that are not repeated here.

1.2   Context for the Core Area Action Plan

The CAAP does not exist independent of many other programs, policies and plans that have been created to foster the success of the Core area.

At the highest level, direction for the Core is established in the London Plan (https://london.ca/government/council-civic-administration/master-plans-strategies/london-plan-official-plan), which established a unique Downtown Place Type with a specific vision and actions to achieve the vision, a defined role within the city overall, unique permitted uses, intensity targets and form requirements.

Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan (https://pub-london.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=17358) slightly predates the London Plan. It establishes the Downtown as London's face to the world, a vibrant destination and a unique neighbourhood. Our Move Forward is organized into five sections: The Planning Framework, Strategic Directions, Transformational Projects, Tools, and Implementation/Targets. Progress on Our Move Forward has been reported through the State of the Downtown Reports, which track the health and progress in the area using consistent metrics.

In January 2021, Council also endorsed the implementation of 20 short-term Ideas for Action identified by the London Community Recovery Network with an investment of more than $1.8 million to support London's pandemic recovery efforts. These ideas added to the 12 Ideas that were already underway in various Service Areas. In total, the City of London is leading 32 Ideas to lay the foundation for a strong and inclusive recovery for the community. Of these City-led Ideas, nearly half (15) include activities that directly relate to strengthening London's Core Area. The remaining 17 Ideas will provide indirect support for London's Core through city-wide initiatives or activities that seek to build the capacity of the community to lay the foundations for community recovery.

In December of 2021, Council approved the Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy which is now in progress. This project will review existing incentive programs and planning processes to streamline redevelopment in the Core, assess any changes or updates that may be warranted to Our Move Forward, the Downtown Parking Strategy or the CAAP, address integration with the LCRN, and evaluate parking demand and supply at a high level. Short-term actions are expected later this spring, with long-term strategies available in the Spring of 2023.

A number of other initiatives, programs and projects are also focused on the Core area. The Downtown Parking Strategy was completed in late 2017 and is evaluated as on-street parking spots are added, removed or converted to other uses like loading zones. The Core Area Servicing Strategy defines the water, wastewater and stormwater upgrades necessary to support intensification and redevelopment in the Core.

Throughout the pandemic, the Back to Business (B2B) team has worked to streamline business supports and approvals. As London recovers from the pandemic, those streamlined processes will be evaluated against the pre-pandemic processes to see where the efficiencies can enhance approvals and supports permanently.

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1   Core Area Action Plan Progress

The Core Area Action Plan (CAAP), approved by Council on November 12, 2019, encompasses the area shown in Figure 1 and included 71 action items to address four key areas of need:
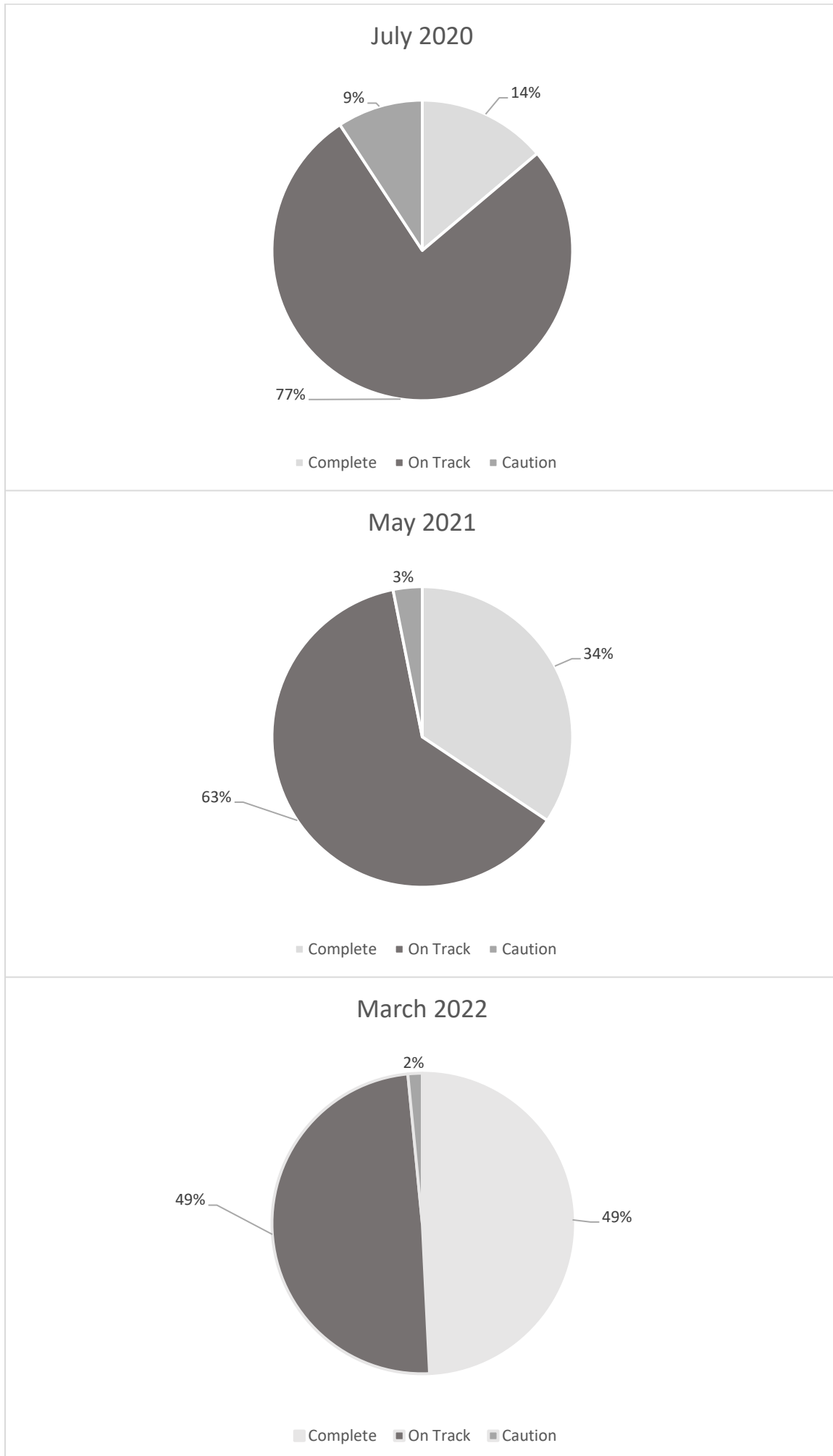
- People struggling with homelessness and health issues need help
- People need to feel safe and secure
- Businesses need an environment that allows them to be successful
- The Core Area needs to attract more people

Figure 1: Core Area Action Plan Boundaries

68 of the 71 actions included in the CAAP were either approved through the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget process or could be advanced through existing programs. In July 2020 and May 2021, the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee received reports detailing plan progress and the impacts of the pandemic on its delivery. Staff have continued to carefully monitor the CAAP. Progress as of July 2020, May 2021, and March 2022 are shown in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2:   CAAP Action Item Status Progress

July 2020

9%   14%

77%

■ Complete   ■ On Track   ■ Caution

May 2021

3%

34%

63%

■ Complete   ■ On Track   ■ Caution

March 2022

2%

49%   49%

■ Complete   ■ On Track   ■ Caution

The full CAAP status update can be found in Appendix A: Core Area Action Plan Implementation Status Update.

- 32 actions are complete and, where they resulted in program or service changes, have been integrated into ongoing operations. One action that was previously reporting as Caution has been rescoped and is now complete
- 32 actions are on track as planned, including one action previously recommended for cancellation that was integrated into the Strategy for Reducing Core Vacancy workplan approved by Council in 2021 and now reports as On Track
- One action is reporting as caution and is discussed subsequently in this report
- Six were not funded through the current Multi-Year Budget, but three of these may be fully or partly addressed through other CAAP actions and the London Community Recovery Network (LCRN) and are discussed in this report

Actions Previously Reporting as Caution

One action reporting as Caution in the May 2021 report, Item# 9 - Install Kindness Meters to directly support Core Area social service agencies, is now considered Complete. Due to the operational and safety issues associated with installing Kindness Meters as originally scoped and the information technology security challenges associated with creating a virtual, City-led fundraising program, staff have offered community organizations access to decommissioned parking meters should they wish to integrate Kindness Meters into their fundraising plans. While uptake has been very low to date, the option will continue to be available to interested organizations in the future.

One action continues to report as Caution: Item# 21 - Establish Core Area stabilization spaces. While property was originally purchased for such a space and Council had endorsed its repurposing, funding has not been secured from the Ministry of Health at this time for its operations. Staff continue to work with community organizations with related expertise to explore future opportunities to launch this service. Discussions continue with experts in this field regarding what an appropriate space and staffing model would entail. A letter of support from Ontario Health Team West was received from Ontario Health Team West Chairs and efforts continue to progress in order to launch this program sustainably.

Revisions to Actions

Minor revisions to the actions, such as changing some projected end dates to Q4 2023 to reflect where implementation work is complete and the results have been integrated into usual operations, are tracked in Appendix A.

One action has been more substantially revised. Item #11: Issue request for proposals on Queens Avenue parking lot, has been integrated into the Strategy for Reducing Core Vacancy workplan approved by Council in December 2021 and now reports as On Track for completion in Q2 2023 as part of those efforts.

Actions Reporting as Not Funded

Generally, staff have not reported on actions that were not funded in the last Multi-Year budget, but three of those actions are able to advance through other programs. Separate funding for businesses to install plumbing and hose connections and awnings on building façades was not approved as those improvements are eligible under the existing Façade Improvement Incentive Program. Prioritization of public art for the Core Area was also not funded, but LCRN funding allows advancement of new installations in the Core, where appropriate, under that program.

Resourcing and Oversight

As reported in May, the Senior Leadership Team made changes to the Core Area Steering Committee (CASC) in late 2020 to provide increased role clarity internally and externally, reduce overlap and duplication, and improve communications with stakeholders on important projects and programs in the Core. The Steering Committee includes the Deputy City Managers of Environment & Infrastructure, Planning & Economic Development, and Social & Health Development, as well as the Director of

Strategic Communications and Government Relations and oversees the People, Places and Economy Teams.

The restructuring of the organization in May of 2021 included the creation of a new work unit in Planning & Economic Development that brought together responsibility for several key functions in the Core. The role of this new unit relative to that of the Core Area Steering Committee and its Teams will be defined further throughout 2022 as hirings proceed. In the interim, however, the CASC, its Teams, leadership and all other accountability mechanisms and relationships will remain consistent to ensure consistent management of the CAAP.

2.2   Ambassador Program

On November 1, 2021, nine full-time Core Area Ambassadors started with the City. The onboarding process for the Ambassadors was comprehensive and reflected the complexity and importance of their roles in the community. Three weeks of training and orientation were provided, including introductions to City Service Areas, Core area BIAs and businesses and other community partners. Training included first aid, non-violent crisis intervention, mental health first aid, community engagement, and customer service.

Beat walks officially started on November 22, 2021 and the Ambassadors provide coverage from 7:00AM to 7:00PM Sunday through Tuesday and 7:00AM to 11:00PM Wednesday through Saturday. The three primary beats are the Downtown Core, Richmond Row, and Dundas East to Egerton Street.

While the Ambassadors have only been in place for a few months, they have already provided a number of new or enhanced services in the Core, including:

- Supporting the Old East Village Dundas Place reopening event
- Supporting the Festival of Markets on Dundas Place
- Alerting other City teams when they observe issues or by-law infractions
- Picking up small amounts of litter, including sharps, as they walk their beats
- Regularly speaking with people on the street and businesses, addressing any issues they can at the time and referring other issues to appropriate City staff for resolution
- Sharing City information about various projects including the new Bus Only Lane when it opened
- Fostering a friendly and safe environment on their walks
- Sharing information with individuals encountered on the street
- Connecting individuals with Coordinated Informed Response
- Calling 911 in emergency situations, including overdoses, and administering Naloxone when necessary

In the Spring of 2022, the team will expand to 12 full-time and 4 part-time Ambassadors, which will allow an expansion of the coverage hours to 7:00AM to 11:00PM Monday through Saturday and 7:00AM to 8:00PM on Sunday. The Ambassadors will continue to play a role in the Core Area Activations and will work closely with the BIAs.

2.3   Core Area Activation and Animation

The Dundas Place Fieldhouse

The Dundas Place Fieldhouse opened at 179 Dundas Street in the Spring of 2021 to support the operations of Dundas Place and provide public washrooms open from 7am to 11pm 7 days a week with funding from LCRN. Work is currently underway to formally transition the Dundas Place Fieldhouse to the Dundas Place Hub. When relaunched, the Hub will include a front counter staffed by a Core Area Ambassador, where the public will be able to access City and community information, learn about Dundas Place and Core Area programming, pick up a sharps disposal kit, borrow equipment, book space on Dundas Place and access other Core Area-related services.

<u>2021 Dundas Place Activations</u>

Despite the ongoing pandemic restrictions, from July to December 2021, Dundas Place hosted over 250 activations, including:

- 125 music performances
- 64 arts activities
- 37 events
- 20 recreation activities
- 4 street markets

It is estimated over 20,000 people participated in this programming. Daily, flexible seating and giant games were set up on Dundas Place and in Market Lane through the warmer months. 17 Community Partners contributed to this programming including the London Arts Council, London Ontario Jazz Hub, The Arts Project, Forest City Film Fest, Middlesex London Health Unit, and Budweiser Gardens. A full list of the activations and partners can be found in Appendix B to this report.

City staff are currently conducting engagement to inform the development of the 2022 Dundas Place program and interested parties can provide feedback via the Get Involved website. Council has also approved extending the traffic diversion pilot project on Dundas Place through this year's construction season, which will continue to provide a safer space for pedestrians and cyclists and allow for expanded opportunities for programming.

<u>Dundas Place Street Vendor Pilot Program</u>

The 2022 Dundas Place activation plan includes the development of the 2022 Dundas Place Street Vendor Pilot Program. Dundas Place was designed to accommodate a range of pedestrian-oriented activities, including small-scale street vending. Subject to Council approval, Civic Administration is proposing a 2022 Dundas Place Street Vendor Pilot Program to increase vendor access to the space. Staff propose starting the pilot on Dundas Place and, if it is successful, expanding the program to other parts of the Core in consultation with the BIAs and area businesses. The street vendor application process and program management would operate from the Dundas Place Hub with administrative support from of the Core Area Ambassadors and the Manager, Core Area Programs. This pilot program will be for non-food vendors only, noting that a business license program already exists for non-motorized food vendors.

Preliminary engagement on the Dundas Place Street Vendor Pilot Program has included conversations with every business on Dundas Place and the Downtown London BIA. Support for this pilot has been very high and it is seen as an opportunity to increase foot traffic and improve the atmosphere on the street.

This program aligns with Council's vision of Dundas Place, London's Strategic Plan (Growing our Economy – Revitalize London's Downtown and urban areas – support entrepreneurs, start-up, and scale-up companies), as well as the Core Area Vacancy strategy work that is currently underway. If a street vendor finds success on Dundas Place, they may be able to transition into a brick-and-mortar location in the future.

Staff are exploring a modest quarterly application fee to help recover the administrative time in processing the application while also keeping the program accessible to small businesses, artists, artisans, and crafters. Staff will return to Council at a future date to request an amendment to the Fees and Charges by-law along with the required PPM.

Other Core Area Activations

Dundas Place is not the only part of the Core that was the focus of increased animation and activation efforts in 2021. Other notable supported activations included:

- Park it at the Market, in partnership with the Western Fair District
- Market Block Dining District in Downtown London in partnership with the Covent Garden Market
- Façade murals in OEV in partnership with the OEV BIA
- OEV Dundas Reopening Celebration in OEV in partnership with the OEV BIA and London Arts Council
- Queens Park Holiday Festivities in OEV in partnership with the Western Fair District
- Holiday Events Calendar in Downtown London in partnership with the Downtown London BIA

Working with the Core Area Activation Coordination Committee, a seasonal activations calendar will be produced and shared with the community to increase awareness of the many activities happening throughout the Core Area this year.

Civic Administration are also working closely with both BIAs to support their activation plans for 2022 and will continue to collaborate with the London Arts Council, the London Music Office, and other stakeholders to support their music, entertainment and cultural programming in the Core, particularly those that manifest UNESCO's recent declaration of London as a Music City.

2.4   Support Approach for Vulnerable People

Staff continue to provide a range of outreach services in the Core Area which include an expanded Coordinated Informed Response team to provide increased presence and support. In addition to these expanded services, City staff are also actively seeking housing placement opportunities for Londoners experiencing homelessness. The type of housing varies from temporary or transitional, supportive, rent geared to income, partnership with tenants on a head lease program and through more traditional affordable housing placements. Key efforts in the support response are described below.

2021 Spring/Summer Response

The pandemic continued to challenge the City team and its partners to find creative ways to support vulnerable people in light of closures and restrictions impacting pre-pandemic supports. Day drop-in services from the 2021 Winter Response at the coffee house at the Hamilton Road Senior Centre were extended into the summer of 2021 in order to continue to offer safe, socially distanced space out of the weather. This service consistently supported up to 50 individuals, providing them a place to rest, eat and access social service supports.

Extension of Winter Response 2021

The Ark Aid Mission WISH to be Home (WISH) program continued to provide transitional supportive housing for participants formally residing at the 2021 WISH sites. The WISH program provides in-home support for individuals residing in transitional units and assistance in accessing income, identification, and VI-SPDAT assessment. Participants residing in the transitional units are matched to supports through Coordinated Access based on eligibility and community priority.

Headlease

The City of London pilot Head Lease program provides transitional supportive housing opportunities for individuals experiencing homelessness. The aim of the program is to provide life skills development aimed at successful tenancy. The City of London has now leased 18 units in the private market. This includes bachelor units (14), one-bedroom (1), two-bedroom (1) and three-bedroom (2) units. Occupants are matched to

units and housing support programs that provide in-home support based on the needs of the occupant(s) and assist in securing and maintaining permanent housing.

The Core Area Diversion Pilot Project

The Core Area Diversion pilot project is a partnership between the London Police Service and the City of London's Social and Health Development team. The project is supported by Housing Stability Services through Coordinated Informed Response and Life Stabilization through the Ontario Works teams. The pilot aims to reduce the number of individual interactions between individuals experiencing homelessness with LPS and the justice system.

Peer Outreach Workers with lived experience support the Core Area Diversion Pilot by connecting individuals experiencing homelessness to services and supports that meet their needs and goals. The team provides 40 hours of outreach services in the Core each week. Peer Outreach Workers act as an inflow program to the Housing Stability System, supporting individuals to move towards housing stability and focusing on those with frequent interactions with the justice system provided by LPS. The program actively works with individuals to:

- Build trust and increase engagement with support programs like Ontario Works
- Work on paper readiness; VI-SPDAT assessments, identification, and income
- Reduce interactions with the criminal justice system through diversion
- Connect to supports and services that meet individual needs and goals
- Participate in the City of London Homeless Prevention housing stability system, including Coordinated Access, to serve individuals meeting prioritization criteria as determined by the system

The program team reports that there has been a significant reduction in interactions between individuals involved in the Diversion Pilot Project and the justice system. In addition, the following measures are being tracked and will be used to evaluate the success of the pilot at its conclusion:

- Number of people who attain social support such as Ontario Works
- Number of people who attain identification
- Number of people who complete a VI-SPDAT
- Number of people on London's Coordinated Access List
- Number of connections to services (health, addiction, mental health, etc.)
- Number of interactions with London Police Service
- Number of people experiencing homelessness who obtain or retain housing

2021/2022 Winter Response

The second year of the enhanced Winter Response plan continues to work to support unsheltered individuals in London over the winter months in a way that meets their basic needs and provides additional solutions to help support some of the most vulnerable population to get out of the cold. The program includes:

A Day Drop-in Space that operates from 8:00AM to 8:00PM in a "coffee house" style space located in the Core that can seat 50 individuals at a time, along with take-out style services. It operates daily to offer warmth, food with beverages and supports for other basic needs along with connections to social services. The Day Drop-in Space opened on December 1, 2021 and will remain in operation until the end of March 2022. It has been at capacity since its opening.

A Night Drop-In Space provides overnight "Resting Space" style drop-in for up to 50 individuals from 8:00PM to 8:00AM and offers warmth, beds, food and basic needs along with access to social service supports. It also will operate from December of last year through March of this year inclusive and has been at or near capacity every night. During some severe cold weather alerts, this space along with others across the community expanded their capacity to accommodate more individuals to get out of the

cold. This capacity expansion was often hindered by access to space and access to staffing supports.

The Winter Shelters which are 24/7 "Mobile Community" spaces. In collaboration with social service providers, the site offers heated portable residential trailers owned by the City of London adjacent to communal space which is used to operate dining, hygiene, and support staff workspaces. Each of the two temporary shelters can accommodate 30 people for stays ranging from several days to up to four months. Lockable rooms are assigned to individuals for the duration of their stay and all amenities are provided in the main buildings, including three meals each day and access to social service supports and personal housing plans.

The Fanshawe Golf Course site is focused on housing and has been offered to individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness interested in working on their long-term goals including health stabilization, adapting to living indoors and within a community, and ultimately independent housing. This model is led by social service workers with lived experience who assist individuals with stabilization and transition to a more typical community life. It is currently supporting 28 participants and multiple participants are now permanently housed.

Wiigiwaaminaan at Parkwood is an Indigenous-led response focused on culturally specific support and healing. Individuals who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness with the highest acuity, prioritizing those who identify as Indigenous, many from the Core, were invited to stay at the response. This response is led by Atlohsa Family Healing Services, which offers wrap-around services to ease the transition from street to shelter. It is currently supporting 24 participants and multiple participants are now permanently housed.

The two Winter Shelters supplement extra motel rooms and resting spaces that have been added to support vulnerable people through the pandemic. Access to the residential trailers were managed through Coordinated Access and tracked in HIFIS. Low barrier services are offered to individuals, couples, and those with pets. The London Area Food Bank supports all Winter Response food needs.

Increasing Affordable Housing Supply

Work also continues to increase the availability of permanent housing solutions. A new residential building located at 122 Baseline Road is scheduled for completion in early 2022 and occupancy to begin occurring in February. The building offers 61 affordable units over four floors and includes one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units. Tenants will be matched to the new units and housing support programs through Coordinated Access and based on program eligibility and identified community priorities.

2.5   Property Standards, Grants and By-law Enforcement

By-law Enforcement

Two new Municipal Law Enforcement Officers (MLEOs) were hired in the Summer of 2021 to work exclusively in the Core area. On average, the MLEOs address three "quick fixes" a day, where they are able to resolve a by-law matter through education and voluntary compliance from an owner or operator.

The MLEOs have also been proactively addressing other by-law concerns in the Core. From May to the end of 2021, they addressed over 300 issues of non-compliance in the Core, mostly related to property standards, yard and lot maintenance and vacant building management. 67% of those complaints have been resolved at the time of this report. Of the remaining issues, some are awaiting spring weather for resolution, when exterior repairs like painting can be completed successfully.

The enforcement approach in the Core has been based on building collaborative relationships with property owners, the Project Clean Slate team, staff from other

Service Areas, the Ambassadors and the BIAs. Feedback from those stakeholders has been very positive and the relationships the team has been able to build have allowed staff to work strategically with property owners and operators to encourage them to consider repairing or adding lighting, repairing fences and gates, securing vestibules, and removing graffiti. Grants are available to support many of these investments as well.

The team also works closely with the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) team to address concerns about disruptive activities. The addition of e-Bikes in the Fall of 2021 provided improved access to the "nooks and crannies" of the area and the team has expressed excitement about using the bikes in their work in 2022. A current enforcement priority focuses on addressing non-conforming waste disposal bins that result in unsightly and unhygienic conditions.

Clean Slate

At the meeting held on May 25, 2021, Council approved the reallocation of $37,500 in one-time funding resulting from the COVID-19 impacts on other Core Area Action Plan efforts to fund the Project Clean Slate pilot. $16,729 in CAAP funding that could not be spent in 2021 due to the impacts of COVID-19 was used to extend the program through to the end of the year.

Operated by Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Project Clean Slate helps to address the issue of loose trash and garbage on private property, while at the same time providing employment and development opportunities for youth engaged in YOU programming. This program is modelled after successful initiatives in other communities. Metrics related to the properties visited and waste quantities removed are being tracked, as is qualitative feedback from the BIAs, businesses, City staff, and the service provider and its participants.

To date, support for this program has been very high from all stakeholders and the extension of the pilot project through 2022 would allow the evaluation of its ongoing performance over a longer timeframe and in the context of a busier Core area as pandemic restrictions are expected to lessen. City staff are also exploring using the program as a gateway for participants to find employment with the City in similar roles.

The cost of extending the pilot project through 2022 is $196,635. Using existing CAAP operating budgets, staff were able to administratively continue the contract with YOU through to the end of March 2022, allowing the program to continue uninterrupted until this report could be considered by Committee and Council. The remaining $146,760 required to further extend Project Clean Slate pilot from April through December 2022 inclusive can be allocated from the Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Economy (EEE) Reserve, subject to Council's approval of the extension as recommended in this report.

Should the outcomes from the extended pilot project continue to be positive, staff will investigate permanent funding options, including external sources, as part of the 2023 Annual Budget Update.

Grant Programs

Via the programs offered through the Core Area Community Improvement Plan, in 2021 sixteen sign permit applicants were reimbursed $3,380 in permit fees. Thirty-five Core Area sidewalk café locations similarly used CIP supports amounting to $32,500 in licensing and application fee reimbursements that would otherwise be the responsibility of the applicants.

These supports supplement the LCRN one-time 2021 funding made available wherein $66,864 was distributed in forty five different Core Area locations, in grants of up to $2,000 each, which leveraged the purchase of sidewalk patio capital investments in equipment such as tables, chairs, perimeter fencing, and plantings to help sustain food-service businesses and contribute to the social animation of the Core Area.

Thirty-three Core Area businesses received a total of $136,681 in 2021 under the LCRN Recovery Grant Program to make eligible interior and exterior business building upgrades. Finally, using existing Downtown and OEV CIP programs, in 2021 two Core Area businesses participated in the Façade Improvement Loan program and four in the Upgrade to Building Code Loan Program.

2.6   Core Communications and Engagement Efforts

Enhanced Communications

Several enhanced communications efforts are now in place to raise awareness and promote programs and initiatives in the Core Area. More information on these efforts can be found in Appendix C. The following is a list of the initiatives that have been introduced:

- An integrated communications framework and the 'Our Core Area' brand, created to help support communication messages and materials
- A comprehensive webpage on london.ca that is home to information about the Core Area to help visitors (london.ca/CoreArea)
- A webpage on the City's engagement site Get Involved to share information for businesses and residents in the Core Area and offer opportunities to provide comments and feedback on initiatives (getinvolved.london.ca/CoreArea)
- A quarterly newsletter sent to Core Area businesses and residents highlighting projects impacting the downtown, Old East Village and Midtown (View past newsletters)
- Engagement through the virtual Our Core Area Spring and Fall Forums (Spring Forum, Fall Forum)
- Ongoing media releases to highlight projects and initiatives and their outcomes, including event promotion, road closure updates, parking updates, art unveilings and cycling information
- Inclusion of content about the Core Area in the City's bi-weekly Our City e-newsletter
- Printed quick reference cards distributed to BIA members to simplify who to contact about active safety, security and cleanliness issues
- A video promoting City of London initiatives to revitalize the Core Area shown during the 2021 AMO Conference and also promoted on social media (https://youtu.be/Zeh_Eyo3aIU)
- Social media campaigns were created to promote Core Area initiatives, programs, recreational activities, events, people and arts
- Communications program to support the Core Area Spotlight program to engage businesses and enhance safety and security in the Core
- Branded uniforms for Core Area Ambassadors and printed contact cards about the Ambassadors' job functions were also distributed to Core Area businesses

Staff are also developing communications programs that will be launched in the near future. These include:

- A plan to build awareness of and promote the processes and procedures of City of London special events and neighbourhood events held in the Core Area
- A plan to share educational information to Core Area business owners and residents on how to report sharps on public property and how to safely pick up sharps on private property
- A promotional plan to inform Londoners about upcoming events taking place in the Core Area

Ongoing Staff-to-Staff Engagement

The Core Area Strategy Team continues to meet monthly and includes the Executive Directors of both BIAs and the members of the City's Core Area Steering Committee. This team is working to address strategic issues, gaps and opportunities in current programs and services and other topics.

The Core Area Action Team meets biweekly and includes staff from the City of London, as well as London Police Services and both BIAs. This is a tactical team focused on solving short-term issues quickly and collaboratively.

In addition, the Chair of the Core Area Steering Committee meets monthly with each BIA Executive Director and special meetings have been convened to focus on topics of particular interest as well.

Engage Core Residents

Due to the desire to build and begin implementing the CAAP quickly, the consultation plans that supported its development did not include mechanisms to engage residents of the Core specifically. While Old East Village has an active community association, there is currently no similar organization for residents of the Downtown.

Learning what residents want in their neighbourhoods has never been more important and experience shows targeting smaller groups or neighbourhoods can result in increased levels of engagement and action. A high-level engagement process has been developed by staff in the Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services Service Area to better reach Core area residents. It has been modelled after engagement processes used for programs such as Neighbourhood Decision Making. For details, please see Appendix D: Core Area Resident Engagement Process.

Enhanced resident engagement is also part of the recommended creation of an updated CAAP, as detailed subsequently in this report.

2.7   Government Relations

The May 2021 report identified a need to work collectively with external stakeholders to engage with higher levels of government for funding to address law enforcement needs, addictions and mental health treatment and support for businesses.

The Government and External Relations team prepared an update outlining the ongoing and future actions to support the Core Area advocacy priority of attracting increased supports for mental health and addictions. Throughout the course of undertaking this work, staff have and will continue to identify opportunities for collaboration with BIAs, businesses, service providers and other stakeholders.

The two main priorities in the advocacy approach are described below. Additionally, ongoing advocacy efforts to fund greater supports for Indigenous people in the London-area are currently being scoped as a parallel priority that overlaps the objectives of the CAAP.

Enhancing the Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST) Program

COAST is a community-led, police-supported initiative that is a partnership between London Police Services, the Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, St. Joseph's Health Care London, and Middlesex London Paramedic Services that launched in 2021. The pilot project pairs a COAST constable with a clinical partner who work together to ensure safety and provide support, guidance, counselling, assistance, and direction to persons who have experienced or are experiencing mental health crises. There are currently three COAST teams working in London at different times of the day, seven days each week and there is considerable interest in seeing the program made permanent and its capacity expanded.

In the latter half of 2021, meetings were held with the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to discuss expanding COAST. On the advice of the Province, City staff arranged a meeting with the Ontario Health Team West Chairs to advance this request.

Staff have worked with local lead agencies to define what ongoing funding for the COAST pilot program would entail and that request for the continuation of COAST has been submitted to the 2022 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission. The continuation of COAST beyond the pilot project and the expansion of its capacity will continue to be key advocacy priorities in 2022.

Establishing Additional Stabilization Spaces

Tied to the continuation and expansion of COAST, the Core Area People Team also identified the need for new stabilization spaces. Work is underway to develop a business case for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, whose team are responsible for allocating investments under the Province's funding for mental health and addictions.

The need for stabilization spaces was also discussed with the Ontario Health Team West Chairs, who provided a letter of support related to the urgency and need for these services for vulnerable people in crisis. A request for additional discussions for stabilization spaces has been included in London's 2022 Provincial Pre-Budget Submission.

2.8   Safety and Security Initiatives

Prolific Offenders Pilot Project

In July 2021, LPS started a new pilot project aimed at working to reduce the activities of known prolific offenders in the Core area. The program started with 15 individuals who were known for frequent crimes like vandalism, mischief, and break-and-enters. Over the course of the fall, the program was expanded to 18 individuals.

152 outreach contacts were made with the individuals and LPS indicates that many of the participants have been receptive to the interventions, including referral to COAST and other supports.

Over the course of the pilot program, targeted crimes have reduced by 20%. The individuals involved have been charged with crimes 58% less frequently than they were before the project started.

Crisis Outreach and Support Team (COAST)

In April 2021, the London Police Service, the Middlesex-London Paramedic Service, the Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, and St. Joseph's Health Care London launched COAST as a one-year pilot program. Coast provides outreach and support service for individuals experiencing serious/acute mental health and addictions issues. The main goals of COAST were to reduce police-led responses to situations in which an individual is experiencing a mental health/addiction crisis and improve outcomes for these individuals by ensuring they receive the appropriate care in the appropriate setting.

Some of the initial results for the COAST program between April and November of 2021 are described below:

- 962 service provider interactions served 713 unique individuals
- Without COAST, 41% of respondents indicated they would have called 911 and 35% said they would have done nothing and tried to cope with things themselves
- 80% of the individuals served were very satisfied or satisfied with the service, with 71% were satisfied that needs for assistance with understanding and accessing supports were met
- 88% of individuals who used COAST services would use the service again

COAST also has the ability to use emergency response and health care capacity more effectively by diverting individuals from hospital waiting rooms and reducing repeat crisis calls to 911. Individuals who make frequent calls for police service are able to reduce

their use of 911. Some individuals who called 911 more than five times per month reduced their use of 911 by 60%. Some of the individuals supported use the emergency department and 911 regularly to cope with distress. 79% of participants surveyed indicated they did not have to attend the hospital or call police within three days of interacting with COAST.

COAST has funding to continue service delivery as part of the pilot project until March 31, 2022.

Bystander Training

Council's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan identifies Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls as one of its six Areas of Focus. Additionally, as a participating city in the United Nations Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Program, the 2021-2024 Safe Cities London Action Plan articulates a vision for London as a 'safe city where women, girls, nonbinary and trans individuals, and survivors access public spaces and freely participate in public life without fear or experience of sexual violence'.

As part of these commitments and the efforts to increase safety in the downtown core, Environment and Infrastructure, Planning and Economic Development and the City Manager's Office have collaborated to create foundational training for teams to recognize and address gender-based violence.

Following a successful pilot in June 2021, the City partnered with Anova to establish a bystander intervention training program. Bystander intervention is the ability to know what to do when a situation arises that requires assistance or interruption. Bystander intervention training is designed to equip employees with an understanding of our role in creating safe public spaces, the prevalence and impacts of gender-based violence, including how to recognize it, as well as tools to help us take a survivor-centred approach to safely intervening to make our community safer.

The program will be rolled out to people leaders in Environment and Infrastructure and Planning and Economic Development from February to June 2022. Training for operational teams will follow and will be completed by December 2022. The training program is intentionally starting with the Environment and Infrastructure and Planning and Economic Development teams as they have the most visible, operational presence in our community. It is anticipated that the program will be rolled out more broadly across the corporation in the coming months and could be expanded to external service providers, businesses and other organizations in the future as well.

Spotlight Program

The spotlight program identified businesses in the Core Area that have CCTV systems and promotes the presence of the system through visual signage as a deterrent related to negative behaviour. It also assists law enforcement in knowing the systems exist for potential evidence gathering. The program has been operational for approximately one month and sixteen businesses have signed on to the program.

Safety Audits

The Core Area security audit was completed in January 2022 and staff are currently reviewing recommendations and establishing a process for completion of the prioritized recommendations identified in the audit. Recommendations associated with private properties will begin to be addressed in March. Property owners where recommendations have been made will be engaged to determine if they would like to proceed with implementation. The owner will be responsible for the completion of the work and enter into an agreement with the City regarding reimbursement using the Core Area Safety Audit Grant Program previously approved by Council.

2.9   Other Core-Related Initiatives

London Community Recovery Network (LCRN)

In January 2021, Council endorsed the implementation of 20 short-term Ideas for Action identified by the London Community Recovery Network (LCRN) with an investment of more than $1.8 million to support London's pandemic recovery efforts. These ideas added to the 12 Ideas that were already underway in various Service Areas. As of January 1, 2022, all of the City-led LCRN initiatives have been completed, noting some initiatives have investments continuing on into 2022 and 2023.

In October 2021, Council adopted the London Community Recovery Framework – a three-year community-driven resource to guide actions and alignment toward a strong and inclusive post-COVID London. Many of the shared indicators adopted by LCRN member organizations align with the priorities within the CAAP. Future efforts by Civic Administration, including initiatives under the CAAP, will align with the London Community Recovery Framework to contribute to a strong, deep, and inclusive recovery and renewal for London.

Back to Business (B2B)

The Back To Business [B2B] Team was set up in 2020 to coordinate service areas to be as responsive as possible in accommodating requests for assistance from businesses coping with pandemic-related impacts that the City can play a role in addressing. Though responsive to requests from businesses coming from anywhere in the city, most requests have come from within the Core Area. The group has facilitated the streamlined approvals of almost 100 sidewalk patios on public and private property, put in place 15 temporary drop/off pick-up spots at curbsides and municipal parking lots, streamlined the approval process for sidewalk sales on City property, and acted as a single point of contact for hundreds of questions. Current provisions related to sidewalk patios, temporary drop/off pick-up spots, etc. continue in 2022, through authority delegated to staff in November 2021. As the volume of requests has been quite low lately, the B2B group now meets on an as-needed basis and continues to address any requests made at b2b@london.ca.

Supports for Business During Construction

The City began developing a specific Core construction strategy in 2018 during the construction of Dundas Place. It arose out of an understanding that major work in the Core requires heightened attention and collaboration. By adding dedicated communications and business relations resources to the traditional construction project management team, the goal was and remains to enhance the service provided to business and community stakeholders affected by construction. This program is also forming the basis of improved construction communications and engagement for major projects in other areas of the City in 2022 and beyond.

Appendix E contains the 2022 construction projects in the Core area. These projects will receive the full slate of core construction supports, including:

- Virtual public pre-construction meetings to be hosted in advance of construction
- Core Construction Toolkit and Contact Card to be distributed at start of construction
- Bi-weekly construction updates to be provided through email
- Up-to-date project information will be available on project website
- Rapid response support from the Construction Business Relations Coordinator
- Weekly construction and traffic impact updates to be provided to internal partners and LTC through Core Area Construction Coordination Committee (CAC3) meetings

The 2022 Rapid Transit projects have also included contract provisions requiring an enhanced construction staging workshop with the contractor and project team and enhanced Public Relations from the contractor through construction contract special provisions.

The Core Area Construction Dollars Pilot Program will be returning for its third year to support Downtown London and Old East Village businesses during another busy construction season. The four-year program is funded through CAAP, administered by the Downtown London and Old East Village Business Improvement Areas, and will contribute close to $100,000 into the local economy this year. It is designed to incentivize customers to visit the Core Area to shop, dine and experience the many unique businesses. The 2022 program will be launched in the spring and will run until late fall. Construction Dollars come in $5-, $10- and $20-dollar amounts and can be spent at participating businesses in the Core.

The BIAs create and manage a wide range of promotion/marketing and distribution methods to draw people to the Core Area during construction (e.g., social media posts, cash mobs, business-to-business collaboration, contests, social media influencers, partnerships, radio giveaways, provide directly to businesses to give to customers). Over 750 businesses in the Core are able to participate in and benefit from the Core Area Construction Dollar Program. In 2021, Construction Dollars in the OEV BIA were redeemed at a rate of 86% of those distributed, while Downtown BIA Construction Dollars were redeemed at a rate of 70%.

Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on core area vacancy in cities across Canada. London is no exception. London's office vacancy rate is currently hovering around 20%, a 23% year-over-year increase in comparison to 2020. The long-term outlook for commercial real estate is particularly uncertain as tenants consider new and emerging business models. As noted in a previous section of this report, Council has directed staff to develop a Core Area Vacancy Strategy. Addressing core area land and building vacancy requires both immediate action and a comprehensive long-term strategy as part of the overall approach to core area planning. Short-term ideas for action will be provided to Council for its consideration in mid-2022, with a longer-term Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy being completed in early 2023.

London Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) Retail Accelerator

An LEDC Business Case was approved at SPPC on February 8, 2022 for a retail accelerator pilot program. The pilot will support commercial and main street corridor recovery in core areas of Downtown and Old East Village, by recruiting new businesses, home based and expanding entrepreneurs to reduce main street vacancies and further develop small business jobs and investment.

Through a new one-year pilot program, LEDC, SBC, OEV and Downtown London would work together to create a pipeline of 10-15 targeted prospects, with a goal to work with 4-6 businesses to scale up their growing operations, increase employment and productively utilize vacant spaces in London's Core areas, Downtown and Old East Village.

This proposed investment of $180,000 will come from the $10 million funding Council authorized to be contributed to the Economic Development Reserve Fund to support social and economic recovery measures, as well as the LCRN Framework.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

<u>Operating Budgets</u>

Operating budgets associated with the CAAP have been reviewed for 2021, including the expenditure of the $100,000 in operating funding that was identified as surplus in the May 2021 Council report.

Table 1: Operating Budgets and Expenditures for 2021(1000's)

Program	2021 Net Budget	Var- iance	2021 Variance Description	2022 Net Budget
Coordinated Informed Response (CIR)	$1,661	($46)	Due to increased winter response costs	$1,697
Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	$0	$0	$340k was spent on this program in 2021. Fully funded from 2019 operating budget surplus as approved through Business Case #7	$0
Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	$1,000	$0		$1,000
Proactive Compliance Program	$148	($24)	Cost of new MLEOs not fully accounted for when Clean Slate allocated to this account.	$148
Establish, implement, and regularly monitor a higher clean standard for Core Area; Implement new pressure wash program for sidewalks and civic spaces; Implement safety audit recommendations on public property	$850	$0		$850
Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area; Activate spaces and places with bistro chairs and tables; Invest in Dundas Place	$354	$53	$450K budget reported in May included a management employee now funded in a different account. Surplus from using internal resources for program development.	$354
Eliminate encroachment fees for patios, signage, and awnings in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	$30	$0		$30
Experiment with temporary free municipal parking	$150	$0		$150
Fund four-year Core Area "construction dollars" pilot program; Provide grants to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property through Core Area Community Improvement Plan;	$200	$100	Construction Dollars were fully spent. No grants issued for safety audit as report finished at year end. Safety budget items will report as their own line items in 2022.	$200
Establish new Core Area garbage and recycling collection program	$200	$0		$200
Total	**$4,593**	**$83**	**98% Spent in 2021**	**$4,629**

While surpluses and shortfalls occurred in various programs included in the CAAP in 2021, the program overall is slightly underspent. Changes will be made to financial reporting in 2022 to provide further clarity. This is mostly related to tracking expenditures related to the implementation of the Safety Audit program separately, instead of seeing those funds budgeted with public property cleaning and Construction Dollars.

Also in May 2021, Council provided its approval to reallocate the $100,000 in one-time funding to other emergent opportunities that arose in the Core prior to year-end. Table 2 provides a summary of where those funds were allocated by the CAAP, guided by the decision-making process provided in Appendix F, along with considerations related to supply chain impacts on procurement.

Table 2: Reallocation of $100,000 in 2021 Operating Funds

Project / Program / Event / Service	Amount
Sharps disposal kits for distribution to businesses and property owners	$895
Core Area marketing and promotional materials, including Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, Google Display Ads, Google Search Ads and Radio Ads	$5,597
Continue Project Clean Slate Pilot until the end of 2021	$16,729
Concert Style Fencing - additional 50 pieces for CCMA's, Winter Festival, security needs, etc.	$8,971
Clothing supports for Winter Response (winter coats, gloves, hats)	$7,685
Outreach Program staff winter needs (winter coats, gloves, hats)	$1,005
Diversion Pilot - increased funding	$28,989
Eco-counter for Dundas Place for technology to ongoing counting of pedestrians/cyclists/vehicle	$8,517
Total	**$78,388**

Please note that the $78,388 in operating expenditures, as well as the unspent $21,612, are included in the overall operating budget summary in Table 1.

Overall, CAAP team members are expecting to be fully spent in 2022 as pandemic restrictions hopefully ease. Staff are also recommending that the contract with Youth Opportunities Unlimited for Project Clean Slate pilot be extended through December 31, 2022 at a total contract price of $195,635, it being noted that $48,875 in funding for January 1, 2022 to March 31, 2022 was available within existing approved operating budgets and that the balance of $146,760 for the remainder of 2022 is available through the Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Economy (EEE) Reserve as per the stated purpose of the reserve. Feedback on this program has been very positive from all stakeholders and, should the results continue to be positive through the summer, staff will work to find ongoing sources to extend this program into additional years in advance of the 2023 Annual Budget Update.

Capital Budgets

At this time, capital spending is anticipated to be on-track as per the approved budgets; while some projects may take longer to deliver in their entireties due to the impacts of the pandemic, those funds would carry forward to 2023 to allow their completion at that time.

4.0 Key Issues and Considerations

4.1 Performance Measurement

The May 2021 report identified an opportunity to improve the metrics and performance measurement efforts associated with the CAAP. While actions included in the CAAP are monitored for progress status, monitoring for impact was being done inconsistently by the various teams responsible for delivering the actions.

In the latter half of 2021, a consultant worked with City staff and partner agencies to develop the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan, which can be found in Appendix G to this report. The performance measurement plan establishes the metrics that will be tracked and reported on annually, as well as over the lifespan of the CAAP, using over 140 quantitative measures as well as qualitative evaluation strategies.

Data collection related to Core Area Action Plan Actions began in January 2022 and included the development of data collection tools where they did not already exist.

4.2 Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis

As part of the design of the Ambassador program, a consultant was retained to assess any variances between the work undertaken by the London Ambassadors and that associated with similar programs in other cities. This evaluation evolved into a more comprehensive program review, the results of which can be found in Appendix H: Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis. The final report summarizes the results of a literature scan and interviews with 16 other Canadian municipalities. Key findings are as follows:

- London's Experience is Similar to that of Other Communities: The challenges facing London's Core area related to homelessness and mental health, safety and security, fostering a thriving environment for businesses, attracting people to the Core, and commercial vacancies are occurring across Canada.

- Communities Have Struggled with Moving to Implementation: While most of the communities interviewed across Canada have some sort of plan for their Core, not all activities included in the plan were being fully implemented or implemented as originally envisioned in the plan. Few plans had strong metrics to assess both the level of implementation completeness and/or the effectiveness of the intervention.

- Other Communities are Interested in Learning from London: London's CAAP is seen as doing more than some other communities to address specific areas of focus, such as supporting individuals experiencing homelessness and mental health challenges and promoting safety and security. Several communities indicated they looked to London as a best practice community.

Some opportunities for improvement have also been identified in the consultant's report. The detailed Opportunities for Further Exploration can be found in Appendix H, with some overarching themes as follows:

- Updating the Core Area Action Plan: Not only does the current CAAP conclude in 2023, the plan was developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. More information on a proposed update to the CAAP is provided in the subsequent section of this report.

- Defining Scope, Scale, and Standards for Core Area Action Plan Actions: While the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan will assist in measuring the scope, scale and outcomes associated with the implementation of the CAAP action items, developing additional work is recommended related to standards and analytics. Likely this is best to incorporate into an updated CAAP, should Council approve its development.

- Identifying Opportunities Not Yet Tested in Similar Size Cities – The research concluded that, while there are similar challenges in peer municipalities across Canada, there are few ready-made solutions. There is an opportunity for London to find creative and innovative made-in-London solutions to pilot through consultation with staff, stakeholders, researchers and others.

- Developing a Community of Practice – There is an opportunity to bring together similar size communities from across Canada to work collectively towards solutions to the issues shared by many municipalities. A community of practice could allow different cities to pilot different possible solutions and provide the opportunity for comparison, knowledge-sharing, and innovation.

4.3 Updating the CAAP

The current CAAP was developed over the spring and summer of 2019, before being approved by City Council in November of that year. The development of the CAAP and the consultation associated with that work occurred quickly in order to respond to issues and opportunities in the Core of the city. Implementation of the CAAP was focused on the four-year period from January 2020 through December 2023 inclusive. As such, 2023 is the last year for the current CAAP, which coincides with the start of the next Multi-Year Budget as well.

Significant efforts have been directed to the Core by the City of London, the London Police Service and other agencies and organizations since the approval of the Core Area Action Plan efforts in the 2020 - 2023 Multi-Year Budget process. The motivating factors that resulted in the current CAAP still persist and ongoing work will be required to build on the progress to date. As a result, it is recommended that staff be directed to begin the process of building a new CAAP that would take effect starting in January of 2023 and that could be used to inform the next MYB process as well. It is further noted that updating of the CAAP beyond 2023 also coincides with the need to update the 2019 - 2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London.

Assuming work starts in April of 2022, a general approach to refreshing the CAAP is proposed in Table 3.

Table 3: High-level Work Plan to Build the 2024 - 2027 CAAP

Project Deliverable	Expected Completion
Project initiation and planning, including the creation of a project team and charter	May 2022
Background data collection, including metrics from the current plan, the results of the gap analysis, engagement with key staff, and external consultation	July 2022
Creation of draft 2024 - 2027 CAAP	October 2022
Consultation and engagement on draft plan	November 2022
Integration in 2024 - 2028 Strategic Plan for the City of London	December 2022
Refinement of the 2024 - 2027 CAAP	February 2023
Consideration of the 2024 - 2027 CAAP by Council	April 2023
Preparation of business cases for the 2024 - 2027 Multi-Year Budget	Summer 2023
Consideration of business cases as part of the 2024 - 2027 Multi-Year Budget	Early 2024
Revision of the 2024 - 2027 CAAP based on the available funding approved as part of the MYB	Early 2024

The earlier stage of consultation planned for the summer of this year will be focused on evaluating what has worked under the current CAAP and where there are opportunities for improvement. Discussions with City staff, partner agencies, stakeholders and other interested parties through the management of the current CAAP have already suggested that the updated plan should, among many other things, strive to:

- Find enhanced ways to connect with Core residents
- Build in on-going and meaningful collaboration with key stakeholders through mechanisms like the Core Area Strategy Team and Core Area Action Team
- Ensure the internal oversight and accountability mechanisms for delivering the 2024 - 2027 CAAP are captured in its actions and implementation plan
- Review the geographic boundaries of the CAAP, noting that additional funding would be required to expand the plan to other areas of the city or current service levels or the scope of services currently provided would need to be reduced
- Identify opportunities for partnership, innovation and collaboration as part of the plan in order to reduce duplication of effort between the CAAP and work being led by other organizations and identify and include emerging best practices

- Build outcome-based performance metrics early on for any new or substantially revised actions

While it is expected that Council would consider the 2024 - 2027 CAAP in advance of approval of the 2024 – 2027 MYB, approval of the updated CAAP would not presuppose budget approval in 2024. The rationale for approving the refreshed CAAP in advance of budget is to allow Council to consider and approve the actions, projects and programs it included, while recognizing that MYB would be the opportunity to decide the level and timing of funding that will be made available to those efforts relative to other priorities. Based on MYB approvals, the 2024 - 2027 CAAP would then be adjusted to reflect the available funding, with some actions potentially being delayed, delivered at reduced levels, delivered over longer timeframes or not proceeding at all.

Integration with the development of the 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan will also be very important and the draft schedule contemplates an iterative process with those efforts starting in late 2022 and continuing into early 2023.

Subject to direction to proceed by Council, the existing Core Area Steering Committee and its People, Places and Economy teams would provide internal resources to this project, coordinating it from an enterprise-wide perspective.

Conclusion

Significant efforts have been directed to the Core by the City of London, the London Police Service and other agencies and organizations since the approval of the Core Area Action Plan efforts in the 2020-2023 Multi-Year Budget process and since the May 2021 report to Council. 49% of the funded actions are complete, with 49% on track for completion as planned. Only one action is currently listed as caution.

Highlights of recent efforts in the Core Area include:

- Nine full-time Core Area Ambassadors started with the City, focusing on fostering a welcoming and safe environment in the Core Area, contributing to a vibrant Core Area that is a destination for all, and providing supports to other programs and services

- The Spotlight Project was developed and launched and sixteen businesses have signed up. More outreach to encourage enrolment will continue through 2022

- The Safety Audit is complete and work with property owners will start in 2022 to implement the recommendations

- Staff from all Service Areas are working collaboratively to support the delivery of increased maintenance, security, and activation on Dundas Place and in other key locations in the Downtown and Old East Village and are planning for a variety of programming that can occur safely in the context of the pandemic

- The Project Clean Slate pilot providing garbage removal and cleaning services on private property launched and has received very positive feedback from the BIAs and businesses and is reporting positive outcomes for the participating youth so far

- Significant enhancements were made to communications including the "Our Core Area" brand launch, a comprehensive webpage, a quarterly newsletter, and social media campaigns promoting Core Area initiatives, programs, recreational activities, events, people and arts

- The Dundas Place Fieldhouse opened to support the operations of Dundas Place and provide public washrooms. Work is currently underway to formally transition the Dundas Place Fieldhouse to the Dundas Place Hub, which will provide additional access to Core area information and services

- 18 individuals were identified as part of an LPS Prolific Offenders program, which saw 152 outreach contacts and targeted crimes have reduced by 20%. The individuals involved have been charged with crimes 58% less frequently than they were before the project started

- Despite the ongoing pandemic restrictions, from July to December 2021, Dundas Place hosted over 250 activations in 2021. Several activations were held in other locations in the Core, noting that work will continue to expand programming by scope, scale and location in 2022 as pandemic restrictions are hoped to lessen

- The Core Area Diversion pilot project launched and aims to reduce interactions between individuals experiencing homelessness with the justice system. The project team is reporting strong progress in reducing recidivism to date

- Winter Response has been offered to support individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness to work towards health stabilization, adapting to living indoors and in a community, and ultimately towards independent housing. Wiigiwaaminaan at Parkwood is Indigenous-led, with an additional focus on culturally specific supports and healing

- Two new Municipal Law Enforcement Officers were hired exclusively for the Core area and are successfully building collaborative relationships with property owners, the Project Clean Slate team, staff from other Service Areas, the Ambassadors and the BIAs

- A metrics program for the CAAP has been developed and data tracking started in January 2022 where it was not occurring already

The challenges facing London's Core area related to homelessness and mental health, safety and security, fostering a thriving environment for businesses, attracting people to the Core, and commercial vacancies are occurring across Canada. While the CAAP and other programs and plans are working to address these concerns, there will be an ongoing need to resource these efforts and understand how they may need to be adjusted to support a post-pandemic London. An update to the CAAP to coincide with the preparation of the next Strategic Plan and Multi-Year Budget in 2023 is recommended to ensure this important work continue to be focused, aligned and collaboratively managed.

Recommended by: **Kelly Scherr, Deputy City Manager, Environment & Infrastructure**

Scott Mathers, Deputy City Manager, Planning & Economic Development

Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social & Health Development

Attach:

Appendix A: Core Area Action Plan Implementation Status Update
Appendix B: 2021 Dundas Place Activations
Appendix C: Core Area Enhanced Communications
Appendix D: Core Area Resident Engagement Process
Appendix E: 2022 Core Area Construction Projects
Appendix F: Funding Reallocation Decision-Making Process
Appendix G: Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan
Appendix H: Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis

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Rosanna Wilcox, Director, Strategy and Innovation
Dave O'Brien, Director, Emergency Management and Security
Inspector D'Wayne Price, Patrol Operations, London Police Service
Sergeant Mark McGugan, London Police Service, COAST Unit Supervisor
Barbara Maly, Executive Director, Downtown London Business Improvement Area
Jen Pastorius, Executive Director, Old East Village Business Improvement Area

Core Area Action Plan

Implementation Status Update
March 2022

The Implementation Status Update provides a high-level overview of the progress made on each of the action items identified in the *Core Area Action Plan* as of March 2022. It also identifies the planned date of implementation for those action items not yet completed. The action item numbers in this table correspond to the action item numbers in the *Core Area Action Plan*. For more detailed information on the action items, please refer to the Plan.

It is important to note that due to necessary resource re-allocation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, target dates have been adjusted based on best estimates and may not reflect the initial time-frames set out in the *Core Area Action Plan*.

Accomplishments

High-level achievements such as key performance indicators from Business Plans, etc., have been included in this report.

Action

The steps that are required to deliver on the strategies and corresponding metrics identified in the *Core Area Action Plan*.

Status

Each action has been assigned a status indicator to help define progress towards implementation. There are three status indicators:

Complete: The action is done.

On Target: The action is ongoing or is completed annually. Or, the action is in progress and is on target to be complete by the target end date. Or, the action is not yet started, but is on target to be complete by target end date.

Caution: The action is in progress or not yet started, and is flagged as possibly not being completed by target end date.

Target End Date

A target completion date has been set for each action, expressed as the quarter and year. When the action is ongoing throughout the life of the Plan or completed on an annual basis, the target end date is Q4 2023 (the *Strategic Plan* end date).

Variance

In cases where actions have been delayed due to shifting priorities or emerging circumstances, an explanation is included.

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
1	Strengthen delivery of Coordinated Informed Response Program	Q4 2023	⬆	As of March 2021, Homeless Prevention has increased the CIR team by two Customer Service Representatives and two Access Coordinators. Programs to support vulnerable populations through the Coordinated Informed Response Outreach Team have been implemented. Customer Relations Management (CRM) software and the Homeless Individuals and Families Information Systems (HIFIS) are used as daily tools to strengthen individual and site tracking, system reporting and data collection. LPS started their COAST model in 2021 and City Staff are seeing enhanced engagement from the COAST outreach teams. 2021 also saw the LPS Diversion Pilot Project implemented, which is a collaborative approach including wrap-around supports meant to divert repeat offenders of minor misdemeanours from justice system. LPS, Ontario Works and City outreach staff are involved and the program has been extended until the end of June 2022 due to the success being seen: individuals becoming paper-ready for housing, decrease in target crimes in the Core by 27% from project start to August 31, almost none of the participants have re-offended since outreach began.	
2	Implement Housing Stability Week pilot project	Q4 2020	✓	Housing Stability Week took place between October 28th and November 1st, 2019. Over 800 people came through the doors looking to obtain information on housing. This event housed 118 individuals, which included finding short-, medium- and long-term housing accommodations for 84 adults and 34 children. Intakes were completed by 362 unique individuals, Social Housing Applications were completed by 132 people, and 101 individuals applied for ID.	
3	Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program	Q4 2020	✓	Outreach now occurs 24 hours, a day seven days a week. Early morning curbside clean-up has been implemented.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
4	Implement breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program	Q4 2023	⬆	Community engagement meetings took place in early 2020. A workshop was created to establish both a mobile and a stationary option for providing breakfast to those in need. Winter response 2020/2021 supplemented the Core breakfast and hot lunch program. The breakfast program will be offered once the lock down is lifted in collaboration with Fanshawe Culinary and some faith-based groups. Winter Response plan for 2021/2022 also incorporated a breakfast program. Options for beyond March 2022 are being considered now and include looking for a longer term location (i.e. exploring a mobile truck to serve food and establish a location) and having all suppliers on-line. (Plan B is YMCA but cost would be approximately $50,000.)	
5	Establish Headlease Program	Q4 2020	✓	On March 31, 2020, a report was brought forward seeking approval of Standard Draft Occupancy Agreements for supportive transitional housing with supports aimed at life skills development.	
6	Double foot patrol officers in Core Area for a discrete period of time	Q1 2021	✓	Foot Patrol in the Core Area was doubled during the periods of: October 20, 2019 - December 1, 2019 and April 1, 2020 - June 14, 2020. Additional officers were patrolling the Core from February 1, 2021 - March 1, 2021.	
7	Create new Spotlight Program	Q4 2021	✓	Project start date was delayed due to COVID-19 impacts and business closures. The program was implemented in December 2021, sixteen (16) businesses have signed into the program to date and continued promotion will be ongoing.	
8	Enhance Service London Portal to allow for complaints, concerns, and inquiries on Core Area issues	Q4 2023	⬆	In addition to accessing City services by calling 311 / 661-CITY, residents and businesses can submit service requests and report issues online 24/7 by using the Service London portal. Residents and businesses can access more than 60 popular service request types such as garbage and recycling, road and sidewalk issues, flooding, sewers, trees, etc. The portal is integrated with the City's customer relationship management (CRM) system, which manages workflow and prioritization for many operational areas. Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) was recently added to CRM and work is underway to add CIR-related services to the portal. The Core Area Steering Committee Chair and Communications will continue to work with Service London and ITS to enhance the portal to address more Core Area concerns, and will increase awareness and understanding of the services available.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
9	Install kindness meters to directly support core area social service agencies	Q4 2021	✓	Four City Of London parking meters were sold to a private person, prior to the development of this Action Plan, who collects the funds to give to charity. Kindness Meters as a mechanism for the City to solicit and manage donations will not be going forward, however the City can provide out of service meters to interested charitable organizations to use as a means to collect and manage donations. Staff were also directed to explore digital options, but Legal and ITS security concerns recommend against further advancement of that work. NCWS promoted "Kindness Meters" in their October 2021 newsletter to community partners. Organizations interested in collecting/distributing donations to support community members can request a surplus meter from the City. There are a number of meters available.	Staff recommend that, when parking meters are taken out of service, they could be made available to community groups for re-purposing into kindness meters, it being noted that staff are also exploring options for digital donations. Meters are available for community groups. The digital option has been explored but Legal and IT Security concerns recommend against pursuing it further.
10	Stage police command vehicle in strategic locations	Q4 2020	✓	The Community Command Vehicle (CCV) has been deployed 49 times, in strategic locations, since October 28, 2019.	
11	Issue request for proposals on Queens Avenue parking lot	Q2 2023	↑	In December 2021, Municipal Council approved the Terms of Reference for a workplan intended to prepare a more comprehensive review on vacancies in the Core Area. Included in this workplan is the integration of this action into a broader study that reports on the status of the geographic distribution of parking demand, parking revenue and any recommended modifications or alternatives. The Terms of Reference of this workplan recommended a completion timeline for this action of Q2 2023.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
12	Explore new ways to support Core Area property owners to dispose of found syringes	Q4 2023	⬆	Needle bins are placed strategically based on usage/numbers and returned each year. Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) funds Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC) to pick up needles and is accountable monthly. There is also a Community Informed Response Program for clean-up on public and some private properties. Staff work with MLHU and other agencies to determine and re-evaluate hot spots. October 2020-July 2021: 57 locations in the Core Area were supported by peer or employees of RHAC for needle pick-up or education on how to dispose of syringes safely. A total of 86 hours was spent by staff responding and attending locations for improperly disposed sharps. A total of 609 syringes were collected. "Working together to remove sharps and needles" was an article included in the August 2021 Core Area Newsletter. Currently working on targeted mail-out to private property owners and businesses in the Core to provide information about sharps disposal. 150 Sharp Disposal Kits with Tongs were purchased and will be housed at the Fieldhouse for distribution. Communications is working on promotional materials - searching out postal codes for the Core area to have Canada Post deliver targeted mailing.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
13	Conduct three-week Core Area By-law Enforcement blitz	Q4 2023	✔	Two dedicated Municipal Law Enforcement Officers have been recruited and will be proactively enforcing in the Core on an ongoing basis, as an alternative to a short-term blitz approach.	
14	Prioritize Core Area building and sign permits	Q4 2023	⬆	The team is working on education and website information packages to address Core Area Building & Sign Permits.	Action updated to reflect website information instead of brochures.
15	Streamline event processes	Q4 2023	⬆	The development of user friendly promotional material will be created to educate event organizers on the City's role related to hosting special events in the Core Area. The communications plan has been completed and physical promotional materials will be created in the near future.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
16	Provide incentives for installing uplighting on privately-owned buildings	Q4 2020	✔	The two-year Pilot Program for Uplighting Grants will end in July 2021. Five Uplighting Grants were issued at a total of $24,410.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
17	Proactively recruit food trucks in dedicated area along Dundas Place	Q4 2023	✓	The London Food Truck Association was invited to hold a weekly Food Truck night on Dundas Place in the Summer of 2021. In the month of August Food Trucks filled Dundas Place between Talbot and Ridout Streets on Wednesday nights.	COVID-19 has impacted Dundas Place activation options. The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
18	Identify opportunities for new parking spaces in the Core Area	Q4 2020	✓	Initial identification of opportunities complete. The study identified opportunities to create new on-street parking spots through the reallocation of existing road space, while protecting existing on-street loading zones and necessary lanes of travel and considering necessary time restrictions. The review has informed the Back 2 Business implementation of temporary parking and pick up/drop off zones. Individual parking opportunities are being further reviewed to assess impacts on traffic and transit operations as well as public safety prior to permanent implementation. Implementation will occur with consultation internally and externally within existing budgets and through routine amendments to the Traffic and Parking By-Law.	
19	Establish permanent Coordinated Informed Response Program	Q2 2021	✓	Full time initiative that has been approved in the Multi-Year Budget. Hiring and changes still in process.	
20	Establish more daytime resting spaces	Q4 2023	✓	An additional 15 Day Resting spaces were added at the Men's Mission operationalized by London Cares.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
21	Establish Core Area stabilization spaces	Q4 2022	⬜	Property had been purchased for a stabilization space, and Council has endorsed the re-purposing of the land for permanent housing. Revised business case has been endorsed by Western Ontario Health Team and revised ask has been submitted to the Ministry of Health.	Implementation may be delayed based on availability of funding from the Ministry of Health. New Target End Date is Q4 2022.
22	Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements	Q4 2023	⬆	A partnership was made with Indwell for supportive housing for lower-mid range homeless acuity individuals, located at 744 Dundas Street. The project will include a total of 70 affordable units, with 34 of those dedicated to individuals identified through Homeless Prevention's coordinated access system. Completion is anticipated for December 2022. The project is on track, agreements are in place and occupancy is expected in the fall of 2022.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
23	Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	Q4 2023	⬆	A public Requests for Proposals process was completed to increase case management supports to include supports for individuals with low- to medium-acuity. Public and agency requests were made to operationalize WISH sites ensuring supports are in place for vulnerable individuals as part of Winter Response. Additional resources were added for the operationalizing of the community resting spaces, this led to creation of 40 spaces. Funded to start work in April/May 2021. Enhanced case management had been provided to the community through operation of the resting spaces. The Diversion Pilot (launched in July 2021) between LPS, Outreach and Life Stabilization (OW) is providing an innovative case management approach for supporting vulnerable populations. The pilot has been extended to early 2022.	
24	Complete and implement Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan	Q4 2023	✓	The Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan was adopted by Municipal Council in January 2020. Incentives are currently available.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
25	Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	Q4 2023	⬆	9 Core Area Ambassadors were hired on November 1, 2021. Following 3 weeks of training the team started regular shift work. In the spring of 2022, 3 more FT and 4 PT positions will be filled. Monitoring of the program is underway with daily data collection.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
26	Undertake Core Area safety audit	Q4 2021	✓	Safety Audit has been completed by consultants and Civic Administration await the completion of the report. The audit has been completed and the steps of implementing the recommendations will be in February 2022.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
27	Establish new storefront space for foot patrol, By-law Enforcement Officers and public washrooms	Q4 2021	✓	The Dundas Place Field House opened in June 2021 The new facility includes public washrooms open every day of the year (funded through London Community Recovery Network). Two Municipal Law Enforcement Officers have dedicated space along with the Dundas Place Manager and support staff. In the Spring of 2022 the storefront space will be officially launched as the Dundas Place Hub with an operational front counter where residents and businesses may access City and community information and communicate with a Core Area Ambassador. London Police Service decided the space did not meet their needs and will be looking for another location in the Downtown Core. The Core Area Ambassadors are operating out of the room that would have been used by the London Foot Patrol.	
28	Increase London Police Services foot patrol	Q2 2021	✓	In 2020, the Foot Patrol Unit was increased by 3 Constables and 1 Sergeant.	
29	Proactive Compliance Program	Q4 2023	✓	Two dedicated Municipal Law Enforcement Officers have been recruited with a start date of May 2021 and will be proactively monitoring bylaw compliance in the Core.	Action has been renamed to 'Proactive Compliance Program' to better represent the intent of the program.
30	Develop and deliver safety training for business owners, employees and residents	Q4 2023	✓	London Police Services have done over 160 presentations/ training events that include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) reviews and safety training to Core Area businesses in the last year. Corporate Security continues to maintain relationships with all stakeholders in the Core to address immediate needs. Work is being done to provide intersectional training for business owners in the Core (combo of LPS and Anova Training).	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
31	Utilize existing Façade Improvement Loan Program to incent decorative gates through existing Community Improvement Plans	Q2 2021	✓	Decorative gates are eligible for the existing Façade Improvement incentive program. No Facade Improvement Loans were requested. In 2021 LCRN Recovery Grants assisted the funding of gates at 4 locations.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
32	Undertake safety blitz for aggressive driving in the Core Area	Q2 2021	✔	The London Police Services Traffic Management Unit ran projects targeting aggressive driving, during Canada Road Safety week (May 12-18, 2020), during Operation Impact 2020 (October 9-12, 2020), and during the Loud Vehicle/Improper Muffler campaign (September 28-October 11, 2020)	
33	Proactive enforcement of Property Standards By-law	Q4 2023	⬆	Recruitment is complete. Starting in May 2021 two dedicated Municipal Law Enforcement Officers have been proactively enforcing in the Core on an ongoing basis. Middle of May to end of December 2021 there were 312 of non compliant property matters that were beyond very minor in the areas of Property Standards, Yard and Lot Maintenance and Vacant Buildings By-laws. By year end 67% of the matter above had been resolved. Outstanding repairs/maintenance such as exterior painting have been put forward for compliance to June 2022 where a repair of that nature needs to be completed in the warmer weather. On average the team addresses about 3 "quick fixes" each week. Quick action clean up on C/P or P/P through contact with the property owner and voluntary compliance. In addition there are minor incidents remedied daily, that would not be included in the formal tracking. Aside from a few blocks in the Core that were closed for construction in the summer/fall, the team have addressed all exterior property standard issues within the Core, but will also continue to monitor. In the later part of the fall, the team was able to start using 2 E-bikes which have allowed them quicker access through alleys etc. In the few weeks the E-bikes were used they found to be very conductive to the work and allowed greater Core Area coverage. The team has engaged in strategy discussions with property owners, including repairing and adding adequate lighting, repairing fences/gates, boarding vestibules, and removing graffiti. Focused work is also taking place on non-conforming garbage dumpsters that allow individuals to dig through them and create unsightly conditions. There has also been focused efforts on assisting with some parking problems on Dundas Place. During a period of concentrated efforts there were 14 Administrative Monetary Penalties issued to curb the illegal parking activity. Their combined efforts with the Community Informed Response (CIR) team on sleeping rough, and disruptive activities on Dundas Place is reporting progress made with some visible reductions. Relationships built with property owners, Clean State team, Road crews, the Ambassadors, and BIA groups have been paramount to their successes and BIAs are sending appreciation and positive feedback.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
34	Package Core Area patio, signage, licensing and other regular business processes	Q4 2023	✓	Information packages continue to be completed through the Business Hub in Development and Compliance Services.	Ongoing Initiative
35	Brand uniforms and equipment for all City staff providing service in the Core Area	Q4 2021	✓	Branding was developed for the Core Area Ambassadors who started working in the Core Area in late November, 2021.	Core Area Ambassadors were hired in 2021. These individuals were provided with branded uniforms that reflected not only their connection to the City of London, but the fact that they are a valuable source of information about the Core. On reviewing this action it's been determined that no additional branding will be applied to uniforms or vehicles in the Core. While the level of service within the Core is planned and stable, the exact personnel, equipment and vehicles used to deliver those services vary depending on staffing levels, activity levels, fleet maintenance and other factors. Keeping those resources under the City brand increases flexibility and responsiveness and reduces the cost of service delivery.
36	Establish, implement and regularly monitor a higher clean standard for the Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	Implementation and monitoring of the higher level of service is in place for 2021 and will be ongoing.	
37	Implement new pressure wash program for sidewalks and civic spaces	Q4 2023	✓	Service contract for pressure washing was established. Implementation started in 2020 and continued through 2021.	
42	Fund four-year Core Area "construction dollars" pilot program	Q4 2023	⬆	The 2021 Construction Dollar program launched in mid-April 2021. $92,000 Construction Dollar certificates were distributed by BIAs to the public to encourage patronage at Core Area businesses. The 2022 Construction Dollars program begins in late spring 2022.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
43	Experiment with temporary free municipal parking	Q4 2023	⬆	The intent of this program was to provide free parking for customers patronizing businesses impacted by construction sites in the Core. Since 2020, free two-hour parking throughout the Core has been provided as a pandemic relief measure.	
44	Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	The Core Area was filled with cultural programming throughout the summer and fall of 2021. The London Arts Council, Downtown London, OEV BIA, Covent Garden Market, Museum London, and other partners worked together to increase the range and intensity of programming. Locations include Dundas Place, Victoria Park, Market Square, Queens Park, Talbot Street, and more. Plans to grow the program in 2022 are underway with a coordinated seasonal calendar that will be used to promote the activations to the community.	
45	Activate spaces and places with bistro chairs and tables	Q4 2023	✔	Bistro Tables and Chairs were installed on Dundas Place throughout the summer and fall for visitors to enjoy. The program has been established and will continue through the end of 2023. In 2022 the Core Area Ambassadors will be able to move the bistro tables and chairs to other parts of the Core Area with a small electric vehicle.	
47	Create an infrastructure art and beautification program	Q4 2023	⬆	In partnership with the London Arts Council, the City of London increased the number of traffic signal box art wraps installed in 2020, adding an additional ten wraps in the Core Area. Art Murals will be included in core beautification in 2022. Additional horticultural displays are planned for 2022.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
48	Engage Core Area businesses to lead, volunteer or fund initiatives	Q4 2023	⬆	Downtown London's 2021 Endurance Grant is an example of a business-funded initiative. The London Small Business Centre's 2022 Business Ambassadors program in cooperation with Downtown and Old East Village BIA is another.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initiative.
49	Explore partnership opportunities with educational institutions for immersive learning in Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	City Studio projects related to the Core Area are currently underway. Economic Partnerships will serve as a member of the steering committee for the planned downtown University of Western Ontario Community Engaged Learning Hub, located at 450 Talbot.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
50	Establish new Core Area garbage and recycling collection program	Q4 2023	⬆	Several pilot projects are underway including night collection services for garbage pickup (e.g., to remove bags before they are ripped); night packer parking storage area at EROC (until December 31, 2021), and the use of large communal garbage roll-out carts on Dundas Place. Recycling services are being examined. New Provincial recycling regulations are expected shortly and will identify roles and responsibilities for future recycling initiatives and how this may impact the Core Area (e.g., what will be paid by industry and what will not).	
51	Regenerate London and Middlesex Housing Corporation housing stock	Q4 2023	⬆	Currently on track with regeneration of London and Middlesex Housing Corporation housing stock. First building is currently under renovations in London South.	
52	Complete and implement the *Housing Stability Plan*	Q4 2023	⬆	Municipal Council approved the Housing Stability Plan in December 2019. This Plan has been submitted to the Provincial and Federal governments. Update to Council for 2021 was provided. Working towards 2022 implementation goals. Quarterly report going to Council in September. Effective 2022 reports will be annually.	
53	Open permanent supervised consumption facility in appropriate location and close existing temporary facility	Q4 2023	✔	Council enacted a zoning by-law amendment to permit a supervised consumption facility at 446 York Street. The Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) approved Council's by-law by way of decision dated November 28, 2019. A motion for leave to appeal the LPAT's decision to the Divisional Court was dismissed on July 3, 2020, so the facility is now permitted from a land use perspective. Current ETA for opening the new site is summer 2022.	
54	Provide grants to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	Q4 2023	✔	The Core Area Community Improvement Plan was approved by Council on March 23, 2021. A Request for Proposal was issued in May 2021 for a Core Area Safety Audit. Once the audit is complete, Safety Audit Grants will be available to property owners identified eligible for improvements.	
55	Implement safety audit recommendations on public property	Q4 2023	⬆	A Request for Proposal was issued in May 2021 and the safety audit is complete. The implementation of the Security Audit recommendations will begin in February 2022 and will be ongoing until recommendations are complete and/or funding is available.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
56	Implement Core Area digital solutions	Q4 2023	⬆	The Corporation continues to evaluate digital solutions that may support the Core Area Action Plan.	The Target End Date has been updated to reflect that this is an on-going initative.
57	Use City Studio to explore innovative approaches to addressing Core Area social issues	Q4 2023	⬆	A number of City Studio projects in Fall 2019 and Winter 2020 dealt with Core Area issues ranging from surveys on social housing, facade condition assessments, retrofitting buildings on Richmond Row and public safety on streets and parks. A number of City Studio projects in 2021 addressed Core Area issues such as Housing and Homelessness Crisis; Recycling in London Parks; Choose Your Winter - exploring winter event opportunities for the downtown; and Re-Occupying Downtown London - Post-pandemic exodus.	
58	Work with surrounding communities to establish a regional strategy for addressing vulnerable populations	Q4 2023	⬆	Continue to engage with other service managers across Housing/Life Stabilization and Homeless Prevention. Currently have representation at monthly meetings with the SW region. Working with neighbouring service managers and partners on a referral strategy for individuals back to their community. Middlesex County is implementing a by-name list for homelessness which is integrated into the City's by-name list, consistent triaging and referral practices are being established.	
59	Explore opportunities to partner with agencies to provide a Core Area Resource Centre	Q4 2023	⬆	Temporary daytime resource spaces were operationalized as part of a Winter Response at Talbot Street Church and Hamilton Road Senior's Centre. The transition of the Dundas Place Fieldhouse to the Dundas Hub will fulfill some of the intended functionality and additional discussions are underway regarding other permanent sites and services.	
61	Explore opportunities for additional public washrooms	Q4 2023	⬆	Starting in June 2021, public washrooms have been available 365 days a year in the Dundas Place Field House and the Victoria Park Band-shell. This is funded through the London Community Recovery Network for a 2-year period.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
62	Eliminate encroachment fees for patios, signage and awnings in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	Q4 2023	✔	The Core Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved by Council on March 23, 2021 (O-9257). The Core Area Patio Fees and Core Area Signage Fees programs are now available.	
63	Eliminate application fees for encroachments, signage and patios in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	Q4 2023	✔	The Core Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved by Council on March 23, 2021 (O-9257). The Core Area Patio Fees and Core Area Signage Fees programs are now available.	
64	Eliminate fees for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	Q4 2023	✔	The Core Area Community Improvement Plan (CIP) was approved by Council on March 23, 2021(O-9257). The Core Area Patio Fees program is now available.	
65	Discourage perpetual extension of temporary surface parking lots in Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	This is an ongoing item that is evaluated with each request for a temporary use through the Zoning By-law amendment application process. Applications to extend temporary surface parking in the downtown are evaluated based on the City's applicable policies and guidelines. This direction is intended to be implemented gradually by discontinuing permissions in areas where parking utilization is low. Background information collection and mapping associated with surface parking lots in the Core is underway to establish tracking trends.	
66	Continue to enhance transit service to the Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	Construction of the first phase of the Downtown Loop for the Rapid Transit System was completed in April 2021. Procurement of the second phase of the Downtown Loop and first phase of the East London Link was commenced. Design and property acquisition is progressing for the remainder of the East London Link and Wellington Gateway.	

	Action	Target End Date	Progress	Action Accomplishments	Action Variance
67	Continue to improve cycling infrastructure in the Core Area	Q4 2023	⬆	Construction of capital projects well underway including 2020 completion of Dundas Street protected cycle lanes, 2021 extension of the Colborne cycle track and an improved connection between the Thames Valley Parkway and Dundas Place.	
68	Plan and save funds for a public parking garage	Q4 2023	⬆	Planned contributions to the parking reserve fund in support of a downtown parking strategy were approved through the Multi-Year Budget, sustained by increased parking meter fees.	An annual contribution funded by parking fees was introduced in 2020 to start to build a source of financing for the Downtown Parking Strategy, however, given the significant reduction of parking revenues it will be a very long term strategy to accumulate a reasonably significant balance that would support the capital costs.
69	Inventory social services in the Core Area	Q4 2022	✔	"Help Yourself Through Hard Times" is published by the City of London which inventories all services for vulnerable populations and provided at all Social Services offices. We have an inventory of Social Services in the Core Area	
70	Provide a deferral of payment for businesses holding City-issued CIP loans for the duration of construction projects.	Q4 2020	✔	On March 2, 2020, Municipal Council endorsed an amendment to update the guidelines for financial incentive programs permitted to allow for the deferral of loan repayments during road construction.	
71	Invest in Dundas Place	Q4 2023	⬆	Investment in Dundas Place in 2021 has been focused on equipping the Field House for operations and creating a new team to facilitate programming and a higher standard of cleanliness.	

2021

DUNDAS PLACE ANIMATION & ACTIVATION REPORT

JULY 2021- OCTOBER 2021

Dundas Place
Core Area and Urban Regeneration
Planning and Economic Development
City of London

Contents

1. Dundas Place Overview

Dundas Place is a destination for shopping, dining, art, and celebration. From Wellington to Ridout Streets, Dundas Place is a flexible street shared by pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. With extra wide sidewalks and no curbs, parking spaces can easily transform into patios, be used for sidewalk sales, or for street performances

How We Got Here

Transforming Dundas Street into Dundas Place was identified as a key Transformational Project in London's Downtown Plan (2015). Construction began in 2018 and ended in December 2019. The construction project also included storm sewer, sanitary sewer and utility (internet, hydro, water) upgrades.

Place Management

In the development of Dundas Place, proactive place management and programming were identified as integral to success. In support of this vision, the City of London identified funding and a dedicated staff to ensure Dundas Place is effectively managed and programmed. In early 2020 a full schedule of events were planned for Dundas Place but with the arrival of COVID-19, all programming plans were put on hold.
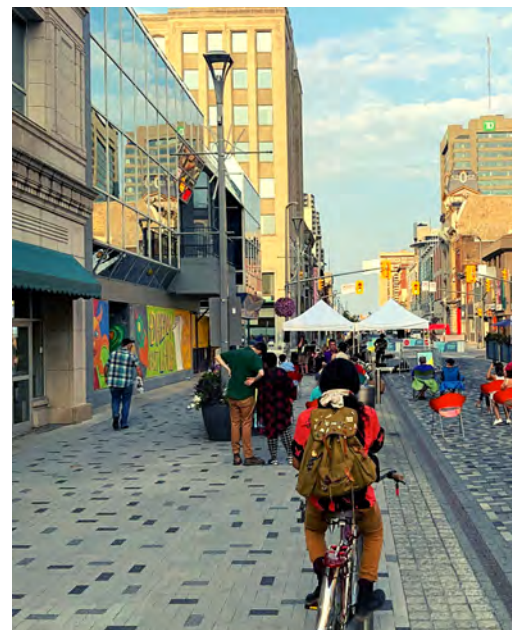
2. Programming Overview

In early 2021, despite the uncertainty of COVID-19, plans began for filling Dundas Place with a diverse range of small-scale programming, should restrictions allow. An animation and activation plan was created and shared with City Council in the May 18, 2021 Core Area Action Plan Implementation Status Update. The plan is included as an appendix in this report.   As the summer arrived, restrictions began to shift and small-scale outdoor activities were permitted with appropriate COVID-19 safety measures in place.

A team of staff was hired, equipment was moved into the recently completed Dundas Place Field House and programming began in July.

From July to October 2021 Dundas Place hosted **249** activations working with over 20 community partners.

These activations included:

125 Music Performances
64 Arts Activities
37 Special Events
20 Recreation Activities
3 Street Markets

Over the 4 month period an estimated 20,000 people attended an event or activation on Dundas Place.

3. COVID-19 Safety

The Dundas Place team had an active COVID-19 safety plan and worked closely with the Middlesex-London Health Unit to confirm appropriate precautions were being followed.

During activations, signage was in place to encourage social distancing, washing hands, mask wearing, and getting vaccinated. Seating was placed six feet apart and hand sanitization stations were installed with all activations.

Dundas Place also partnered with the Middlesex-London Health Unit to host multiple mobile vaccination clinics.

4. Programming Review

Music Performances
The London Arts Council and the London Ontario Jazz Hub programmed over 80 musical acts between July and October. Performances took place at Library Terrace, Dundas St. and Clarence St. intersection, and in Market Lane in the evenings from Wednesday to Saturday as well as the afternoons on Saturday and Sunday.

Arts Activities
The London Arts Council, 519 School of Hip Hop, Forest City Film Fest, Latin Passion Dance Academy, IAOVA, The Arts Project, AlvegoRoot Theatre, and Good Sport shared a diverse range of artistic programming on Dundas Place. This included mural painting, dance lessons and performance, film screenings, painting classes, writing classes, pop-up art sales, comedy, mime, and other types of art.

Special Events
Dundas Place worked with Budweiser Gardens, Downtown London, local businesses, Pride London Festival, Sunfest, London Food Truck Association, and the Middlesex-London Health Unit to host a series of events and activities on Dundas Place.

Recreation Activities
Working with City of London Recreation staff, Dundas Place hosted programming for kids, as well as Health and Wellness classes for adults.

Street Markets
Dundas Place hosted multiple street markets including Vintage on the Block and the Witch's Veil Night Market. Later in the year, working with Downtown London, Dundas Place also hosted the Festival of Markets.

July to October

Passive Activations:
Flex seating & giant games on the sidewalks and in Market Lane
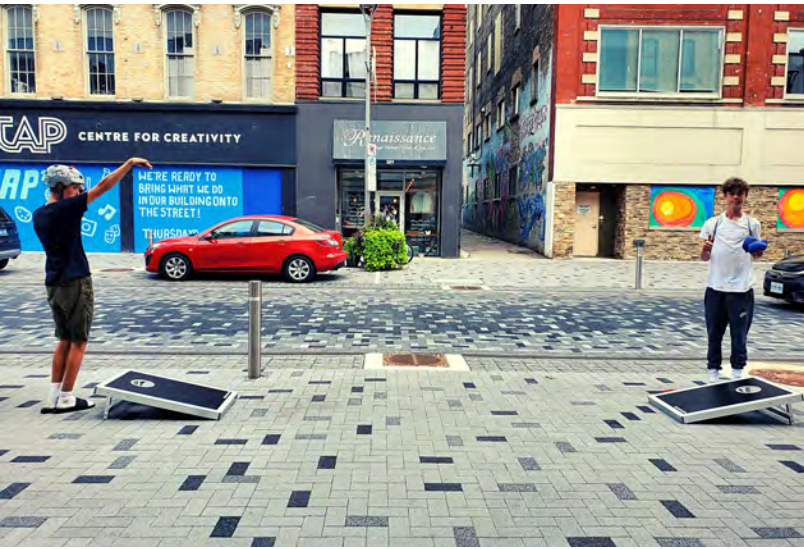
July - October

125 Music Performances
Partners - London Arts Council, London Ontario Jazz Hub

Approximate number of attendees - 4000

From July 17th to August 21st

Hip Hop Dance Classes
Partner - 519 School of Hip Hop

Approximate number of attendees - 100

9

From August 21st to September 25th

Salsa Classes
Partner - Latin Passion Dance Academy

Approximate number of attendees - 700

10

September - October

Mural Painting
Partner - London Arts Council

Approximate number of attendees - 600
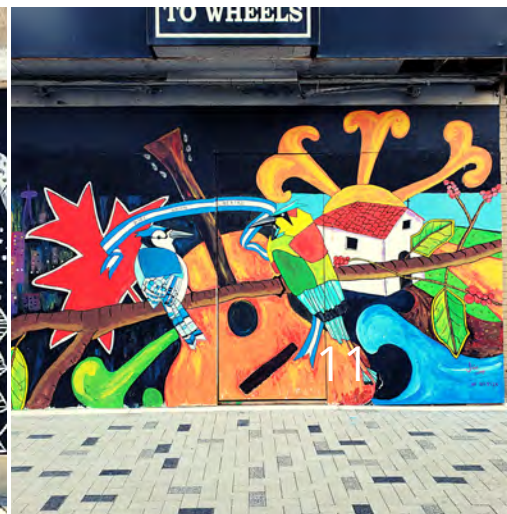
September

Drop In Art Classes
Partner - IAOVA

Approximate number of attendees - 50

September

TAP² Project
Partner - The Arts Project

Approximate number of attendees - 110

13

September

Streetscape Playwrights Workshop
Partner - AlvegoRoot Theatre

Approximate number of attendees - 10

14

October

Good Talks, Pop-Up Vendors

Partner - Good Sport

Approximate number of attendees - 70

15

DUNDAS PLACE
London CANADA

October

Portable Mural Painting
Partner - London Arts Council

Approximate number of attendees - 700

DUNDAS PLACE
London CANADA
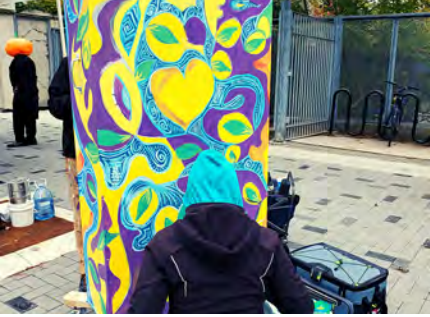
July to September

Bud's Brew Garden
Hosted by Budweiser Gardens

Approximate number of attendees - 2643

17

From July 22nd to 25th

Pride Weekend
Partner - Pride London Festival

Approximate number of attendees - 1000

18

From August to October

Film Club Summer Screenings
Partner - Forest City Film Fest

Approximate number of attendees - 220

19

August to September

Food Truck Nights
Partner - London Food Truck Association

Approximate number of attendees - 210

20

DUNDAS PLACE London CANADA

August 14th

Free Comic Book Day
Partner - Heroes Comics

Approximate number of attendees - 1000

August 25th to September 08th

Mobile Vaccination Clinic
Partner - Middlesex London Health Unit

Approximate number of attendees - 300

August 21st and October 23rd

Vintage On The Block
Partners - Dugout Vintage, Filthy Rebena Vintage, Downtown London

Approximate number of attendees - 3500

23

August 21st

2nd Annual Dundas Village Arts Festival

Hosted by Businesses on Dundas Place with support from Downtown London

Approximate number of attendees - 500

24

October 30th

Candy Crawl
Partners - Downtown London, Budweiser Gardens

Approximate number of attendees - 300

September

Kids Activations

Approximate number of attendees - 30

October 30th

The Witch's Veil Night Market
Partners - Seven Sisters Ritual Apothecary

Approximate number of attendees - 1000

September

Health & Wellness Classes
Hatha Yoga| Cardio for 55+| Fitness
Partner - City of London Recreation Services

Approximate number of attendees - 30

28

Strategic Framework & Funding

The Dundas Place 2021 program of activities was directed through the Dundas Place Management vision and was supported with funding from the Core Area Action Plan and the London Community Recovery Network.

Core Area Action Plan

The Core Area represents the heart of London. It holds the greatest concentration of employment, heritage properties, largest community gathering places, primary stage for music and entertainment, and the majority of the tourism infrastructure. The health, vitality and resiliency of the Core Area is key to any successful economic development strategy for London and sends an important message to the world about London as a place to live and do business.

This plan included direction and funding to invest in Dundas Place, increase range and intensity of programming in the Core, and activate places and spaces with bistro tables and chairs.

London Community Recovery Network

Created on July 21, 2020, the London Community Recovery Network (the Network) was formed to power London's recovery from COVID-19. The Network brings together leaders from the private sector, non-profit and institutional organizations to undertake community conversations about London's recovery, and to identify short/long term ideas for action to be considered for implementation by the City of London, other orders of government, and the community at-large.

City Council endorsed and funded the recommendation to support outdoor performances and to make public washrooms on Dundas Place open 16 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Accessibility

Seating & Public Washrooms

Dundas Place offered residents and visitors a place to sit and play with flex seating and giant games throughout the summer and fall. These daily set ups played a vital role in making Dundas Place an accessible and fun place for all.

The Dundas Place Public Washrooms were available **7 days a week from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m**. Providing accessible public washrooms that were consistently open to all ensure a basic dignity to those in need.

Similar to the flex seating, the Dundas Place Public Washrooms became more integrated in the routine of people who live, work or visit downtown, creating a more holistic place for all to enjoy.

Public Washroom use:

July - **1052**
August - **1621**
September - **1912**
October - **1863**

The Dundas Place team is proud to offer this essential service to our community.

Marketing & Communications

The Dundas Place animation and activation program was promoted with our social media accounts. Every week, the full list of activities was shared with bright beautiful images of people enjoying the street. Our social media accounts saw significant growth in engagement and followers over the course of the summer.

Weekly emails were also sent out with the full schedule to all the businesses on the street and downtown community partners.

In September, we started issuing a printed schedule with the full month's program. The program was delivered to local businesses, distributed to people on the street and brought to the downtown Tourism London Welcome Centre.

Thank you!

A huge thank you to all the programming partners, artists, and staff who made this amazing season of fun possible!

Programming Partners

London Arts Council
London Ontario Jazz Hub
The Arts Project
Forest City Film Fest
Budweiser Gardens
IAOVA
Latin Passion Dance Academy
519 School of Hip Hop
Museum London
Tourism London
London Food Truck Association
Middlesex London Health Unit
Downtown! London
Pride London Festival
TD Sunfest
Dundas Place Businesses
AlvegoRoot Theatre
Good Sport

Staff Team

The programming on Dundas Place was supported by a team of 3 Community Animators and 7 Building Attendants. They tirelessly lugged equipment all over the 4 blocks with carts and by hand.

Dundas Place

Animation and Activation

2021

All COVID-19 safety protocols will be strictly followed.

Activation Strategy

Who: Dundas Place staff, businesses, institutions, community partners

What: intentionally filling strategic spaces with prosocial activations (see list)

Where: targeted locations on each block (see map)

When: something happening every day with increased activity on weekends

Why: give people reasons to come, create a pleasant and dynamic social environment, increase foot traffic

Activation Strategy

How: Operating out of the Dundas Place Field House (179 Dundas St.), Building Attendants and Community Animators will use large wagons to move tables, chairs, games, tents, audio equipment, and signage to specific locations along the sidewalks and in Market Lane. They will facilitate activations which may involve setting up equipment, cleaning the site, communicating with businesses, disinfecting equipment, providing information, inviting participation, and enforcing safety rules.

Activation Types

- Performance
  - Music, dance, theatre, poetry, movies
- Visual
  - Murals, posters, banners, sculpture
- Sales and Vendors
  - Retail, art, crafts, community
- Moveable Furniture
- Games
  - Chess, checkers, Ping pong, Jenga, corn hole
- Classes
  - Dance, yoga, Thai Chi, art
- Tours
  - Public Art, Heritage
- Recreation
  - Walking groups, running groups

Activation Locations

DUNDAS PLACE BLOCK 1

LEGEND

Block 1 Activation
- Only block where food trucks are permitted when street is open.
- Bud Gardens will be operating Beer Garden Friday and Saturday nights June - October
- Tables and other forms of seating added

Activation Locations

DUNDAS PLACE BLOCK 2

LEGEND

Block 2 Activations
- Cluster of patios at Talbot program their own music
- Market Lane will be optimized with regular programming in partnership with Fanshawe College, London Arts Council, The Arts Project, and other partners.
- Market Lane could be designated a "Dining District" for visitors to bring food and drink from downtown businesses to consume.
- Vendors could be located on the street or in Market Lane.
- Discussions with businesses about organizing street markets on this block are underway. (i.e., monthly antique market)

Activation Locations

DUNDAS PLACE BLOCK 3

Block 3 Activations

- Support patio with live music on weekends
- Support take out restaurants with moveable street furniture
- Pop-up art shows on street and other arts programming with The Arts Project
- With Field House located on block, games can easily be set up with staff near by
- Moveable furniture will serve as short rest stops for people in need

Activation Locations

DUNDAS PLACE BLOCK 4
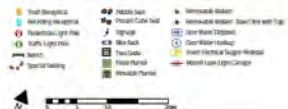
Block 4 Activations

- Heavily Library focused
- Support patios with live music on weekends
- Moveable furniture for take out restaurants
- Sidewalk sales
- Vendors near Wellington

APPENDIX C

Detailed Overview of New Communications Efforts in 2021

Throughout 2021, the City promoted different initiatives that are revitalizing the Core Area through several communications plans, strategies and tactics. In addition, the City's communications department was involved early in projects to establish and support a Core Area communications framework, brand and communications plans with service areas.

By establishing a communications framework and having communications staff develop and support Core Area communications, the City has been able to better provide regular updates to residents and businesses, showcase homelessness prevention and safety initiatives and promote local arts and culture. Information about Core Area initiatives, projects and programs was also streamlined through comprehensive webpages that provide a holistic view of the progress being made.

Communications tactics that are being used to support Core Area efforts include the following:

- An integrated communications framework and the 'Our Core Area' brand were created to help support communication messages and materials
- A comprehensive webpage on London.ca is home to information about the Core Area to help visitors (london.ca/CoreArea)
- A webpage on the City's engagement site Get Involved shares information for businesses and residents in the Core Area and offers opportunities for them to provide comments and feedback on initiatives (getinvolved.london.ca/CoreArea)
- A quarterly newsletter is sent to Core Area businesses and residents highlighting projects impacting the downtown, Old East Village and Midtown (View past newsletters)
- Engagement through the virtual Our Core Area Spring and Fall Forums brought together Core Area business owners, residents and visitors who have a shared interest in the success of the Core (Spring Forum, Fall Forum)
- Ongoing media releases to highlight projects and initiatives and their outcomes, including event promotion, road closure updates, parking updates, art unveilings and cycling information.
- Inclusion of content about the Core Area in the City's bi-weekly Our City e-newsletter
- Printed quick reference cards were distributed to BIA members to simplify who to contact about active safety, security and cleanliness issues
- A video promoting City of London initiatives to revitalize the Core Area was shown during the 2021 AMO Conference and also promoted on social media (https://youtu.be/Zeh_Eyo3aIU)
- Social media campaigns were created to promote Core Area initiatives, programs, recreational activities, events, people and arts

- The Core Area Spotlight program was launched with a communications plan to engage businesses and enhance safety and security in the Core
- Branded uniforms for Core Area Ambassadors were created. Printed contact cards about the Ambassadors' job functions were also distributed to Core Area businesses
- Creating a communications plan to build awareness of and promote City of London special events and neighbourhood events processes and procedures to encourage Londoners to hold events within London's Core Area
- Creating a communications plan to share educational information to Core Area business owners and residents on how to report sharps on public property and how to safely pick up sharps on private property
- Developing a promotional plan to inform Londoners of upcoming events taking place in the Core Area

Several of these initiatives were launched in 2021, including the Our Core Area Forums, which took place in May and October 2021. Businesses and residents were able to attend these online forums where they could watch brief presentations from the City of London, Tourism London and London Police Service about key projects and programs that have impacts in the Core. Attendees could also ask questions to the presenters or share comments and concerns. The forums were recorded and posted on the City's Core Area Get Involved webpage afterwards for people to watch. Participants provided feedback in surveys following the webinars and expressed that the Our Core Area forums were informative and that more forums should be held in the future. It is anticipated there will be additional forums in 2022.

Quick reference cards were also created and distributed to the Downtown London and Old East Village BIAs for their members to use. These printed cards shared information about safety and security, garbage and cleanliness and Core Area Ambassadors. The goal of these cards was to provide a streamlined overview of City services and supports in the Core Area to make it easier for businesses and residents to quickly submit questions, inquiries and complaints.

[A video promoting the City's Core Area plans, strategies and programs](#) was also developed and shared with delegates at the AMO 2021 Conference as part of a virtual study tour of London. The video was later promoted to Londoners through a social media ad campaign to help share the work the City is doing to revitalize London's Core Area.

The City also established two social media campaigns to promote the Core, including #LdnCoreStories and #CoreAreaArt. #LdnCoreStories is a collection of stories examining the experiences and challenges of a diverse range of individuals who live, work or play in London's Core Area. The goal was not to tell the story of the Core but to tell the stories of individuals to humanize what it is like to work, live or play in our Core to create a dialogue on the benefits and challenges within London's Core Area. #CoreAreaArt was a campaign promoting London's strong arts identity by showcasing

art pieces in Old East Village, Downtown London and Midtown. It also encouraged Londoners to visit the Core to experience different art pieces. Both campaigns received high engagement, with 170,596 impressions across Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Looking at 2022, the City's communications department is working on different communications plans to promote the Core Area Ambassadors and Project Clean Slate, and to build awareness of and promote the City's special events and neighbourhood events processes and procedures. In addition, a communications plan will also be created to share educational information to Core Area business owners and residents on how to report sharps on public property and how to safely pick up sharps on private property. Finally, the City is working with its community partners to develop a promotional plan to inform Londoners of upcoming events taking place in the Core Area.

Appendix

Media release examples

- [City of London adding more than a dozen new "park & pick-up" parking locations downtown](#)
- [City of London adds more "park & pick-up" locations downtown, extends 2-hour core parking discount to end of April](#)
- [Two construction projects in the downtown core set to begin Monday](#)
- [Phase 2 of the Dundas Street infrastructure renewal project begins in Old East Village](#)
- [Dundas Place now fully reopened to traffic following installation of new gateway markers](#)
- [Traffic changes on Dundas Place to support safety and mobility for all during core construction](#)
- [City of London launches new promo code for accessing two hours of complimentary parking in the Core Area for remainder of 2021](#)
- [Additional weekly programming begins on Dundas Place to support dining and shopping in the core](#)
- [City of London launches new bike lockers to offer a secure solution for downtown bike parking](#)
- [City of London unveils SITELINES artwork and plaque](#)
- [Downtown road closures for Country Music Week](#)
- [Londoners invited to Victoria Park for Lighting of the Lights](#)

Social media examples

#LdnCoreStories

Analytics

Post impressions: 102,174
Post engagement: 9,456
Post link clicks: N/A

Examples

- [Chantelle McDonald – Director of Service at London CARES](#)
- [Yam Gurung – Owner of Momos at the Market](#)
- [Andrew Joseph Stevens III – Local artist](#)

#CoreAreaArt examples

Analytics

Post impressions: 68,422
Post engagement: 2,157
Post link Clicks: 26

Examples

- [Market Lane murals](#)
- [Movable murals on Dundas Place](#)
- [The Flame of Hope](#)

APPENDIX D

Core Area Resident Engagement Process

The following process will be used to engage core area residents when seeking feedback about specific issues, questions, or topics. The process was modelled after targeted engagement used for programs such as Neighbourhood Decision Making and other resident led engagement initiatives or projects.

Process

- Engagement opportunities will be promoted to core area residents, using one or more of the promotional tactics described below.
- Promotion will include a link to the City's core area engagement webpage, getinvolved.london.ca/CoreArea, where engagement details will be posted.
- Details on the site will vary depending on the engagement opportunity but could include information such as timelines, background information, surveys, relevant contact information etc.
- Residents will have the opportunity to engage on the site both with Civic Administration and each other. This will include the ability to submit feedback or input and comment on other people's feedback or input. It may also include opportunities for residents to hold moderated discussions with each other.
- Questions to City staff may be submitted and answers posted for everyone to view or posted privately, depending on the inquiry.
- Input received from residents will be reviewed by Civic Administration and used to inform decisions or actions.
- Outcomes from engagement opportunities including next steps will be shared with residents on the City's engagement site.

Promotional Tactic Options

- Sharing a unique URL, getinvolved.london.ca/CoreArea
- Mobile signage in neighbourhood locations and digital billboards across the core area
- Mail out to residents, this could involve multiple phases such as initial information about the opportunity and follow up if required
- Townhall meetings
- Posting on social media, including neighbourhood Facebook Groups
- Emails from Councillors
- Emails to community groups with request for circulation
- In person promotion such as pop ups in public spaces where individuals can engage with staff and each other, for example parks, shopping areas, schools, daycares, or faith base establishments

APPENDIX E

2022 Core Area Construction Projects

	Project	Street	From	To	Status / Project Description
1	English St & Lorne Ave - IRP	English St	Dundas St	Princess Ave	2021 carryover work 46% project completion as of January 2022
		Lorne Ave	English St	100m east of intersection	
2	Downtown Loop Phase 1 - BRT	King St	Richmond St	Wellington St	2021 project carryover work 1 month duration
3	Downtown Loop Phase 2 - BRT	Ridout St	King St	Fullarton St	Tendered in Oct 2021, construction planned to start this Spring (lowest bid: JAAR)
		Queens Ave	Ridout St	Wellington St	
4	East London Link Phase 1 - BRT	King St	Wellington St	Lyle St	Tender closed on January 14th, construction planned to start this Spring (lowest bid: Bre Ex)
5	Queens Ave Road and Cycling Rehabilitation	Queens Ave	Quebec St	Maitland St	Road Rehab
		Queens Ave	William St	Quebec St	Cycle Improvement
6	Richmond St / Pall Mall St	Intersection			Signal modification

APPENDIX F

Funding Reallocation Decision-Making Process

Purpose

This document provides a short decision-making framework to assist in allocating the $100,000 in funding that Council has left at the discretion of the Core Area Steering Committee to spend on a one-time basis in 2021.

General Approach

The Core Area Steering Committee will request that the BIAs and the People, Places and Economy Teams put forward projects, programs, events or services that could use or partly use the $100,000 in one-time funding by August 30, 2021.

The projects will be evaluated for suitability for this one-time funding and a short list will be created. If the demand for funding exceeds the funds available, project proponents may be asked to provide a short presentation about their proposal to help assist in prioritization.

If additional projects are required, additional intakes will occur.

Considerations for Evaluation

- Did the proposal come from one of the BIAs included in the Core Area Action Plan (CAAP)?
- Which CAAP Action(s) does the proposal support?
- Is the proposal community facing?
- If the proposal supports an event or activation, is it accessible to everyone who may wish to attend?
- Does the proposal benefit a range of stakeholders?
- Does the proposal contribute to change in the Core?
- Does the proposal support community recovery?
- Is the proposal an increase to the level of service of a funded action in the CAAP?
- Does the proposal result in additional ongoing operating costs that are not funded and cannot be managed in existing budgets?
- Does the proposal support equity deserving populations?
- Does the proposal address issues of crime, safety and security?
- Can the proposal be fully delivered by December 31, 2021?
- Will it be difficult to discontinue the program or project at year end?
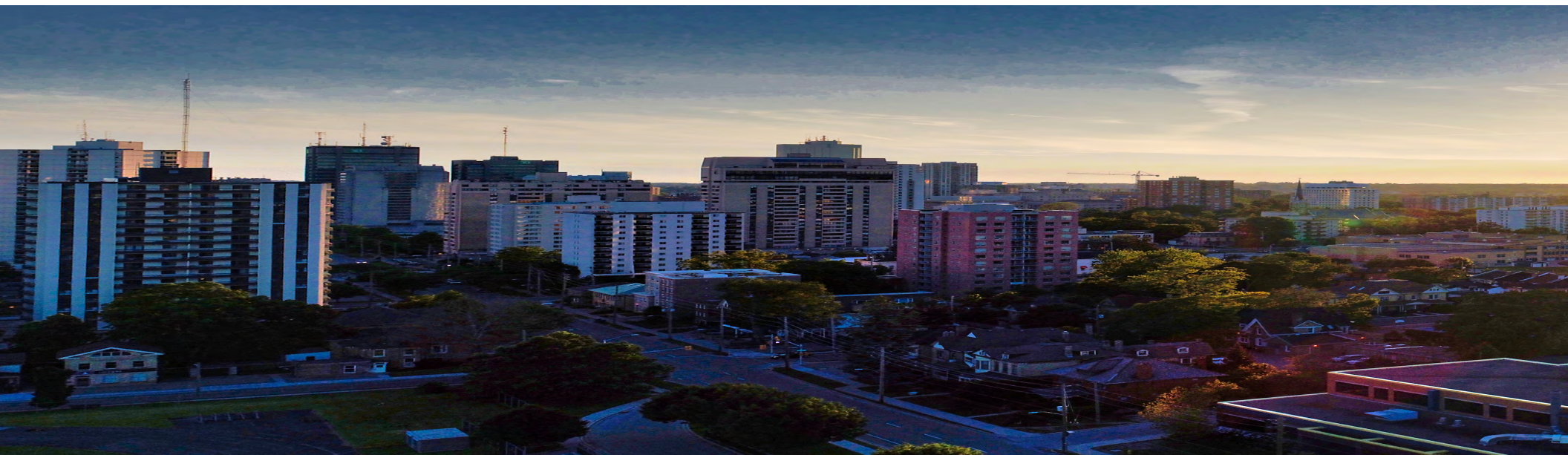
Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan

December 2021

Table of Contents

Section 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

At its meeting held on May 25, 2021, Municipal Council resolved that on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Environment and Infrastructure, the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development, and the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, that Civic Administration be directed to develop a performance measurement plan to assess the outcomes and impacts of various Core Area initiatives and report back to Committee and Council at year-end with an update on the information contained in the report. To accomplish this, a Project Management Team consisting of City of London staff was formed to work in collaboration with the Core Area Teams (People, Places, Economy) and the Core Area Steering Committee.

1.2 Purpose of the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan

The purpose of the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan is to establish a framework to report on the collective results from the implementation of the Core Area Action Plan. Metrics will be tracked and reported on annually, as well as over the lifespan of the Core Area Action Plan. Through the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan, the questions, "What was done through the Core Area Action Plan?" and "What resulted from the implementation of the Core Area Action Plan?" will be answered. The Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan will use both qualitative and quantitative data to respond to these questions.

1.3 How the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan Is Organized

The Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan is organized by the four needs identified in the Core Area Action Plan:
- People struggling with homelessness and health issues need help.
- People need to feel safe and secure.
- Businesses need an environment that allows them to be successful.
- The Core Area needs to attract more people.

1.4 How the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan Was Developed

To develop the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan, the following steps were taken:

Step 1: Develop the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan Template
- The Project Team reviewed the City of London Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 and determined that, for consistency, a similar template should be used for the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan. Further, to align directly with the Core Area Action Plan, the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan was organized by the four "needs," and the content in the Core Area Action Plan was used to develop Outcomes and Expected Results. The City of London Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023 was also consulted, where appropriate, so that similar language was used.
- The three Core Area Teams (People, Places, and Economy) and the Core Area Steering Committee reviewed the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan template and provided feedback. The template was revised to integrate the feedback.

Step 2: Populate the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan
- The Project Management Team prepared a Workbook that listed each of the Core Area Action Plan Actions and the required information for each Action.
- The Leads for each of the Actions completed the Workbook by providing metrics, data collection methods, data sources, data collection timelines, and data collection leads.
- The results from this process were compiled to prepare the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan.

Step 3: Review and Approve the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan
- The Core Area Teams (People, Places, and Economy) as well as the Core Area Steering Committee reviewed the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan. The insights provided during the review were integrated into the final Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan.

1.5 How the Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Plan Will Be Implemented

Data collection related to Core Area Action Plan Actions will begin in January 2022. This will include the development of data collection tools (if not already developed), the implementation of those tools, and the reporting of metrics. For Core Area Action Plan Actions completed between 2019 and 2021, Leads will provide the data collected during this timeframe. A simple reporting tool will be developed by the Project Team to support the data reporting process. On an annual basis, a Core Area Action Plan Performance Measurement Report will be prepared to report the collective results of the Core Area Action Plan.

1.6 Definitions of Key Terms

- Core Area Action Plan Actions: The actions that are included in the Core Area Action Plan.
- Data Collection Method: How the data will be collected (e.g. survey).
- Data Source: Where the data will be sourced from (e.g. community members).
- Expected Result: The conditions or change required to achieve each outcome.
- Metrics: Quantifiable measures to be used to track performance. Metrics will provide quantitative data.
- Outcome: The intended change to be accomplished through the implementation of the Core Area Action Plan.
- Population Level Indicator, Metric, Data Point: What the collective effort of this work is trying to influence. These align directly with the content in the London Community Recovery Framework.
- Qualitative Data: Non-numerical data that describes the results that occurred from the implementation of a Core Area Action Plan Action. It is based on observation and perception.
- Quantitative Data: Numerical data that describes the results that occurred from the implementation of a Core Area Action Plan Action. It is based on numbers.
- Results Description: A description of the impact that resulted from the implementation of the Core Area Action Plan Action. This qualitative data can be used to augment the quantitative data.

Section 2.0 People struggling with homelessness and health issues need help.

Outcome: Our Core Area offers compassionate care for those who need it.

Population Level Indicator: Homelessness
Population Level Metric: Rate of Homelessness
Population Level Data Point: Number of individuals on London's By Name List

Expected Result 1: Reduce the number of individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Strengthen delivery of Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of individuals who secure housing	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Implement Housing Stability Week pilot project	# of individuals who were served through the Housing Stability Week pilot project	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data
	# of individuals who secure housing	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data
	# of intakes completed	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data
	# of Social Housing Applications completed	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data
	# of individuals who were supported to apply for ID	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of individuals who secure housing	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Establish Headlease Program	# of people supported through the pilot Headlease Program	Documentation Review	Occupancy Agreements
	# of people who move from headlease unit to another housing placement	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
	# of people experiencing chronic homelessness matched to the pilot Headlease Program	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Establish more daytime resting spaces	# of daytime resting spaces added	Statistics Reporting	Memorandums of Understanding
	# of individuals served through the newly added daytime resting spaces	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
	# of individuals referred to other services and supports though daytime resting spaces	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
	# of agencies who refer to and support the daytime resting spaces	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Establish Core Area stabilization spaces	# of stabilization spaces added to the system	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements	# of individuals identified through Homeless Prevention's Coordinated Access system who secure housing in the affordable units	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	# of individuals housed through case management supports	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Complete and implement the Housing Stability Plan	Housing Stability Action Plan developed	Documentation Review	Housing Stability Action Plan
	# of households that attained housing	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
	# of successful diversions	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Results Description:			

Expected Result 2: Increase in effective coordination among multiple social service agencies.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Strengthen delivery of Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of teams engaged in the Coordinated Informed Response Program	Documentation Review	Memorandums of Understanding
	# of additional team members part of the Coordinated Informed Response Program	Documentation Review	Hiring Documentation
Implement Housing Stability Week pilot project	# of partners who participated in the Housing Stability Week pilot project	Statistics Reporting	Housing Stability Week Data
Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of teams engaged in the early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program	Documentation Review	Memorandums of Understanding
Implement breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of social service programs participating in the breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program	Documentation Review	Tracking Database
	Breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program operational	Documentation Review	Contracts
Establish permanent Coordinated Informed Response Program	The Coordinated Informed Response Program is integrated within the multi-year budget on an ongoing basis	Documentation Review	Multi-Year Budget
Establish Core Area stabilization spaces	# of agencies who refer and support the stabilization space response	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements	# of agencies involved in supportive housing	Documentation Review	Memorandums of Understanding

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	# of individuals referred to housing and other supports	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Complete and implement the Housing Stability Plan	# of programs participating in London's Coordinated Access	Document Review	Coordinated Access Lead – Manual List
Work with surrounding communities to establish a regional strategy for addressing vulnerable populations	# of surrounding communities engaged for a regional strategy	Statistics Reporting	Memorandums of Understanding/ Tracking Database
Results Description:			

Expected Result 3: Increase in affordable and quality housing options.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements	# of affordable units created	Statistics Reporting	Coordinated Access/ Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	# of people connected to Coordinated Access and housed	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Complete and implement Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan	Completion and approval of the Community Improvement Plan	Documentation Review	Community Improvement Plan Records
	# of property owners accessing the Community Improvement Plan	Statistics Reporting	Community Improvement Plan Records
	$ value of accessed Community Improvement Plan	Statistics Reporting	Community Improvement Plan Records
Regenerate London and Middlesex Housing Corporation housing stock	Amount of housing stock created annually	Statistics Reporting	London Housing Stock Records/MHDT
Complete and implement the Housing Stability Plan	# of affordable units attained	Document Review	Agreements

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Discourage perpetual extension of temporary surface parking lots in Core Area	Identify total number of surface parking lots	Aerial Maps, Geographic Information System, Downtown Parking Study, Planning Applications and Reports	City of London
	# of surface parking lots with temporary zoning	Aerial Maps, Geographic Information System, Downtown Parking Study, Planning Applications and Reports	City of London
	# of applications for temporary extensions for surface parking lots	Aerial Maps, Geographic Information System, Downtown Parking Study, Planning Applications and Reports	City of London
	Development applications applied to surface level parking lots for affordable housing projects	Aerial Maps, Geographic Information System, Downtown Parking Study, Planning Applications and Reports	City of London
Results Description:			

Expected Result 4: Improved access to mental health and addictions services.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program	# of individuals who are referred to mental health and addictions resources	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Establish Core Area stabilization spaces	# of referrals and individuals connected to mental health and addictions services	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements	# of referrals and connections made to mental health and addictions support agencies	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations	# of individuals referred to provincial mental health and addictions support agencies	Statistics Reporting	Homeless Individuals and Families Information System
Open permanent supervised consumption facility in appropriate location and close existing temporary facility	Permanent supervised consumption facility opened	Documentation Review	Middlesex-London Heath Unit/Craig Cooper
Work with surrounding communities to establish a regional strategy for addressing vulnerable populations	# of regional service providers participating in strategy	Statistics Reporting	Memorandums of Understanding/ Tracking Database
Results Description:			

Section 3.0 People need to feel safe and secure.

Outcome: Our Core Area is safe, secure, and welcoming for a broad diversity of people.

Population Level Indicator: Crime and Safety
Population Level Metric: London Crime Statistics
Population Level Data Point: Number of assaults, robberies, violent crimes, etc. in the Core Area

Expected Result 1: Improved sense of safety in the Core Area.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Double Foot Patrol Officers in Core Area for a discrete period of time	# of Foot Patrol Officers in Core Area for a discrete period of time (note: Foot Patrol Officers to double)	Staffing Logs	London Police Service
Create new Spotlight Program	# of businesses that subscribe to the Spotlight Program	Documentation Review	Spotlight Program Records
Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	# of individuals who report an improved sense of safety	Survey	Members of the Public and Business Owners
Undertake Core Area safety audit	Core Area Safety Audit completed	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations determined to be feasible from the Core Area Safety Audit	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations implemented from the Core Area Safety Audit	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
Increase London Police Service Foot Patrol	# of pilots completed in the Core Area to increase London Police Service Foot Patrol	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
	# of additional London Police Service Foot Patrol Officers available during the pilot	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
	# of additional service hours provided by London Police Service Foot Patrol Officers available during the pilot	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
Proactive Compliance Program	# of new Municipal Law Enforcement Officers added to patrol	Database Review	AMANDA Property Folders
Utilize existing Façade Improvement Loan Program to incent decorative gates through existing Community Improvement Plans	# of Façade Improvement Loans issued for gates	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
	$ value of Façade Improvement Loans issued for gates	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
Undertake safety blitz for aggressive driving in the Core Area	Safety blitz for aggressive driving in the Core Area conducted	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
Brand uniforms and equipment for all City staff providing service in the Core Area	# of teams servicing the Core Area adopting standard uniforms	Documentation Review	Uniform Order Records
Provide grants to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	Core Area Safety Audit completed	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations determined to be feasible from the Core Area Safety Audit	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations implemented from the Core Area Safety Audit	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
	# of grants provided to implement Core Area Safety Audit recommendations	Documentation Review	Tracking Database
Implement safety audit recommendations on public property	Core Area Safety Audit completed	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations determined to be feasible from the Core Area Safety Audit	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
	# of recommendations implemented from the Core Area Safety Audit on public property	Documentation Review	Core Area Safety Audit
Results Description:			

Expected Result 2: Strengthened response to safety and security concerns.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Stage police command vehicle in strategic locations	# of strategic locations that police command vehicles were staged	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
	# of police command vehicles staged in strategic locations	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
	# of days police command vehicles were staged in strategic locations	Documentation Review	London Police Service Records
Develop and deliver safety training for business owners, employees, and residents	# of members of the public trained	Statistics Reporting	Training Reports
	# of presentations completed	Statistics Reporting	Training Reports
Implement Core Area digital solutions	# of Core Area related Service London Portal tickets received	Statistics Reporting	Service London Portal
Results Description:			

Section 4.0 Businesses need an environment that allows them to be successful.

Outcome: Our Core Area signals our city's economic vibrancy and attraction.

Population Level Indicator: Core Area Vacancy
Population Level Metric: Commercial Vacancy Rate
Population Level Data Point: Percentage of commercial properties that are vacant

Expected Result 1: Improved cleanliness and maintenance of public and private property and infrastructure.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Enhance Service London Portal to allow for complaints, concerns, and enquiries on Core Area issues	# of tickets received to the Core Area issue related Service London Portal items	Statistics Reporting	CRM
Explore new ways to support Core Area property owners to dispose of found syringes	# of locations in the Core Area that were supported by peers or employees of Regional HIV/AIDS Connection for needle pickup or education on how to dispose of syringes safely	Statistics Reporting	Regional HIV/AIDS Connection/Parks and Recreation
	# of locations in the Core Area that were supported by Parks and Recreation staff for needle pickup	Statistics Reporting	Regional HIV/AIDS Connection/Parks and Recreation
	# of syringes collected i.e. needle bins and pickup	Statistics Reporting	Regional HIV/AIDS Connection/Parks and Recreation
	# of times the video on safe sharps pickup was viewed	Statistics Reporting	City of London Website
	# of service requests made	Statistics Reporting	CRM

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	# of pieces of litter picked up	Statistics Reporting	CRM
	# of service improvements made with Ambassadors	Statistics Reporting	CRM
Conduct three-week Core Area By-law Enforcement blitz	Feedback from Business Improvement Areas	AMANDA Records and Excel Tracking Spreadsheets	AMANDA and Team Participants
	Visual results to the Core Area overall	AMANDA Records and Excel Tracking Spreadsheets	AMANDA and Team Participants
Proactive enforcement of Property Standards By-law	# of Notices of Violation and/or Property Standards Orders issued by Municipal By-Law Enforcement Officers	E-Files of Each Property/AMANDA Software to Track Number of Files (Compliant vs Non-Compliant)	Private Property Owners/Businesses Within the Core Area
	The result in compliance of property owners/business owners from those orders issued	E-Files of Each Property/AMANDA Software to Track Number of Files (Compliant vs Non-Compliant)	Private Property Owners/Businesses Within the Core Area
	# of Litter Collection Walks throughout the Core Area daily (average crew walks each day)	Statistics Reporting	Operations Records

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Establish, implement and regularly monitor a higher clean standard for the Core Area	# of Sidewalk Sweeping Units operating in the Core Area each day, weather permitting (average units operating each day)	Statistics Reporting	Operations Records
	# of bags (business or residential rental) of garbage outside the defined set out period	Statistics Reporting	Monitoring Survey (Defined Areas)
	# of locations (business or residential rental) with garbage outside the defined set out period	Statistics Reporting	Monitoring Survey (Defined Areas)
Implement new pressure wash program for sidewalks and civic spaces	m^2 of sidewalk area power washed	Documentation Review	Contract Payment Records
Establish new Core Area garbage and recycling collection program	Satisfaction with extended garbage collection program in the Core Area	Online Survey	Members of the Public and Business Owners
	Design of a recycling program in mid-2022 that meets the short-term and medium-term needs of businesses and residents living in the Core Area	Online Survey/ Meetings Arranged Through the Business Improvement Areas	Members of the Public and Business Owners
Results Description:			

Expected Result 2: Increase in Core Area occupancy and retention of current businesses.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Fund four-year Core Area "construction dollars" pilot program	Amount of Core Area Construction Dollars redeemed by the Old East Village and Downtown London Business Improvement Areas	Statistics Reporting	City of London Finance Division
	# of Construction Dollar certificates that were distributed to the public during construction	Statistics Reporting	City of London Finance Division
	% of Construction Dollars redeemed at local businesses	Statistics Reporting	City of London Finance Division
Results Description:			

Expected Result 3: Increase in public and private investment.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Provide incentives for installing uplighting on privately-owned buildings	# of incentive applications (loans and grants) issued for uplighting	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
	$ value of incentive applications (loans and grants) issued for uplighting	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
Results Description:			

Expected Result 4: Increase in access to supports for entrepreneurs, non-profits, and businesses.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Install kindness meters to directly support Core Area social service agencies	Frequency of meter requests	Statistics Reporting	Recycling Record/Tracking and Location Placement Tracking
	# of meter requests	Statistics Reporting	Recycling Record/Tracking and Location Placement Tracking
Prioritize Core Area building and sign permits	# of building permits issued in the Core Area	Statistics Reporting	AMANADA Report Layered With Core Area Geographic Information System
	# of sign permits issued in the Core Area	Statistics Reporting	AMANDA Report
Package Core Area patio, signage, licensing and other regular business processes	# of materials printed and distributed	Outlook	Emails
	# of inquiries	Outlook	Emails
	# of sign permits issued	AMANDA	Permits
Eliminate encroachment fees for patios, signage and awnings in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	# of sign permit applications received in the Core Area that had fees waived	Statistics Reporting	AMANDA
	$ value of waived applications	Statistics Reporting	AMANDA
Eliminate application fees for encroachments, signage and patios	# of sign permit applications received in the Core Area that had fees waived	Statistics Reporting	AMANDA

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
in the Core Area through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	$ value of waived applications	Statistics Reporting	AMANDA
Inventory social services in the Core Area	# of requests for information related to services available in the Core Area	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
Provide a deferral of payment for businesses holding City-issued Community Improvement Plan loans for the duration of construction projects	# of Community Improvement Plan loan customers who take the deferral of loan payments	Email Contacts	Loan Customers/ Excel Database
Results Description:			

Section 5.0 The Core Area needs to attract more people.

Outcome: Our Core Area serves as a canvas for culture, arts, music, and entertainment.

Population Level Indicator: Arts, Culture, and Tourism
Population Level Metric: Number of Visitors
Population Level Data Point: Number of overnight visitors to London

Expected Result 1: Strengthened local and tourist attractions and music, entertainment, culture, and arts offerings.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Create an infrastructure art and beautification program	# of art and beautification programs	Statistics Reporting	Robin Armistead/Jen Postorious/Barb Maly/London Arts Council
Results Description:			

Expected Result 2: Increase in activity and programming in the Core Area.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Streamline event processes	# of events	Statistics Reporting	Perfect Mind
	# of event days	Statistics Reporting	Perfect Mind
	# of requests for permits	Statistics Reporting	Event Applications
Proactively recruit food trucks in dedicated area along Dundas Place	# of food truck events on Dundas Place	Documentation Review	Tracking of Food Truck Events on Dundas Place
Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	# of events and planned activities	Statistics Reporting	Reporting Database
Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area	# of events and activities	Tracking of Events and Activities	Core Area Programs
Engage Core Area businesses to lead, volunteer or fund initiatives	# of business-initiated public activities in the Core Area	Statistics Reporting	Street and Park Bookings (via City of London Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Initiatives and Downtown London)
Explore partnership opportunities with educational institutions for immersive learning in Core Area	# of CityStudio courses with a topic related to the Core Area	Documentation Review	Course Catalogue
	# of educational institutions partnered on immersive learning in the Core Area	Documentation Review	Partnership Agreements
	# of students involved in immersive learning in the Core Area	Documentation Review	Course Registry List

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Use CityStudio to explore innovative approaches to addressing Core Area social issues	# of collaborative projects between the City and partnering universities/colleges supporting social causes	Documentation Review	CityStudio Records (Planning and Economic Development)
Invest in Dundas Place	# of activations on Dundas Place	Tracking Activations on Dundas	Tracking Database
	Amount of foot traffic	Counting Pedestrians on Dundas Place	Tracking Database
Results Description:			

Expected Result 3: Improved perception of the Core Area.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program	# of individuals who report an improved perception of the Core Area	Survey	Members of the Public and Business Owners
Establish new storefront space for Foot Patrol, By-law Enforcement Officers and public washrooms	% of public and business owners who have a positive perception of the Core Area	Survey	Members of the Public and Business Owners
Activate spaces and places with bistro chairs and tables	# of setups	Tracking Setups	City of London Documentation
	# of individuals who report an improved perception of the Core Area	Survey	Members of the Public
Results Description:			

Expected Result 4: Increased number of people who visit, live, and work in the Core Area.

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
Experiment with temporary free municipal parking	# of codes used	Statistics Reporting (Honk Codes Provided to the Public)	Honk/City of London
	$ value of codes provided to public	Statistics Reporting (Honk Codes Provided to the Public)	Honk/City of London
Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area	# of visitors to the Core Area	Cell Phone Data	Environics
	# of people who live in the Core Area	Tracking of Residential Units	City Residential Units
Eliminate fees for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios through Core Area Community Improvement Plan	# of fees eliminated for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
	$ value of fees eliminated for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios	Statistics Reporting	Tracking Database
Plan and save funds for a public parking garage	$ value set aside to reserves for a public parking garage	Statistics Reporting	City of London Finance Division
Identify opportunities for new parking spaces in the Core Area	# of new parking spaces implemented	Documentation Review	By-law Amendments
Continue to enhance transit service to the Core Area	Construction of phases of rapid transit	Construction Team Progress	Major Projects Office

Core Area Action Plan Actions	Metrics	Data Collection Method	Data Source
	Transit ridership in the Core Area	London Transit Commission Passenger Counter Data	London Transit Commission
	Frequency increases in transit routes	London Transit Commission Service Plans	London Transit Commission
Continue to improve cycling infrastructure in the Core Area	Average daily ridership on the Dundas Street Cycletrack	Eco-Counter Data From the Bike Lane Counter	London's Eco-Counter Website
	Average daily ridership on the Colborne Street Cycletrack	Eco-Counter Data From the Bike Lane Counter	London's Eco-Counter Website
Results Description:			

Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis

January 2022

Table of Contents

Section 1.0 Introduction

1.1 About the Core Area Action Plan

In 2019, despite extensive investment in London's Core Area, issues persisted that threatened its long-term success. The health of the Core Area was recognized as vital to London's prosperity as a whole. To create a healthy and resilient Core Area, the City of London set out to develop an action plan.

To understand the Core Area's current state more fully, City staff engaged in an extensive consultation and engagement process over a period of several weeks. Property owners, business owners, employees, resident associations, agency leads, building operators, City managers, London Police Service staff, and other Londoners who frequent the Core Area were interviewed.

The insights shared provided the foundation for the Core Area Action Plan. The Core Area Action Plan outlines short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives to address such things as homelessness and health issues, safety and security, creating a positive business environment, and attracting more people to the Core Area.

1.2 About the Core Area

The map in Figure 1 outlines the geographic boundaries of the Core Area. The Core Area includes the Downtown, Richmond Row, and the Old East Village, and encompasses most of the London Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Old East Village BIA.

Figure 1: Map of the Geographic Boundaries of the Core Area

1.3 Purpose of This Report

In June 2021, a Project Team was formed to explore emerging and evidence-based practices, initiatives, and strategies that could enrich the Core Area Action Plan. Gaps were to be identified between what other communities were implementing in their core area and the actions in the Core Area Action Plan. The purpose of this report is to share key findings from the research conducted.

1.4 Research Methods

Research Process

To facilitate the research, the Project Team undertook four phases:

- Phase 1: Define the Research Scope
- Phase 2: Design the Research Framework
- Phase 3: Implement Data Collection
- Phase 4: Analyze Data and Report Key Findings

The activities conducted in each of these phases are outlined in more detail below.

Research Scope

The Project Team, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) determined that the scope of the research would include the four focus areas in the Core Area Action Plan and one additional focus area:

1. Assisting people experiencing homelessness and health issues;
2. Helping people to feel safe and secure;
3. Creating an environment for businesses to be successful;
4. Attracting more residents, tourists, or businesses to the downtown area;
5. Addressing commercial vacancy (added to align with the July 6 Council Resolution related to Core Area vacancy).

The Project Team acknowledged that a large body of evidence existed in London about the challenges experienced in the core area due to the significant community engagement efforts that had been facilitated in the last year. Therefore, this research focused solely on collecting data to inform a gap analysis.

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used in the research design. Semi-structured interviews and a literature scan were identified as the most appropriate methods to gather data.

In total, 16 cities were identified to participate in interviews. These communities were chosen because they had similar population and geographic characteristics to London and/or the initial literature scan identified they were implementing relevant work in their core area. The communities identified to participate in the interviews included:

- Barrie, Ontario
- Brampton, Ontario
- Calgary, Alberta
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Denver, Colorado
- Edmonton, Alberta
- Guelph, Ontario
- Hamilton, Ontario
- Kingston, Ontario
- Kitchener, Ontario
- Montreal, Quebec
- Regina, Saskatchewan
- Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- St. Catharines, Ontario
- Toronto, Ontario
- Winnipeg, Manitoba

In total, 12 of the 16 communities contacted responded to the invite and agreed to participate in an interview. Barrie, Brampton, Calgary, Denver, Hamilton, Kingston, Kitchener, Montreal, Regina, Saskatoon, St. Catharines, and Toronto completed an interview. Cleveland, Edmonton, Guelph, and Winnipeg did not respond to the invitation to participate in an interview.

Data Collection

Data presented in this report has been derived from:

1. Community Interviews – City staff from each of the communities participated in 60-minute interviews. Interviews occurred between September 13 and September 30, 2021. Questions focused on the initiatives and strategies they were implementing in their core area. Please see Appendix A for the interview tool.

2. Literature Scan – To both inform the selection of cities for an interview, as well as gather additional information about what cities are doing to enhance their core area, a literature scan was conducted.

Data Analysis

All data collected was collated into a single master file and identifiers were removed. To support and provide structure for the analysis of the qualitative data, an initial list of key terms was prepared. Inductive and deductive thematic analysis was then conducted to identify common themes across all sources of qualitative data.

In the results sections of this report, the most common themes are provided for each question. Where applicable, the themes are organized in alignment with the five focus areas, with the focus areas presented in the same order as they appear in the Core Area Action Plan. Within each focus area, themes are ordered alphabetically and not by frequency of response due to the nature of the research design.

Data Limitations

Recency effect is when current events are weighed more heavily than past events or potential future events. Because this research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, responses to the interview questions are reflective of respondents' sensitivities to the current situation. The weight of the current pandemic significantly influenced responses, even in future-focused questions.

Section 2.0 Research Results

To identify gaps in the Core Area Action Plan, the research explored trends impacting core areas, emerging and evidence-based practices, initiatives, and strategies with demonstrated success being implemented in core areas by other communities, and how other communities are implementing these strategies. Specifically, the literature scan focused on identifying the most significant trends affecting core areas, including how they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, future predictions for core areas and the potential long-term implications of the identified trends, and solutions being implemented to address them. Further, interview participants were asked to identify practices, initiatives, and strategies that have been successful in enhancing their core area and new strategies they plan to test.

To help inform the implementation of identified solutions, interview participants were also asked about their use of a place-based or system-based approach to addressing issues in their core area, how municipal service areas in their core areas work, and whether there are structures, practices, or strategies in place to support coordination in the core area. Interview participants were also asked how they measure the work being done in their core area and whether they have an evaluation framework, plan, or dashboard in place.

The themes and findings presented in this section provide a summary of the results from the literature scan and the insights shared by interview participants. Where applicable, themes have been organized according to the five focus areas outlined in the research scope.

2.1 Trends That Are Impacting Core Areas

Results from the literature scan demonstrated trends affecting core areas include increased demand for community and social services, homelessness, addictions, a lack of affordable housing, and a shift in crime. Further, trends impacting core areas include business closures, a shift to virtual services and experiences, support for buying local, decreased use of public transit use, increased interest in parks and outdoor spaces, reduced foot traffic, and reduced travel and tourism, adoption of remote work, reduced brick-and-mortar retail, and a shift to e-commerce and automation.

Interview participants were not asked specifically about trends impacting their core area. However, within their response, participants identified housing, homelessness, addiction, increased demand for community and social services, crime or issues impacting sense of safety in the core area, business closures, lack of foot traffic, and retail vacancy were issues affecting the core areas in their communities. These responses have been integrated to inform the themes. A summary of each theme is presented below, with themes organized under the focus area with the strongest alignment. However, it is important to note some trends may influence multiple focus areas due to their interconnected nature.

Assisting People Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Increase in Demand for Community and Social Services

Growing demand for community and social services was a trend already impacting organizations prior to the pandemic, with community-based service providers experiencing challenges accessing adequate resources to meet the increasing demand.[1,2] With the impacts of the pandemic, there has been a surge in demand for community and social services (e.g. food banks, employment services, etc.), placing increased pressure on these agencies.[3] While access to community services can impact quality of life for residents, they also contribute to social, economic, and cultural development.[4] The increased demand for and vitality of community and social services is of particular significance to core areas as these services tend to be concentrated in city centres, with people coming to the core area to access them.

Increase in Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Cities across Canada are also experiencing increased homelessness, with this issue being exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Increasing rates of homelessness can particularly impact core areas as in many cities, services that support individuals experiencing homelessness are primarily concentrated in downtown areas.[5] Further, during the pandemic, with emergency shelters operating at reduced capacity, homelessness also became more visible, as exemplified by greater presence of encampments in core areas.[6] Interview participants also identified there has been an increase in homelessness in their core areas. Further, with a lack of available public amenities during the pandemic, interview participants noted challenges related to increased homelessness and encampments included lack of access to clean drinking water, toilets, and showers for unhoused individuals, increased garbage in public spaces, and impacts on perceived safety.

Increase in Opioid Overdose Deaths and Challenges With Addiction

The increasing rate of opioid-related deaths is a longstanding issue that has been made worse by the pandemic. Evidence indicates opioid-related deaths have accelerated during the pandemic, up more than 75% in 2020 compared to 2019, because of reduced access to addiction and harm reduction services and increased toxicity and contamination of the drug supply.[7,8] This issue has particularly impacted individuals experiencing homelessness, with the number of opioid-related deaths more than doubling amongst those experiencing homelessness in 2020.[9] While substance use can impact individuals living in all areas of a city, it has been identified as an issue particularly impacting core areas.[10,11,12] Interview participants also reported issues related to addiction and mental health have impacted their core area, with many safety and security calls being related to these issues.

Lack of Affordable Housing

A shortage of housing and increasing housing costs have been impacting core areas since before the COVID-19 pandemic, which can drive people to live in unsafe, crowded, and unhealthy situations. During the pandemic, there was a shift away from living downtown to the suburbs, with real estate values increasing faster in suburban areas relative to core areas and declines in house and rent prices in city centres.[13] However, recent rental data has shown rent prices are rebounding, indicating demand for units in downtown cores is increasing.[14,15] Rising home and rental prices have put increased pressure on available affordable housing. Further, in 2020, increases in rent continued to outpace inflation, making it more difficult for lower income renters to find affordable housing.[16] Additionally, while there has been increased development of new rental buildings, this development has been driven by the luxury rental market.[17] For example, in Montreal, while approximately 40% of new rental units were in the downtown area, the average rent for these units was not affordable for lower income households, with average rent ranging from $1,400 for a one-bedroom unit to $2,300 for a three-bedroom unit.[18]

Helping People Feel Safe and Secure

Shift in Crime

There is evidence indicating the pattern of crime has shifted during the pandemic towards fewer traffic violations, reduced drunk driving, less fraud, increased domestic violence, more stunt driving, and increased commercial break-ins.[19] With reduced foot traffic in downtown cores and increased vacancies and business closures, commercial break-ins have particularly impacted businesses in core areas. For example, incidents of commercial break-ins more than doubled in downtown Vancouver after physical distancing measures began.[20] In London, break and enters downtown increased 83% in 2020 compared to 2019.[21] For many core area businesses, this has resulted in lost revenue. Interview participants also reported issues of vandalism and concerns about safety in their core areas, with two participants identifying businesses have been spending more on implementing security measures.

Creating an Environment for Businesses to Be Successful

Business Closures and Loss of Jobs

Suburbanization and the movement of commercial and retail activity away from core areas has been impacting businesses and economic activity in city centres for many years.[22] However, the disruptions of lockdowns and restrictions on revenues during the pandemic have placed core area businesses under further strain, resulting in reduced staffing and operations. The economic toll of the pandemic has been particularly significant for businesses in core areas. For example, it is estimated that up to 20% of merchants in downtown Montreal will close because of the pandemic.[23]

Further, while tourism and hotels are an anchor industry for core areas, employment in Canada's tourism sector decreased by 410,000 jobs between February 2020 and November 2021.[24]

Shift to Virtual Services and Experiences

There has been an ongoing transformation in how people are accessing services and engaging with culture and entertainment, with a shift towards virtual platforms. With the shuttering of service-based businesses, organizations, and cultural institutions, this trend has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic as organizations looked to improve their virtual presence and digital offerings. Further, a 2020 global survey of 5,000 consumers found 45% of all respondents plan to use more online services after the pandemic and one-third of respondents aged 18-24 reported they plan to keep watching sports, concerts, and movies online post-pandemic, demonstrating this trend is likely to continue.[25] This shift to digital transactions is occurring across sectors, with a rise in telemedicine, online banking, online education, and digital offerings by personal care services (e.g. virtual fitness classes).[26] The shift to virtual services and experiences is particularly significant for core areas due to the higher concentration of cultural institutions that typically attract visitors and patrons to the area.[27] An increased focus on virtual services and experiences has the potential to affect tourism and foot traffic in core areas, meaning fewer customers and patrons to and reduced revenue for core area businesses and cultural institutions.

Support for Buying Local

Support for purchasing from locally owned businesses has been increasing. Specifically, a survey of over 550 consumers found that 53% of respondents reported they are more likely to buy from a local business during the pandemic than a national retailer, with the main reasons being a desire to support the local community and local economy.[28] Of greater significance is the finding that 68% of survey respondents who reported they are more likely to buy from a local business during the pandemic plan to continue buying locally post-pandemic.[29] This trend for buying local can be leveraged to help promote and support local small businesses, with these businesses being critical to the revitalization of the core area, development of the local economy, and creation of local jobs.

Attracting More People to the Core Area

Decreased Use of Public Transit

Prior to the pandemic, urban transit ridership in Canada had plateaued between 2014 and 2016, but was increasing each year between 2017 and 2019.[30] However ridership plummeted in 2020 during the pandemic. Statistics Canada reported public transit ridership decreased by 45.6% in March 2020 and ridership remained below 2019 levels throughout the rest of 2020.[31]

With the increased adoption of remote work during the pandemic, it is estimated 10-20% fewer people are commuting to downtown core areas each day, creating not only economic impacts for the core area, but also changes in how people travel.[32] Data demonstrates more than one-third of people who used public transit prior to the pandemic changed their mode of transportation during the pandemic, with approximately three-quarters of previous transit users switching to a personal vehicle and one-fifth changing to an active mode of transportation like walking or bicycling. Further, more people have been walking or bicycling (6%) than using public transit (3%).[33] It was also found that by increasing connectivity throughout the city, bike lanes set up during the pandemic have improved access to jobs, parks, and stores.[34] This shift in the use of public transit and how people are traveling has the potential to influence how people access and move around the core area into the future.

Increased Interest in and Use of Parks and Outdoor Spaces

While parks and green space are important for well-being and quality of life, increasing population and density levels are putting greater pressures on available parks and outdoor spaces in core areas.[35,36] For example, Toronto's downtown core lacks enough public space to keep up with the increasing population.[37] The strain on existing parks and outdoor spaces have only increased during the pandemic as more people have been using outdoor public spaces like parks and public gardens. Of a survey of over 50 municipalities, more than half reported the use of parks has increased since the start of the pandemic, demonstrating the importance of these spaces to residents.[38]

Reduced Foot Traffic in Core Areas

As a result of lockdowns, a shift to working from home, and border closures during the pandemic, city centres in Canada have experienced significant decreases in foot traffic with fewer workers, tourists, and students coming to the area. The reduced foot traffic has posed a challenge for core area businesses and retailers. A study conducted in 2020 of seven main streets in Canada found foot traffic in core areas had decreased by 35% to 70%, negatively impacting revenues of core area businesses.[39] Interview participants also identified fewer people have been visiting their core areas, with one participant noting reduced foot traffic has particularly affected businesses that catered directly to office workers prior to the pandemic.

Reduced Travel and Tourism

Travel and tourism are key drivers of economic activity in core areas. However, lockdowns and travel restrictions have significantly impacted convention, business, and leisure travel and tourism during the pandemic, while border closures have posed a barrier to the travel of international students. These limits on travel and tourism have particularly impacted core areas. For example, hotels in downtown Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver reported the lowest hotel occupancy rates in Canada, resulting in approximately 79% less revenue.[40] Increases in remote work may also result in reduced business travel, meaning less travel to core areas for businesses purposes.[41]

It is projected that recovery of the visitor economy will take several years, with revenues returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2025. However, a shift towards increased domestic travel and tourism could help to offset the impacts of the pandemic and accelerate recovery.[42]

Addressing Commercial Vacancy

Adoption of Remote Work

Prior to the pandemic, approximately four percent of Canadian workers were already working mostly remotely. However, the work environment changed rapidly during the pandemic with the remote work trend increasing to over 20% of people working remotely in March 2021.[43] It is expected this shift to remote work will continue beyond the pandemic, impacting downtown office buildings occupied by businesses able to shift to an ongoing remote work model and reducing demand for office space in core areas. This trend has already impacted commercial vacancy rates in core areas, with CBRE reporting an increase in downtown office vacancy rates for the fourth consecutive quarter, reaching 14.3% in the first quarter of 2021.[44] Further, there is a general consensus amongst city leaders that office occupancy rates are unlikely to return to pre-pandemic levels, and it is anticipated there will continue to be less demand for office space as people and employers maintain remote or hybrid work models.[45]

Reduced Brick-and-Mortar Retail

Factors such as a rise in e-commerce, more delivery-oriented retailers, loss of business to big box stores outside the city centre, and shifting consumer habits have been impacting brick-and-mortar businesses for many years and will continue to change the retail landscape in core areas. Specifically, many brick-and-mortar retail anchors such as Hudson's Bay as well as small businesses are struggling to remain open, and it is expected more of these retail anchors and brick-and-mortar retailers will close in the coming years.[46,47] The President of the International Downtown Association (IDA) reported that in most cities, retail space was overbuilt by up to 5% per capita prior to the pandemic, creating challenges for brick-and-mortar stores.[48] The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend towards fewer brick-and-mortar businesses and emptying retail spaces.[49] This trend was echoed by interview participants who reported their core areas were dealing with retail vacancies in advance of the pandemic, but that vacancies have increased because of the pandemic.

Shift to E-Commerce and Automation

An emerging trend affecting core areas before the COVID-19 pandemic that has been accelerated by the pandemic is the shift towards e-commerce, delivery services, and automation.[50,51] For core area businesses, the trend towards increased automation has the potential to impact jobs and the shift to e-commerce is affecting core area businesses that have typically relied on visitors and foot traffic.

While core area businesses were already facing challenges resulting from a rise in e-commerce pre-pandemic, online shopping and delivery-oriented services have increased during the pandemic. For example, according to Statistics Canada, online sales increased by 99.3% between February and May 2020.[52] As a result, it has now become vital for core area businesses to create an online presence and develop digital business solutions in order to survive. While adapting to shifts in consumer patterns is critical, a 2020 study of seven main streets in Canada found that although more than 60% of businesses have developed an online presence, the transition to online sales will not make up for the loss these businesses have experienced in visitors.[53]

2.2 Future Predictions for Core Areas

Through the literature scan, the potential long-term implications of the trends affecting core areas and predictions for the future state of core areas were identified. Predictions for the future state included increased demand for housing in core areas, an increased focus on public health, the emergence of local enterprise and innovation ecosystems, and a greater focus on experience shopping. Further, future predictions included an increased focus on placemaking, increased demand for hospitality and leisure services, more demand for multi-use streets and outdoor spaces, a focus on active and flexible transit options, changes to models of work and a shift in how office spaces are used, and repurposing of buildings into more mixed-use spaces.

A description of each theme is outlined below. Themes are organized according to the focus area with the strongest alignment. However, some trends may influence multiple focus areas due to the interconnection between the focus areas.

Assisting People Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Increased Demand for Core Area Residential Real Estate

Economists and urban planning experts have identified that downtown populations are likely to continue increasing, with this trend being fueled by the preferences of millennials and younger demographics for dense, walkable areas.[54,55] Further, it is anticipated that with the return of people aged 35 and younger to downtowns, there will be a demand for the multi-family residential market in core areas. Preferences for unit types may also shift from smaller units to larger units with one or more bedrooms, and to address affordability, there may be an increase in alternative ownership and rental approaches, such as group or cooperative living. To address the demand and need for core area residential real estate, it is expected empty commercial and retail buildings will be repurposed and converted into residential spaces – an approach that was already underway in some core areas prior to the pandemic.

Helping People Feel Safe and Secure

Increased Focus on Public Health

Collaboration between public health officials and urban planners had already begun prior to the pandemic, with a focus on addressing obesity through increased walkability.[56] As a result of the pandemic, health and wellness has become a priority for many people and higher standards for cleanliness and safety have become expected. It is anticipated that public health will remain a high priority consideration for core area retailers, offices, restaurants, and hotels. Further, it is expected that health will increasingly be considered by city builders and policy makers, with the threat of infectious disease likely to impact urban design solutions that make it easier to protect the health of visitors and residents.[57]

Creating an Environment for Businesses to Be Successful

Emergence of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Ecosystems

Declining retail rents, more opportunities for short-term leases, and empty spaces provide more opportunities for and can help to attract local startups, entrepreneurs, and small businesses to core areas, as well as support innovative use of spaces (e.g. community partnerships, makerspaces, social enterprises, etc.). Further, a rise in innovation districts is being seen as an opportunity to support economic development in core areas, helping to promote local startups, support entrepreneurs, build and grow new businesses, and develop local talent.[58,59]

Increased Focus on Experience Shopping

A trend towards experience shopping emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and is anticipated to continue post-pandemic. Shopify has identified there is an appetite amongst consumers for businesses that provide personalized customer experience and unique offerings.[60] Further, 86% of shoppers report they are willing to pay more for a great customer experience.[61] One of the ways brick-and-mortar retail can provide a great customer experience is to create an immersive experience that is fun, unique, and offers entertainment value.[62] In alignment with this shift, based on a recent survey of 1,920 business professionals, 45.9% said their number one priority for their business in the next five years is customer experience.[63] This trend of transforming retail into an experience for shoppers has the potential to impact how core area businesses and retailers attract and engage with patrons as people transition towards only coming into the city centre for experiences they can't get at home or from shopping online.

Rise of Satellite Central Business Districts

With decentralization, more people working remotely, and an increased focus on work flexibility, a shift towards the development of more satellite Central Business Districts (CBDs) is likely to occur.[64]

It is expected that major headquarters will remain in city centres with satellite locations being established for easier access to employees working remotely part time in suburbs or second and third-tier cities, creating a hub and satellite model.[65,66] While this model maintains some office space in Central Business Districts, it has the potential to contribute to reduced demand for core area office space.

Attracting More People to the Core Area

A Focus on Placemaking

With more people working from home, it is anticipated people will only come into the city centre for experiences they are unable to access in their own neighbourhood, meaning core areas will need to offer unique amenities and programming that attract people to the city centre. Further, there is continued interest in placemaking as a way to create destinations for residents and visitors and promote community identity.[67] Placemaking has been identified as an important strategy for activating public spaces, encouraging social connection, supporting economic development, and promoting increased equity.[68,69]

Increased Demand for Hospitality and Leisure Services

Tourism and leisure are expected to re-emerge strongly, with an initial pent-up demand for opportunities to socialize, travel, and share experiences.[70] A survey of over 9,000 Canadian residents found that 80% plan to travel when pandemic restrictions are relaxed, providing an opportunity to promote domestic travel and boost demand for tourism and hospitality services in core areas.[71] Further, based on predictions, the future of core areas includes fewer stores, but more bars and restaurants, which aligns with the increased focus on developing live-work neighbourhoods that include more recreation and leisure options.[72]

Increased Demand for Multi-Use Streets and Outdoor Spaces

With more people working remotely and less traffic coming into city centres, the way roads are used is likely to change towards flexible use of outdoor spaces and people-focused streets. For example, the approach of closing sections of streets or city blocks to vehicles and opening them to pedestrians for various purposes such as patios and retail space is likely to continue.[73] It is also expected there will be an increased focus on developing more green spaces and pedestrian walkways.[74] Greater pedestrianization, walkability, and access to outdoor spaces will create more opportunities for people to gather and linger in the core area and increase visitor foot traffic.

More Focus on Active and Flexible Transit Options

The future of transit is likely to support more flexibility in how people travel. For example, while main transit lines will continue bringing people into city centres, there will be increased connection and integration between these main lines and on-demand micro-transit options like ride-hailing services or ride sharing that support more flexible schedules and destinations.[75,76] This will likely result in greater interaction between public and private transit and a rise in alternative transportation options.[77] Further, temporary bicycle lanes established during the pandemic saw great success and it is expected these lanes will be made permanent and new bicycle lanes will be added to help shift more commuters to cycling.

Addressing Commercial Vacancy

Changes to Models of Work and Shifting Office Space Needs

It is expected that the way people work post-pandemic will continue to include a higher level of remote and hybrid work models, with real estate experts predicting most office workers will experience a mix of office and remote work.[78] With this change in how people work, businesses may require less space with fewer workers coming into the office at one time. For example, a 2020 survey of 278 executives found respondents intended to decrease their office space by an average of 30%.[79] Additionally, with an increased demand for work flexibility from employees along with a continued desire for workplace connection and in-person opportunities for idea exchange, office space needs and functions may shift. With the emphasis of coming into the office shifting towards meetings, mentoring, and development of organizational culture, co-working models, spaces for collaboration and meeting, and flexible spaces that support multiple uses will become more important.[80] Further, it is expected companies will seek to upgrade their offices with moves to newer, higher quality offices that are energy efficient, have high quality HVAC systems, and are close to other amenities.[81]

Modification and Repurposing of Vacant Buildings Into Mixed-Use Spaces

It is predicted that emptying retail and office spaces in core areas will be repurposed for other uses, such as restaurants and personal-care businesses.[82] Further, there is an increasing demand for mixed-use spaces. This has created a movement towards modifying existing spaces to be more flexible and adaptive (e.g. so a space can be used for a different purpose during long stretches of inactivity) and to create mixed-use spaces (e.g. having housing, co-working spaces, outdoor areas, a gym, and ground-floor shops or restaurants incorporated in one building).[83,84] "Dead" spaces are also getting more attention, with a focus on making more efficient use of these spaces, such as turning an alleyway into a patio area or parking lot into a pop-up shop.

2.3 Initiatives, Strategies, and Practices to Support Core Areas

The literature scan explored solutions being implemented to support core areas, and interview participants were asked about the practices, initiatives, and strategies being used and tested to enhance their core areas. Themes of strategies being implemented to support core areas included developing partnerships and programs to address homelessness and health issues, promoting development of affordable housing in the core area, investing in beautification, greening of spaces, and public realm improvements, and investing in design changes and initiatives focused on safety and security. Solutions identified through the literature search and interview process also included implementing parking management strategies, supporting small businesses and entrepreneurs, creating tourism, art, culture, and recreation experiences, supporting different uses of spaces, investing in public and active transportation, developing more residential buildings in the core area, developing marketing and promotional strategies, and supporting the renovation and repurposing of vacant or underutilized buildings. Additional overarching themes included gathering and using data to inform and assess strategies as well as promoting cross-sector collaboration and coordination.

A summary of each theme is presented below. Themes are organized according to the focus area with the strongest alignment. However, some solutions may be applicable to multiple focus areas.

Assisting People Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Develop Partnerships and Programs to Support Individuals Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Implementing ambassador and outreach programs was identified through the literature scan and interviews as a key strategy for supporting individuals in the core area experiencing homelessness and health issues and addressing concerns regarding safety and security. These types of programs were used to provide a variety of supports, including street outreach, case management, picking up drug paraphernalia, conflict mediation and resolution, developing trust and relationships with individuals, providing food and basic needs items, and connecting individuals to appropriate services. One interview participant noted the Tribal Council in their area also implemented an Indigenous specific outreach program. Additional strategies identified by interview participants to support individuals in the core area experiencing homelessness and health issues included developing a mental health and addictions strategy, developing a plan to end homelessness that is focused on the downtown area, helping applicable community agencies access provincial funding, establishing safe injection sites, creating washroom facilities in the core area individuals experiencing homelessness could easily access, and negotiating with hotels and apartment building owners to secure shelter spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Developing partnerships to implement strategies, address identified issues, and coordinate services was highlighted as being an important approach, with interview participants discussing partnerships across public, private, and non-profit sectors (e.g. private sector security companies, Police, transit enforcement, By-law Officers, BIAs, tourism sector representatives, individuals with lived experience, and social service agencies that support individuals experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health issues). Further, interview participants noted these initiatives used a holistic approach focused on support as opposed to enforcement.

Ensure Affordable Housing Is Developed in the Core Area

Ensuring there is a strong affordable housing market in the core area was identified as an important practice. For example, one interview participant reported their city had identified surplus property in the core area that is being designated for affordable housing, with a requirement of the property sale being that the developer build a medium-density residential property with a mix of affordable, social, and market housing.[1] Developing affordable housing mandates (i.e. inclusionary zoning) that require developers to sell or rent a portion of units below market price as low-income or moderate-income housing, implementing policies that support urban infill (e.g. up-zoning), and developing affordable housing community land trusts were also identified through the literature scan as strategies to support affordable housing in core areas.[85,86] Another recommended solution was restricting land speculation to reduce the escalation of land and housing prices.

Helping People Feel Safe and Secure

Invest in Beautification, Greening Spaces, and Public Realm Improvements

The literature scan and interviews demonstrated core areas are also investing in public space improvements. Examples of improvement initiatives included beautification, landscaping, and streetscape improvements (including using beautification to mitigate the impacts of construction), temporary amenities for pedestrians (e.g. firepits in winter to warm up, decorative and ornamental lighting, cleaning spaces), providing incentives for property and storefront improvements, "adopt-a-block" programs to engage residents in keeping areas clean, safe, and attractive, creating formal downtown design guidelines for cohesive streetscapes or plans to improve public spaces, implementing shade guidelines in parks to ensure sun protection, developing studies and recommendations regarding thermal comfort and sunlight at street level, implementing policies to maintain heritage buildings, and investing in core area vibrancy infrastructure and amenities. For example, Calgary has approved funding for capital projects that improve public spaces and vibrancy.[87]

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[1] This approach is being implemented in St. Catharines, with more information available at: https://www.stcatharines.ca/en/news/index.aspx?feedId=b0165e24-355d-46e4-8ce3-0fb066f4f843&newsId=7469831d-bf8f-4e60-8891-8b17b550b596

Ongoing investments in core area capital improvement projects and plans were also identified by interview participants (e.g. for bridges, underpasses, sidewalks, road repairs, cycling tracks, and anchor projects), as well as leveraging natural resources to create outdoor amenities (e.g. creating a walkway along the river while implementing flood protection measures). Further, interview participants reported initiatives to develop more parks and green spaces in their core areas, including identifying streets for permanent closure and conversion into public spaces and parks, tree planting and urban forest initiatives, and improving or expanding park spaces. One interview participant reported their city now has a dedicated supervisor who oversee all work related to horticulture, beautification, and repairs, and that this approach has been valuable. Overall, it is important to note that beautification, greening, and streetscape improvements were identified not only as a way to help people feel safer and more comfortable, but also as a means to attract more residents, tourists, and businesses to core areas.

Invest in Design Changes and Initiatives That Promote Safety and Security

Results from the literature scan and interviews indicate core areas are implementing a variety of strategies to help residents and visitors feel safer and address perceptions of public safety. Specific types of initiatives included providing grant funding to enhance lighting and security in spaces accessible by the public, developing a long-term plan for city lighting and architectural lighting, developing bystander training for businesses and organizations, creating public education campaigns (e.g. to encourage reporting of concerns, to address perceptions of safety in the core area, to promote inclusion, etc.), implementing clean and safe programs, engaging public and private sector partners to create a security action plan for the core area, and promoting resident engagement through community safety committees. Increasing the presence of Police and/or security personnel was also identified as a strategy being implemented to create an improved sense of safety, particularly through increased bike units and foot patrols, with one interview participant noting the development of a safety hub in the core area for coordination between local enforcement agencies (e.g. Police, transit enforcement, By-law Officers, etc.).

Creating an Environment for Businesses to Be Successful

Implement Strategies to Manage Parking

One strategy identified through the literature scan and interviews to create an environment in the core area that supports businesses and attracting visitors was developing strategies to manage parking in the core area. Practices used to attract visitors entering the core area via private vehicle included offering free parking or providing incentives to the private sector to offer free or reduced fee parking in lots that are underutilized on evenings and weekends, as well as maintaining accessible parking spaces and providing a map of these locations.

Further, strategies identified to help manage core area parking to support businesses included reconfiguring parking to create designated curbside pickup and deliveries for restaurants and retailers (e.g. 10 minute parking areas), removing minimum parking requirements for non-residential uses, constructing new parking lots or garages, and building multilevel garages at key transit locations in the city periphery to reduce the number of cars entering the core area and promote public transit as the preferred way to enter the city centre.

Support Small Businesses and Entrepreneurial Projects

Practices used to create an environment that supports attraction and retention of small businesses and entrepreneurs in core areas identified through the literature scan and interviews included offering micro-grants and other forms of funding, helping small businesses and entrepreneurs access existing grant and funding opportunities, implementing initiatives to help small businesses develop an online presence and business platform, and offering tax incentives to help small businesses control their operating costs (e.g. offering a grant to cover a portion of a business's taxes, capping annual property tax increases for small businesses, etc.). Coordination with construction happening in the core area to ensure people are able to still access businesses was also identified by one of the interview participants. In addition, creating a small business advocate position in the municipality was noted as a way to ensure small businesses have a known point of contact that can assist with navigating applicable rules, policies, and regulations, work as a liaison with other City departments, and help create strategies to support small businesses. Further, two interview participants identified their core areas had developed a working group specifically focused on supporting core area small businesses.

Further, to create a healthy start-up environment that supports entrepreneurship as well as the development of tech and innovation sectors, it was identified through the literature scan that core areas are focused on creating innovation hubs, spaces for business incubators and accelerators, co-working spaces, and are offering incentives for entrepreneurs and startups to move to the core area like financial incentives, subsidies, or free desk space for their businesses. Campaigns are also being used to attract startups and entrepreneurs to core areas. For example, the Downtown Cleveland Alliance has developed a campaign to encourage minority entrepreneurs to open a business downtown and help them grow.[88]

Attracting More People to the Core Area

Create Tourism, Art, Culture, and Recreation Experiences

Supporting the tourism, art, culture, and recreation sector was identified as a key strategy for revitalizing and attracting residents and tourists to core areas through the literature scan and interviews. Examples of initiatives included: commissioning public art projects; investing in core area arts, culture, and recreation capital projects like event arenas, convention centres, sport facilities, and theatre spaces; utilizing existing event spaces for programming; retrofitting empty buildings or underutilized land into public areas that include entertainment, dining, market, park, and recreation spaces; offering free events on evenings and weekends; funding and expanding public festivals (e.g. Bluesfest, Ribfest), arts programming, and cultural events; hosting farmers' markets and seasonal markets; hosting block parties; and working with local arts and culture organizations and business associations to implement a variety of activations and placemaking initiatives in public spaces, such as street and busking performances, live music, murals, physical activity programming (e.g. yoga, Zumba) art exhibitions or walks, kids programming, and temporary furniture and dining areas. It is important to note that while activations were identified as a way to attract visitors, they were also identified as an important strategy for promoting a sense of safety in core areas.

Core areas are also focused on ensuring programming is being implemented year round and creating winter programming or amenities to maintain visitor attraction during the colder months and promote their core area as a "winter destination" (e.g. creating a larger-scale winter festival, offering heating elements in public spaces, etc.). Further, some core areas have created or are looking at developing specific arts and entertainment cultural districts or cultural corridors along specific streets. Developing policies to support the film industry was also mentioned by one interview participant. Overall, these initiatives are intended to create more spaces and events that extend the time people stay in the core area outside of work hours, as well as celebrate local culture and support core area businesses.

Implement Policy and Zoning Changes to Support Different Use of Spaces

Changes to policies, zoning by-laws, and regulations are being used to support the changing needs of core areas and allow for more flexible and innovative use of spaces that help activate them, such as outdoor patios and dining, activities in the street, parklets, pop-up shops, sidewalk sales, and open-air markets. Specifically, strategies identified through the literature scan and interviews to promote new or flexible use of spaces included reducing or eliminating patio permit fees, extending allowed patio hours and extending or removing seasonal patio limits, streamlining permitting processes and reducing "red tape," modifying rules about where food trucks can operate, reducing parking requirements to maximize space for pedestrians, implementing pedestrian only zones (i.e. open streets), extending temporary street closures later into the year (e.g. into early winter), using signage, temporary barricades, and temporary furniture to adapt spaces, widening sidewalks, creating chicanes, and developing side street and parking lot plazas.

Strategies to promote more permanent changes to how specific spaces are used and developed were also identified, including modifying zoning and changing parking minimums to support more mixed-use developments and clustering (i.e. grouping of complementary types of businesses). Overall, the emphasis of these approaches is on creating people-centred spaces that promote walkability and provide amenities people can use in different ways, such as for dining, recreation and entertainment programming, and active transportation.

Invest in Public and Active Transportation

Improved public and active transportation was identified through the literature scan and interviews as a strategy that can help inject core areas with more energy and opportunities, make them more accessible to workers, visitors, and residents, and promote core area development and investment. Initiatives to improve public and active transportation included: investing in transit infrastructure improvements (e.g. a rapid transit system, bicycle lanes, pedestrian trails, and maintaining transit hubs, facilities, and underground or sky pedestrian paths), transit expansions (e.g. two-way all day GO Transit), and greener options; adjusting scheduling and connections to meet changing user needs; and adopting technology-driven solutions.

Creating a transit and cycling network that connects outer areas to the city centre and integrating fares and services across transit systems were also identified as strategies to help make the core area more accessible to more people and attract transit users. Interview participants also reported implementing active transit projects such as an e-scooter pilot, a downtown cross country ski trail pilot, a bicycle valet program with free bicycle parking, and developing policies to discourage commuting by private vehicle. Further, one interview participant reported implementing a traffic management initiative to help make public transit more reliable and address traffic flow issues. Another strategy identified through the literature scan included using data to ensure local transit options align with the areas where people are going to work, business schedules, and supporting visitors and residents to come into or stay in the core area for recreation and leisure activities outside of work hours.

Promote Development of Residential Buildings in the Core Area

A common theme that arose from the literature scan and interview participants was the need to increase and promote residential development in core areas as a way to attract more people to downtowns, increase intensification, and address a range of housing needs or gaps. Specifically, a common solution identified for supporting the development of more housing in core areas included developing multi-residential investment programs that offer financial incentives such as tax breaks, grants, or low-interest loans for applicable residential development, renewal, and conversion projects (e.g. grants and bonuses for converting commercial units to residential units or adding units to an existing residential building). For example, Calgary plans to transform vacant offices in the core area into residences, with financial incentives being provided to building owners to convert unused spaces.[89]

Additional strategies included implementing master plans and flexible zoning to allow for retrofitting existing buildings into housing, ensuring core area housing is a strategic priority for the City, and working with developers to transform underutilized buildings into medium and high density, multipurpose residential and commercial buildings that support a mix of living, leisure, and shopping. One interview participant also noted their community had created a Development Permit System to streamline the permitting process to promote residential development, while another identified their core area was completing a market analysis to explore options for bringing more residential development, infill, and interest to the core.

Promote the Core Area Through Marketing Campaigns and Strategies

Core areas are implementing marketing and promotion campaigns to attract talent and draw visitors. For example, marketing strategies identified through the literature scan included partnering with key stakeholders to develop a campaign showcasing the core area or core area businesses, leveraging media outlets and social media to promote messaging and stories, offering welcome packages for new residents, students, businesses, and startups with special offers and information about core area businesses and attractions, and creating a downtown loyalty program with special offers.[90,91] Encouraging visitors to share their experiences in the core area through social media and promoting current events in the core area to key stakeholders were also identified as valuable promotional practices.

One interview participant noted that reacquainting residents with the core area is also a valuable strategy for helping to address stereotypes or perceptions of the core area, while another interview participant reported their BIA had a large team focused on branding for the core area. Further, another interview participant reported that while they have a city-wide committee focused on tourism development and an events and trades alliance, it is important for the core area to work with these groups to identify how their work can benefit the downtown and bring people attending events outside the core into the downtown area. Further, cities and BIAs are leveraging people's interest in supporting local small businesses by creating shop local campaigns that help residents learn about and easily find core area small businesses and offer customers financial incentives to shop locally. For example, one interview participant reported their BIA offered core area gift cards and downtown dollars to promote spending at core area restaurants and businesses.

Addressing Commercial Vacancy

Renovate, Renew, and Repurpose Vacant Buildings

To address commercial vacancy, core areas are applying a variety of strategies to repurpose vacant buildings into more flexible or mixed-use spaces, which aligns close with the trend towards more integrated live-work-leisure spaces that support walkability and convenience. Specifically, practices that emerged through the literature scan and interviews included supporting the development and conversion of vacant or underutilized buildings for other purposes using levies, tax-increment financing, and financial incentive programs, expediting permitting and inspection processes, defining areas within the core where approvals and regulations are modified to make it easier for developers to upgrade buildings and businesses to open (e.g. providing development permit exemptions for exterior alterations and additions for businesses and buildings in the specified area), and forming partnerships with the real estate sector to develop creative ideas and solutions for how office assets are used. Further, interview participants reported developing strategies to promote more temporary pop-up shops in vacant retail spaces in the core area, such as partnerships with building owners and offering incentives to put pop-up shops in these spaces. It was also suggested through the literature scan that underused and vacant spaces could be redeveloped into park areas to increase access to and address demand for more green and open spaces in core areas.

Other

Gather and Use Data to Inform and Assess Strategies

Data-focused solutions are also being used to support core areas, with a focus on ensuring data is being collected to help inform decision-making and assess implemented strategies. Specific approaches identified through the literature scan and interviews included creating crowdsourcing platforms to gather information from residents and key stakeholders, creating partnerships focused on gathering data (e.g. a partnership with a real estate association and BIA to monitor foot traffic and perceptions of the core area, completing studies on public life and spaces), implementing smart city concepts, and conducting research to identify best practices and align core area programs and services accordingly.

Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration, Coordination, and Support

Through the literature scan and interviews, strengthened cooperation and coordination across sectors was identified as a best practice approach for ensuring success in core areas. Specifically, eight interview participants highlighted collaboration as an essential approach, with one participant noting that prior to developing more formal partnerships, "each group was doing their own thing, and it never added up to much," that coordination is making a big difference, and there is greater impact as stakeholders now have similar goals and objectives.

Examples of collaborative approaches included: increasing cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector as well as partnering with post-secondary institutions to develop locations downtown, conduct research, or help develop creative and innovative ideas for addressing core area issues (e.g. Calgary 9 Block Program); developing partnerships to create joint-use entrepreneurial and cultural spaces in the core area; developing collaboration between the municipality, building owners, and BIAs to address identified needs; and gathering support for core area revitalization plans from across sectors. One interview participant reported developing partnerships beyond city hall, such as a cross-community leadership structure that includes the Economic Development Corporation, the City's land development corporation, and BIAs to help develop a core area economic strategy to revitalize the downtown core.

Further, interview participants reported developing a new downtown renewal group, increased coordination between the municipality, BIA, Chamber of Commerce, and tourism association, working more closely with social service providers, creating an alliance with all (over 100) downtown area partners to animate and promote the core area, creating a city centre core partnership to coordinate work, and facilitating multi-sector action plans that use a comprehensive approach to supporting the core area. Additionally, creating more public-private partnerships and encouraging community participation were identified as important strategies for engaging companies and industries in driving meaningful change and ensuring resident voices are helping to shape the future of the core area.

2.4 Use of Place-Based Versus System-Based Approaches

Interview participants were asked whether they use a place-based approach or a system-based approach to address issues in the core area. A place-based approach was defined as one where there are different initiatives implemented that target specific issues occurring in a specific area of the core. In comparison, a system-based approach was defined as one where issues are addressed across the entire area of the core.

All respondents noted that they use a combination of the two approaches. Respondents explained they have initiatives or programs that are implemented across the core area to address complex challenges and issues experienced in the core area. However, respondents also noted that often there are "hot spots" that require a place-based approach to address a specific issue or challenge.

Of the 12 respondents, 10 explained that their use of a place-based approach was often reactionary. They explained they would often find themselves "doubling down" on efforts and resources to address certain areas. While successful at times, there were concerns that the approach could be "haphazard" in its application and lack a strategic approach. However, Denver and Calgary explained that they used a place-based approach purposefully and strategically.

For example, in Denver, if there is an area with safety and security challenges, they immediately target that area using a place-based approach; they use some type of activation to bring more people to that area, bring in temporary lighting to brighten up the space, and work with ground floor properties to make them more noticeable and vibrant. Respondents also noted that they use a place-based approach when a specific area has a unique need. For example, in Hamilton, a loan program was implemented to improve buildings in areas where the need was the highest.

The use of a system-based approach was used to address complex challenges that affected the entire core area such as safety, mental health, and homelessness. Respondents tended to use a system-based approach due to the complexity of the issues and the multi-faceted approach required to address them. Respondents explained the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social, health, and safety issues in their core areas and they were struggling to find adequate solutions.

2.5 Approaches to Coordination and Management

During the interview process, respondents were asked about their approach to coordination and management of the core area. The approach varied significantly across the communities.

Of the 12 respondents, three reported there was no centralization or coordination of efforts, initiatives, or services in the core area. These communities reported that they were experiencing a number of challenges due to service areas and community partners working in silos. Each described that they were exploring how to improve their coordination and collaboration.

Four respondents described their approach as collaborative, where service areas and partners worked together to address core area needs. Respondents explained that for this approach to be effective, all service areas and community partners needed to be willing to take responsibility for what was within their scope of work and also be open to addressing what would be considered on the "fringe" of their mandate.

Two communities had a core area implementation group that was comprised of various service areas to support coordinated and centralized efforts. These communities explained that while each service area was responsible for the tasks within their own mandate, there was an expectation of coordination and collaboration. By bringing service areas together through the core area implementation group, it encouraged innovation, supported collective approaches to addressing challenges, and raised awareness of what others were doing in the core.

The remaining three communities either had or were in the process of developing a specific service area related to the core area that would serve as a central point of contact and coordination. These communities had or intended to have a coordinator who would serve as the main point of contact for all matters related to the core area.

2.6 Evaluation of Core Area Initiatives, Strategies, and Practices

Interview participants were asked whether they had an evaluation framework to measure the work being done in their core area. Of the 12 communities, Montreal was the only community that had an evaluation framework. The evaluation framework was developed in 2017 as part of their Building on Momentum: Action Plan for the Downtown Strategy.[92]

Eight communities reported they measured various metrics related to the core area, however, they noted that the collection and reporting of these metrics was not completed in a coordinated or systematic way or as part of a larger framework related to the core area. Three communities reported not conducting any measurement of core area related initiatives or actions.

In total, seven of the twelve communities noted that they were either in the process of or interested in developing an evaluation framework to measure their efforts in the core area in a coordinated way that would demonstrate the collective impact of their efforts.

2.7 Additional Recommendations

During the interviews, participants were asked to share any other recommendations they had related to enhancing a city's downtown area. Below is a summary of the suggestions offered by interview participants.

1. Ensure Strong Communication, Engagement, and Collaboration – Interview participants reiterated the importance of maintaining direct contact and communication with key stakeholders so they are aware of what is happening in the core area (e.g. maintaining a downtown office website, communicating directly with businesses). Further, it was identified that while the City plays an important role in developing strategies and plans, collaboration, partner engagement, and the support of stakeholders across sectors are critical for creating community buy-in, developing creative solutions, implementing strategies or initiatives, and ensuring the activities of downtown stakeholders are mutually reinforcing. One interview participant specifically highlighted the important backbone role the City plays in facilitating service coordination, enabling collaboration, and creating support for the core area. Further, it was noted that collaboration allows for the sharing of ideas.

2. Develop Core Area Specific Plans and Strategies – Interview participants discussed creating plans and strategies specific to the core area as valuable tools to help guide the work in their downtown areas and for aligning stakeholders both internally and externally and ensuring effective use of resources.

One interview participant noted the City has a unit specifically devoted to implementing their downtown plan, while another noted the development of the downtown has been made a strategic priority by the City. Further, one interview participant reported their Downtown Creative Cluster Plan was used as a way to understand the strengths and assets of the core area and create a roadmap the City can use to help leverage those assets.

3. **Focus on Mixed-Use Core Areas** – Support the development of a core area economy that does not rely exclusively on one sector and promotes a mix of workers, residents, students, and tourists was suggested by interview participants. One interview participant described this approach as "cultivating that one stop shop" that offers a livable, walkable downtown. Further, interview participants highlighted the importance of mixed-use policies that help make core areas vibrant, promote residential and office development, and attract young people and young companies downtown.

4. **Ensure Adequate Financial Investment in the Core Area** – Securing adequate financial investment to implement developed plans, strategies, and interventions was reported by interview participants as crucial to realizing change and creating impact in the core area. One participant noted that cities can develop strategies or pilots, but that pilots won't transform the downtown and that significant financial investment is needed to create strong interventions. Further, another interview participant noted that when cities prioritize their downtown and commit to core area improvements, the economic gains experienced by the core will also benefit other parts of the city.

5. **Manage Expectations** – A couple of interview participants also noted the importance of managing expectations of core area stakeholders, as stakeholders can have varying interests and needs. Further, it was noted that it is important to manage expectations about results, as it can take time for initiatives to create measurable change.

6. **Use Activation Strategies to Improve the Core Area** – Using activations was reported by two interview participants as being a key strategy for improving and bringing more people to the core area, with one participant noting the importance of being flexible, open, accommodating, and creative with the way public spaces are used.

Additional suggestions provided by interview participants included focusing on customer service and experience, finding ways to reduce barriers, and working collaboratively with other municipalities to advocate to higher levels of government for additional funding and assistance to address key issues impacting core areas.

Section 3.0 Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis

This section of the report presents the results of the gap analysis, which compares the actions included in the Core Area Action Plan and what other communities are implementing to support their core areas. The gap analysis is organized according to the five focus areas outlined in the research scope and the themes identified through the literature scan and interviews of strategies, initiatives, and practices being implemented in core areas.

For each theme, a list of corresponding strategies and activities already being implemented or planned through the Core Area Action Plan are listed along with opportunities for further exploration based on gaps identified through the research process. Core Area Action Plan actions were mapped to a single theme based on the strongest alignment, however, it is important to note some Core Area Action Plan actions may contribute to more than one theme or focus area.

It should be noted that there are initiatives and actions being undertaken in the core area that are not included in the Core Area Action Plan. The inclusion of these initiatives in the gap analysis was outside of the scope of this project. Please see Section 4.0 on next steps related to the consideration of these additional initiatives.

Assisting People Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Solution: Ensure Affordable Housing Is Developed in the Core Area

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 5. Establish Headlease Program.
- 22. Create new housing units with supportive living arrangements.
- 24. Complete and implement *Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan.*
- 51. Regenerate London and Middlesex Housing Corporation housing stock.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Explore planning permissions, policies, tools, and investments to encourage the development of affordable housing in the Core Area.
- Identify surplus properties and convert them into affordable housing.

These and other opportunities are being pursued in work undertaken on the Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy.

Solution: Develop Partnerships and Programs to Support Individuals Experiencing Homelessness and Health Issues

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 1. Strengthen delivery of Coordinated Informed Response Program.
- 2. Implement Housing Stability Week pilot project.
- 3. Implement early-morning Coordinated Informed Response Program.
- 4. Implement breakfast Coordinated Informed Response Program.
- 19. Establish permanent Coordinated Informed Response Program.
- 20. Establish more daytime resting spaces.
- 21. Establish Core Area stabilization spaces.
- 23. Expand case management approach for helping vulnerable populations.
- 53. Open permanent supervised consumption facility in appropriate location and close existing temporary facility.
- 57. Use CityStudio to explore innovative approaches to addressing Core Area social issues.
- 58. Work with surrounding communities to establish a regional strategy for addressing vulnerable populations.
- 59. Explore opportunities to partner with agencies to provide a Core Area Resource Centre.
- 69. Inventory social services in the Core Area.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- There were no additional opportunities identified.

Helping People Feel Safe and Secure

Solution: Invest in Beautification, Greening Spaces, and Public Realm Improvements

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 12. Explore new ways to support Core Area property owners to dispose of found syringes.
- 13. Conduct three-week Core Area By-law Enforcement blitz.
- 14. Prioritize Core Area building and sign permits.
- 16. Provide incentives for installing uplighting on privately-owned buildings.
- 31. Utilize existing Façade Improvement Loan Program to incent decorative gates through existing Community Improvement Plans.
- 33. Proactive enforcement of *Property Standards By-law.*
- 36. Establish, implement and regularly monitor a higher clean standard for the Core Area.

- 37. Implement new pressure wash program for sidewalks and civic spaces.
- 47. Create an infrastructure art and beautification program.
- 50. Establish new Core Area garbage and recycling collection program.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Assess current initiatives to determine their effectiveness and uptake and make changes where required.

Solution: Invest in Design Changes and Initiatives That Promote Safety and Security

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 6. Double foot patrol officers in Core Area for a discrete period of time.
- 7. Create new Spotlight Program.
- 8. Enhance Service London Portal to allow for complaints, concerns, and enquiries on Core Area issues.
- 10. Stage police command vehicle in strategic locations.
- 13. Conduct three-week Core Area By-law Enforcement blitz.
- 25. Create four-year Core Area Ambassador pilot program.
- 26. Undertake Core Area safety audit.
- 27. Establish new storefront space for foot patrol, By-law Enforcement Officers and public washrooms.
- 28. Increase London Police Service foot patrol.
- 29. Proactive compliance program.
- 30. Develop and deliver safety training for business owners, employees and residents.
- 32. Undertake safety blitz for aggressive driving in the Core Area.
- 54. Provide grants to implement safety audit recommendations on privately-owned property through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan.*
- 55. Implement safety audit recommendations on public property.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Design a long-term plan for enhanced city and architectural lighting.
- Develop and implement bystander intervention training for businesses and organizations.

Creating an Environment for Businesses to Be Successful

Solution: Implement Strategies to Manage Parking

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 18. Identify opportunities for new parking spaces in the Core Area.
- 43. Experiment with temporary free municipal parking.
- 65. Discourage perpetual extension of temporary surface parking lots in Core Area.
- 68. Plan and save funds for a public parking garage.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Promote public transit as the preferred way to access the Core Area.
- Investigate how City loading policies can integrate short-stay (e.g. 10 min.) curbside pickup and delivery spaces, implemented as a pandemic response for restaurants and retailers.
- Promote cycling and walking (as well as transit).

Solution: Support Small Businesses and Entrepreneurial Projects

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 34. Package Core Area patio, signage, licensing and other regular business processes.
- 63. Eliminate application fees for encroachments, signage and patios in the Core Area through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan.*

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Explore ways to encourage the development of innovation hubs, spaces for business incubators and accelerators, and co-working spaces to encourage start-up businesses in the Core Area.
- Offer incentives for entrepreneurs and startups to move to the Core Area.
- Develop programs to encourage entrepreneurs to open a business in the Core Area and support their growth.
- Create a Core Area small business advocate position to ensure small businesses have a known point of contact that can assist with navigating applicable rules, policies, and regulations, work as a liaison with other City departments, and help create strategies to support small businesses.

Attracting More People to the Core Area

Solution: Promote Development of Residential Buildings in the Core Area

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 52. Complete and implement the *Housing Stability Plan.*

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Transform underutilized buildings in the Core Area into medium and high density, multipurpose residential and commercial buildings that support a mix of living, leisure, and shopping.
- Support and encourage applicable residential development, renewal, and conversion projects through financial incentives and planning permissions, policies, and tools.

Solution: Create Tourism, Art, Culture, and Recreation Experiences

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 15. Streamline event processes.
- 17. Proactively recruit food trucks in dedicated area along Dundas Place.
- 44. Increase range and intensity of programming in Core Area.
- 45. Activate spaces and places with bistro chairs and tables.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Investigate retrofitting empty buildings or underutilized land into public areas that include entertainment, dining, market, park, and recreation spaces.
- Promote the core area as a destination all year-round (e.g. host a winter festival, offer heating elements in public spaces).
- Remake the Core Area into a destination for residents and visitors with free events, public art and interactive art installations, live music, dining, and shopping experiences.

Solution: Promote the Core Area Through Marketing Campaigns and Strategies

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 35. Brand uniforms and equipment for all City staff providing service in the Core Area.
- 42. Fund four-year Core Area "construction dollars" pilot program.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Expand the targeted campaign to encourage residents and visitors to share their experiences in the Core Area and what they enjoy about the Core Area.
- Launch a campaign that "reimagines" the Core Area, leveraging media outlets and social media to showcase Core Area businesses, events, activities, and opportunities.
- Investigate the development of welcome packages for new residents, students, businesses, and startups with special offers and information about Core Area businesses and attractions.

Solution: Implement Policy and Zoning Changes to Support Different Use of Spaces

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 62. Eliminate encroachment fees for patios, signage and awnings in the Core Area through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan.*
- 64. Eliminate fees for use of on-street parking spaces for temporary restaurant patios through *Core Area Community Improvement Plan.*

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Review policies, zoning by-laws, and regulations to identify changes that can help reduce barriers to and increase opportunities for creating more flexible, multi-use public and private spaces in the Core Area.
- Consider extending or removing seasonal patio limits and extending allowed patio hours in the Core Area.
- Identify opportunities to further streamline the permitting process for Core Area businesses.
- Consider reducing or removing parking requirements in support of maximizing space for pedestrians and activations in the Core Area.
- While some open street initiatives may be in place, explore further implementation of temporary or permanent pedestrian only zones (e.g. side street plazas, parking lot plazas) and extension of existing temporary street closures in the Core Area later into the year.
- Invest in temporary furniture, signage, and barricades that can be used to adapt and enhance public or private spaces in the Core Area for pedestrian use.
- Explore additional tactical urbanism strategies (e.g. curb extensions) in the Core Area to create more people-friendly streets and spaces.

Solution: Invest in Public and Active Transportation

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 66. Continue to enhance transit service to the Core Area.
- 67. Continue to improve cycling infrastructure in the Core Area.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Consider additional opportunities to improve walkability in the Core Area (e.g. pedestrian trails, enclosed walkways, placement of transit stops).
- Encourage development of green transit solutions.
- Conduct an assessment of Core Area transit schedules and connections to ensure alignment with resident, student, visitor, and business needs and to support people staying in the Core Area for recreation and leisure during evenings and weekends.
- Explore technology-driven smart mobility solutions that can help to enhance public transit in the Core Area.
- Assess cycling and transit infrastructure plans to identify whether additional opportunities exist to improve connections between the Core Area and outer areas of the city.
- Pilot active transportation projects in the Core Area (e.g. bike share, ski trails, free secure bicycle valet parking).
- Identify strategies that support increased integration between modes of transit or transit systems (e.g. integration of fares, connection points) to increase accessibility to the Core Area.
- Consider policy options that encourage the use of public and active transit and promote cycling in the Core Area.

Addressing Commercial Vacancy

Solution: Renovate, Renew, and Repurpose Vacant Buildings

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- No related actions specified in the Core Area Action Plan.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Consider opportunities to expedite permitting and inspection processes to prioritize renovation or redevelopment of vacant buildings in the Core Area, including providing development permit exemptions in the Core Area for building upgrades, exterior alterations, and additions.
- Assess options for providing incentives to developers to renovate and repurpose vacant buildings in the Core Area, with a focus on flexible and mixed-use spaces, including reducing or removing levies, using tax-increment financing, and implementing financial incentive programs (e.g. low-interest loans, grants).
- Work with owners of vacant Core Area buildings to create opportunities for temporary leases (e.g. for pop-up shops), including offering incentives to building owners.
- Partner with real estate sector leaders to better understand trends and identify creative solutions for use of vacant or underutilized office buildings in the Core Area.
- Explore alternative uses for land with vacant buildings, such as redevelopment into parks and green spaces.

These and other opportunities are being pursued in work undertaken on the Strategy to Reduce Core Area Vacancy.

Other

Solution: Promote Cross-Sector Collaboration, Coordination, and Support

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- 48. Engage Core Area businesses to lead, volunteer or fund initiatives.
- 49. Explore partnership opportunities with educational institutions for immersive learning in Core Area.
- 56. Implement Core Area digital solutions.
- 57. Use CityStudio to explore innovative approaches to addressing Core Area social issues.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- Explore partnership opportunities focused on developing joint-use spaces in the Core Area (e.g. a joint entrepreneurial and cultural space).
- Identify additional opportunities for public-private partnerships in the Core Area.

Solution: Gather and Use Data to Inform and Assess Strategies

Core Area Action Plan Actions

- No related actions specified in the Core Area Action Plan.

Opportunities for Further Exploration

- While some forms of virtual public engagement and means of gathering stakeholder feedback may already be in place, explore the use of crowdsourcing platforms to gather information from Core Area residents, visitors, and key stakeholders.
- Develop data-focused partnerships with sector leaders (e.g. real estate, BIA, tourism, etc.) to identify valuable Core Area measures, collect data, and monitor trends (e.g. foot traffic, perceptions, vacancy, etc.).

Section 4.0 Conclusion & Next Steps

4.1 Summary Conclusion

This report provides a summary of the key findings from the literature scan and interviews conducted with other communities focused on exploring trends impacting core areas, future predictions for core areas, how other communities are implementing, coordinating, and evaluating the work in their core areas, and practices, initiatives, and strategies that could enrich the Core Area Action Plan.

London's Experience is Similar to that of Other Communities

The research results suggest London is not alone in the types of challenges facing the Core Area related to people experiencing homelessness and health issues, safety and security, creating an environment for businesses to be successful, attracting more people, and commercial vacancy, with several communities sharing through the interview processes that they are struggling with similar challenges.

Communities Have Struggled With Moving to Implementation

Based on the results of the interview process, it is important to note that while community plans provided an important tool for understanding the solutions intended for use in other communities, in some cases, differences existed between what was proposed in a community plan and activity implementation. It was found that for a variety of reasons, not all activities included in a plan were being implemented or implemented as outlined (e.g. due to changing circumstances, the plans being focused on long-term strategies versus short-term actions, etc.), and few plans had results or relevant data readily available to adequately assess the scale and scope of implementation or the effectiveness of the intervention.

Other Communities are Interested in Learning from London

Specifically, the findings show that the activities outlined in the Core Area Action Plan align closely with the common types of solutions being implemented in other communities to support their core areas, and that in some instances, London is already doing more than other communities to address specific areas of focus, such as supporting individuals experiencing homelessness and health issues and promoting safety and security. Further, several communities indicated they were interested in learning more about what London is doing to improve the Core Area and looked to London as a best practice community.

There are Opportunities for Further Exploration in London

While the results of the gap analysis demonstrate there are solutions being used in other communities that are not directly addressed in the Core Area Action Plan (e.g. to address building vacancies and collect data) and opportunities exist to enhance

the Core Area Action Plan that require further exploration, the results also indicate the Core Area Action Plan provides a strong foundation London can build on.

As highlighted by the interview results, it is also important that consideration be given to developing a unified, cross-sector approach for reimagining the Core Area that goes beyond collaborating on a specific project, but rather ensures all stakeholders understand, are excited about, and actively support a common vision for the Core Area, know what they are working towards, and are contributing to the common vision through coordinated, consistent, and persistent actions.

4.2 Next Steps for Consideration

Next steps for consideration include:

- Further Investigating Opportunities – Opportunities for further exploration have been identified through the research. It is recommended that City of London Service Areas or Core Area Teams review the opportunities and determine whether an action should be added to the Core Area Action Plan. Consideration should be given to further refining the *Opportunities for Further Exploration* to consider core area initiatives outside of the Core Area Action Plan.
- Updating the Core Area Action Plan – The Core Area Action Plan was developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, there have been actions and initiatives undertaken in the Core Area beyond what it is in the Core Area Action Plan. With an update, the Core Area Action Plan would serve as a comprehensive, "living" document that outlines the actions being undertaken in the Core Area.
- Defining Scope, Scale, and Standards for Core Area Action Plan Actions – It is recommended that standards or targets be further defined regarding the scope, scale, and standard of each activity in the Core Area Action Plan. Setting standards and measuring results for each activity will help to ensure there is a clear understanding of what the community is working towards and whether it is making a difference.
- Identifying Opportunities Not Yet Tested in Similar Size Cities – The research concluded there is "no silver bullet" being implemented in similar size communities in Canada to address Core Area challenges. It is recommended that creative and innovative made-in-London solutions be identified and piloted. These solutions would be identified through consultation with City of London staff, stakeholders, and possibility similar size communities globally.
- Developing a Community of Practice – There is an opportunity to bring together similar size communities from across Canada who have similar challenges to brainstorm, share experiences, and develop solutions. This community of practice would provide a forum for deeper discussion, learning, and problem-solving.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Pre-pandemic, were there any practices, initiatives, and strategies you implemented that were successful in enhancing your downtown area?[2]

2. What are you doing now that has been effective in your downtown area?

3. What new practices, initiatives, and strategies do you plan to try and test in your downtown area?

4. Have you tried any practices, initiatives, or strategies to enhance the downtown area that have not worked? Why do you think they were not successful?
   a. Prior to the pandemic?
   b. During the pandemic?

5. Are you using a place-based approach to address specific issues in certain locations or are you using a system-based approach to address all issues across the entire downtown area? Please explain further.

6. How do municipal service areas in your downtown area work? Do they all work separately or is there one central point of contact for all issues in the downtown?

7. Do you have structures in place, within the municipality, to support coordination in the downtown area? If so, could you please describe them?

8. What practices, initiatives, or strategies are in place, if any, to allow for coordination in the downtown area?

9. Do you have an evaluation framework, evaluation plan, or dashboard to measure the work being done in the downtown area?

10. Have you heard of or know of other communities who you believe are doing a good job of downtown coordination (i.e. who's doing it right in your opinion)?

11. Are there any other recommendations related to enhancing a city's downtown area that you would like to share with me?

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[2] Please consider your responses to questions 1 – 3 in the context of the following areas: 1. Assisting people experiencing homelessness and health issues; 2. Helping people feel safe and secure; 3. Creating an environment for businesses to be successful; 4. Attracting more residents, tourists, or businesses to the downtown area; 5. Addressing commercial vacancy; and 6. Other initiatives and focus areas.

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