

Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee

To: Chair and Members
Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee
From: Scott Mathers, MPA, P. Eng
Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development
Subject: Inventory of Current Actions Addressing Core Area Land and Building Vacancy
Date: June 7, 2022

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Economic Development, the report dated June 7, 2022, with respect to the Inventory of Current Actions addressing Core Area Land and Building Vacancy, **BE RECEIVED**.

Executive Summary

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of City of London actions being implemented in 2022, by City staff, that directly and indirectly help to address Core Area land and building vacancy. This inventory is a key deliverable in Phase 1: Short-Term Ideas for Action in the Terms of Reference: Scope of Work to Address the Council Resolution from July 6, 2021 that outlines how the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy is to be developed.

Context:

A motion introduced at the June 23, 2021 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee meeting sought to explore all options and all resources at the City's disposal to address two key issues: land ready for development and buildings available to be repurposed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic; and a City goal to achieve the creation of 3,000 new affordable housing units.

Thereafter Municipal Council at its meeting held on July 6, 2021 resolved that the Civic Administration be directed to report back on a proposed strategy that sets out potential tools that may assist in reducing Core Area land and building vacancy.

At its meeting held on May 25, 2021, following from the May 18, 2021 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee Comprehensive Report on Core Area Initiatives, City Council had also directed Civic Administration to report back to on the status of the geographic distribution of parking demand, parking revenue and any recommended modifications or alternatives to the Core Area Action Plan Item #11: Issue request for proposals on Queens Avenue parking lot.

Civic Administration was directed by Council on December 7, 2021 to move forward with a detailed Implementation Plan for the proposed strategy, as outlined in a November 30, 2021 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee report and guided by an adopted Terms of Reference. This project includes a review of existing incentive programs and planning processes to streamline redevelopment in the Core Area, assessing any changes or updates that may be warranted to Our Move Forward, the Downtown Parking Strategy or the Core Area Action Plan [CAAP], address integration with the London Community Recovery Network [LCRN], and evaluate parking demand and supply at a high level. CAAP Item #11: has been integrated into the approved work plan to develop the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Council and staff continue to recognize the importance of actions to support the Core Area. 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 work described in this report.

Linkage to the Climate Emergency Declaration

On April 23, 2019, Municipal Council declared a Climate Emergency. The City's loan and grant programs help support the City's commitment to reducing and mitigating climate change by encouraging and incentivizing intensification in strategic areas in London. These programs help support more intense and efficient use of existing urban lands and infrastructure, and the regeneration of the existing communities.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- March 8, 2022 – Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – Core Area Action Plan 2021 Review
- 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

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Commercial Vacancy Environment

A vibrant Core Area is one where people live, work, and play. Core Area land and building vacancy is connected to the health of the Core Area. There are many micro and macro factors that directly and indirectly influence the perception, location, type, and occurrence and reoccurrence rate of Core Area land and building vacancy. Commercial occupancy is essential for a strong, vibrant, and welcoming Core Area; it brings foot traffic to streets, riders to public transit, diners to restaurants, shoppers to retail corridors and employees to work sites. There is a segment of the population that places strong value on having these features near their homes, tying core area residential development to the state of core area commercial occupancies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on core area vacancy in cities across Canada. London is no exception. Secondary sources suggest London's commercial office vacancy rate is currently hovering around 20%, a 23% year-over-year increase in comparison to 2020. News reports and information tracked by the two Business Improvement Associations in London's Core Area indicate some new retail business activity has occurred. The City of London has no comprehensive database of vacant retail space statistics.

The long-term outlook for commercial real estate is particularly uncertain as tenants consider new and emerging business models.

2.2 Vacancy Research Progress

As previously reported in the March 8, 2022 Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee Core Area Action Plan 2021 Review, a Core Area Action Plan Gap Analysis was completed last year. Its purpose was to explore emerging and evidence-based practices, initiatives, and strategies used elsewhere that could enrich the Core Area Action Plan. One of five focus areas in its Research Scope was addressing commercial vacancy.

The research results suggested 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 concerns about commercial vacancy.

Key findings noted from the research conducted in the Core Area Gap Analysis are as follows:

A general consensus reported in many cities is that commercial 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.

Factors such as a rise in e-commerce, more delivery-oriented retailers and shifting consumer habits have reduced the demand for some brick-and-mortar business locations for many years. Pandemic restrictions on businesses further affected customer visits to, and viability of building-based retail.

To address commercial vacancy, core areas in some cities 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. Specific practices include 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; and forming partnerships with the real estate sector to promote more temporary pop-up shops in vacant retail spaces.

2.3 Current Actions

The Core Area Gap Analysis indicated London's Core Area is in many respects in similar straits as many Canadian cities. In some cases, London has been a leader in economic support programs aimed at maintaining and improving conditions conducive to regeneration of and stemming decline in its urban areas. Therefore, a fundamental foundation for developing London's Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy is to understand what actions are already being undertaken by the City and what impact they may have on reducing commercial vacancies.

Phase 1 of the adopted workplan for the Strategy was to create an inventory of these Current Actions. This information is attached as Appendix A. Key findings are as follows:

- City staff are implementing 35 actions in 2022 that may directly or indirectly address Core Area land and building vacancy as part of City business operations.

- About one-third of the actions are regarded to have a direct impact on Core Area land and building vacancy and two-thirds have an indirect impact.
- The current actions have been themed into six focus areas, representing diverse measures ranging from general policy direction to specific financial assistance available to property owners.
- The 35 actions are grouped according to five ways that current actions reduce Core Area land and building vacancy
- The expected results of the current actions have been distilled into three themes. These may form the basis for how the upcoming Strategy can be devised to target issues noted in the City's inventory of current actions, such as the proportion of direct versus indirect impacts.

As noted in the appended report, these actions may be new or ongoing, and are part of the City of London's current business operations. Included in this report is an analysis of the current actions, how they may contribute to reducing Core Area land and/or building vacancy, and their expected results. From an understanding of what is occurring across the service areas of the Corporation, strategic questions can be addressed, such as: How effective are the actions taken in addressing vacancy issues? What limitations exist? Are measures used elsewhere adaptable to London's circumstances?

There is important work being done by businesses, non-profits, and individuals that may also contribute to reducing Core Area land and building vacancy. For example, through a funding request Council approved in February 2022, the London Economic Development Corporation is undertaking several short term initiatives in its Core Area Pilot Program, in partnership with Old East Village BIA (OEV), Downtown London (MainStreet London/MSL and London Downtown Business Association/LDBA), and the Small Business Centre (SBC). These actions are outside the scope and purpose of this inventory, as defined by the Terms of Reference. However, City of London staff are aware of and connected into these actions, and they are being considered in the comprehensive research being conducted to develop the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy.

Phase 1 will end with an assessment of these actions in an information report targeted for the end of 2022.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

3.1 Current Actions

As the Current Actions are undertaken using existing budgets, financial considerations are accounted for.

3.2 Future Undertakings

As described in the adopted Terms of Reference for this project, Phase 2 consists first of a Core Area Vacancy Study to gather London-specific Core Area vacancy data. This information is necessary for establishing a 2022 baseline condition from which to measure the nature and extent of vacancies to help order priorities of possible interventions to address them, be they extensions of existing City actions, proposed new initiatives, or collaborative partnerships with the work being done by others. Also, an independent expert in real estate market trends, conditions and prospects will be engaged to verify how London's situation in these areas is consistent with or contrasts national trends. Working with City staff to collect, document, and analyze various quantitative and qualitative data regarding land and buildings located in the City's Core Area, landlords and major employers will be contacted regarding their return to in-person work plans and schedules to understand what actions may support their transition.

4.0 Key Issues and Considerations

4.1. Next Steps

The portion of the Core Area Vacancy Study concerning gathering of local market intelligence will overlap with initial quantitative data collection to establish a commercial vacancy database.

Through the summer and fall of 2022 a variety of research and data analysis tasks will continue, to identify and prioritize gaps in addressing core area commercial vacancies and possible measures to address them.

The last stage in this project, scheduled to be undertaken starting in December 2022, is focussed on developing recommendations that define a proposed Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy. The Strategy framework is expected to establish achievable targets for improved commercial occupancy rates, and for potential residential occupancy, in land ready for development and buildings available to be repurposed in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The development of the proposed Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy will be occurring during preparation of 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.

Conclusion

London's Core Area continues to experience the effects of commercial retail and office space vacancies. An inventory undertaken across City service areas indicates there are 35 Current Actions being undertaken by City staff in 2022, to help to address the causes and/or consequences of these vacancies. Two-thirds of these are regarded as having an indirect impact. While these actions proceed, a Core Area vacancy study will establish the baseline quantitative measures and qualitative conditions attributable to commercial vacancies in London's Core Area. Research has begun on a proposed Core Area Land and Buildings Vacancy Reduction Strategy, to be delivered in 2023, which will contain recommendations to aimed at increasing commercial occupancies and options for increased residential occupancies.

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Attachment: Appendix A – Inventory of City of London Actions

Inventory of City of London Actions Currently in Place that Directly or Indirectly Address Core Area Land and Building Vacancy

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Section 1.0: Context & Background

1.1 Core Area Land and Building Vacancy in London

A vibrant Core Area is one where people live, work, and play. There are many micro and macro factors that directly and indirectly influence the perception, location, type, and occurrence and reoccurrence rate of Core Area land and building vacancy. Occupancy is essential for a strong, vibrant, and welcoming Core Area; it brings foot traffic to streets, riders to public transit, diners to restaurants, shoppers to retail and service businesses, and employees to work sites.

Although addressing Core Area land and building vacancy has been a priority in the City of London's downtown planning through the years, its urgency and importance has become more critical as London plans its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Left unaddressed, the local economy, quality of life, job creation and retention, and vitality of the Core Area will continue to be affected.

1.2 The July 6, 2021 Council Resolution

On July 6, 2021, Municipal Council resolved: That Civic Administration be directed to report back on a proposed strategy that sets out potential tools that may assist in reducing Core Area land and building vacancy, including but not limited to:

- a) a review of existing incentive programs and any recommended changes to them;
- b) a review of existing planning processes/permissions and any recommended changes that would allow for the conversion of vacant commercial/industrial land/space into residential, including affordable housing;
- c) an assessment of the related strategies in Our Move Forward – London's Downtown Plan, and the Downtown Parking Strategy for any recommended updates or changes;
- d) any recommendations that build on the Core Area Action Plan to support increased safety and security of person and property in the Core Area; and,
- e) an assessment of how a new strategy could be integrated with the work of the London Community Recovery Network (4.2/10/SPCC) (2021-D19/S08).

1.3 The Development of the Terms of Reference

Between August 2021 and November 2021, five Action Teams were formed to focus on each one of the areas in the July 6 Council Resolution. The Action Teams were comprised of staff from across the Corporation. Each Action Team met three times over a six-week period to discuss how to effectively address the July 6 Council Resolution objectives. The Scope of Work developed by each Action Team was collated into the *Terms of Reference: Scope of Work to Address the Council Resolution from July 6, 2021* (Terms of Reference). The Terms of Reference outlines how the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy is to be developed. The Terms of Reference, adopted by City Council on December 7, 2021, can be found on the City's [website](#).

1.3 Purpose of this Report

This report includes an inventory of City of London actions being implemented in 2022 by City staff that can address Core Area land and building vacancy. These actions may be new or ongoing, and are part of the City of London's current business operations. Included in this report is an analysis of the current actions, how they may contribute to reducing Core Area land and/or building vacancy, and their expected results. The current actions documented in this report serve as the starting point from which the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy is being developed.

While there is important work being done by businesses, nonprofits, and individuals that may also contribute to reducing Core Area land and building vacancy, those actions are outside the scope and purpose of this inventory, as defined by the Terms of Reference. However, City of London staff are aware of and connected into these actions, and they are being considered in the comprehensive research being conducted to develop the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy.

1.4 How the Current Actions Were Documented

The following steps were taken to document the current actions being implemented to address Core Area land and building vacancy included in this report.

- 1. Determine Criteria (February 2022):** Criteria were set to provide a framework to determine whether a current action should be included as part of the inventory process. The criteria included the following: the action must be implemented in 2022, the action may be new or ongoing, the action must intend to directly or indirectly impact Core Area land and building vacancy, and the action must be led by the City of London.
- 2. Document Current Actions (March 2022):** Action Team members who were part of developing the initial Terms of Reference were asked to document current actions they and/or their colleagues are implementing in 2022 in a workbook. The workbook included questions related to: the name of the current action, a description, how it reduces land and building vacancy, expected results, and metrics. In total, 35 current actions were submitted by City staff.
- 3. Confirm Current Actions (April 2022 – May 2022):** The Project Team analyzed the current actions and developed a draft report. Action Team members, the Core Area Steering Committee, and the Senior Leadership Team reviewed and provided feedback on the draft report. This feedback was incorporated and resulted in the finalization of this report.

1.5 Key Terms and Definitions

The following key terms have been defined as they relate to this report.

Core Area - The Core Area includes Downtown, Richmond Row, and the Old East Village, and encompasses most of the London Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Old East Village Business Improvement Area (BIA).

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



Current Actions: In the context of this project, *current actions* are new or ongoing projects, plans, programs, or initiatives being implemented in 2022 by City staff that may have a direct or indirect impact on Core Area land or building vacancy. Actions being implemented by businesses, nonprofits, and individuals are outside of the scope of this report, as referenced in Section 1.3 on page 3.

Direct and Indirect Impact on Core Area Land and Building Vacancy: *Direct impact* means that the primary intention of the current action was to reduce Core Area land and building vacancy. *Indirect impact* means that secondary, incidental, or ancillary consequences of the current action may contribute to the reduction of Core Area land and building vacancy.

Land and Building Vacancy Type: The term *land and building vacancy type* is limited to vacant space, empty buildings or unoccupied space in buildings, or land that could be legally occupied as commercial office and retail, residential, and industrial.

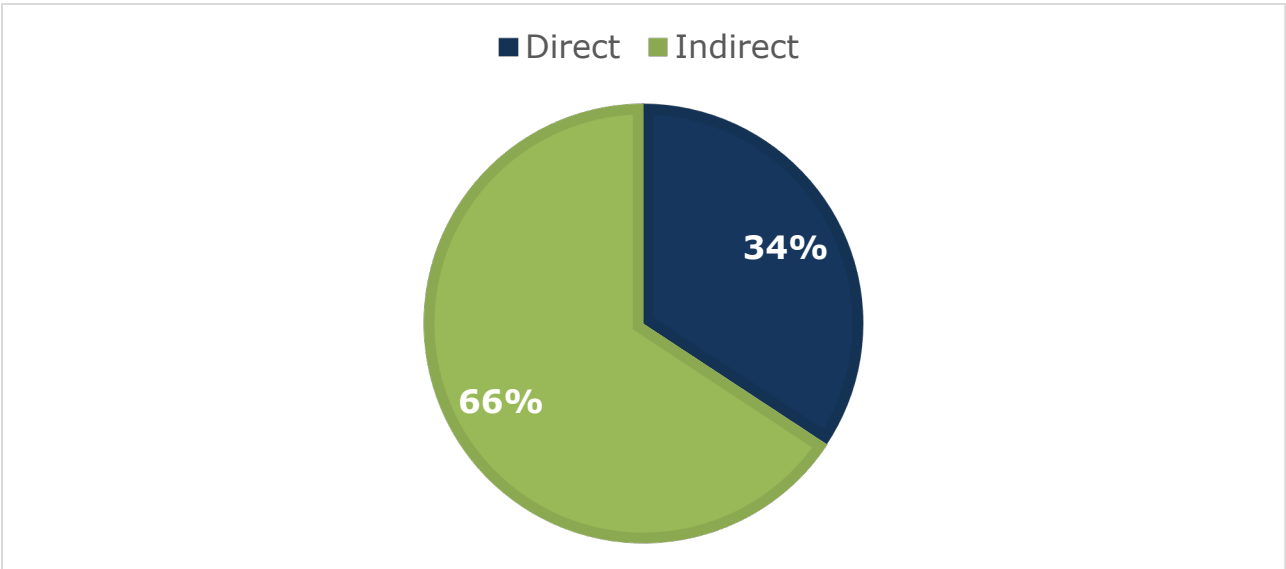
- **Vacant Buildings:** The term *vacant buildings* refers to commercial office and retail, residential, and industrial space or buildings that are unoccupied, or occupied but expected to be available or on the market for occupancy.
- **Vacant Land:** The term *vacant land* refers to “developable” land without a permanent structure or building on it.

Section 2.0: An Analysis of Current Actions

2.1 Number of Current Actions

City staff are implementing 35 actions in 2022 that may directly or indirectly address Core Area land and building vacancy as part of its business operations. Please see Appendix A for a full list of current actions. The 35 current actions included in this inventory represent a point in time, in that they are actions that are known to City of London staff as of April 2022. Additional actions may be implemented through the remainder of 2022.

2.2 Indirect Versus Direct Impact on Core Area Land and Building Vacancy



In total, 34% (n=12) of the actions have a direct impact on Core Area land and building vacancy. The remaining 66% (n=23) of actions have an indirect impact on Core Area land and building vacancy. Direct impact means that the primary intention of the current action was to reduce Core Area land and building vacancy. Indirect impact means that secondary, incidental, or ancillary consequences of the current action may contribute to the reduction of Core Area land and building vacancy.

2.3 Focus Areas of Current Actions

The current actions have been themed into six focus areas. Responses have been ordered by frequency to demonstrate the primary focus of each current action. Where “n=” is used, “n” refers to the number of actions that correspond to that specific theme.

- 1. Financial Incentives Programs (n=9):** Financial incentives are inclusive of grants and loans for property/building improvements and the construction of new units, including affordable housing.
- 2. City of London Plans (n=8):** The City of London has several Strategic Plans and Action Plans that contain specific strategies and actions to support the reduction of Core Area land and building vacancy that will continue to be operational in 2022. Further, these plans demonstrate that the City of London has a robust set of foundational plans from which the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Strategy will be aligned with and built upon.
- 3. Bylaws, Policies, and Guidelines (n=7):** Bylaws, policies, and guidelines are in place to support the reduction of Core Area land and building vacancy. Specific tools relate to property standards and how vacant land can be used.
- 4. Housing Stability Programs / Human Focused Programs (n=5):** There are several programs being implemented that assist individuals experiencing homelessness and sleeping unsheltered to secure emergency shelter, daytime and evening resting spaces, and housing.
- 5. Collaboration and Communication (n=3):** Collaboration and communication actions relate to organizations working together to address, raise awareness of, or share information about Core Area land and building vacancy.
- 6. Vacant Space Utilization (n=2):** To address Core Area land and building vacancy there are efforts underway to use vacant commercial space, as well as to increase the availability of “developable” land.
- 7. Infrastructure (n=1):** One current action increases the available density capacity within the sanitary sewer system, which provides the option for high density planning or conversion of commercial to residential.

2.4 How Current Actions Reduce Core Area Land and Building Vacancy

Current actions reduce Core Area land and building vacancy in five different ways. Themes are presented in alphabetical order.

- 1. Attracting People to the Core Area:** To reduce Core Area land and building vacancy, current actions focus on attracting people to the Core Area. Attracting people to the Core Area to live, work, and play draws businesses to the Core Area, thereby maintaining or increasing the occupancy of commercial space.
- 2. Incentivizing Investment:** Current actions reduce Core Area land and building vacancy by incentivizing and supporting private sector investment in property improvements and maintenance. Grant and loan programs provide incentives to maintain, upgrade, modify, rehabilitate, renovate, and occupy buildings that could be vacant in the Core Area. These efforts also support intensification, safety, and remediation efforts. Grants and loans also encourage the construction of new units, including affordable housing.
- 3. Maintaining Property Standards:** The proactive enforcement of property standards and building maintenance is another way in which actions are addressing Core Area land and building vacancy. For example, keeping sidewalks, vestibules, storefronts, and other public and private spaces in the Core Area clean creates and maintains an environment that positively impacts the rate and location of investments and occupancy by the private sector. It also improves marketability and the perception of the Core Area.
- 4. Occupancy Retention, Recruitment, and Expansion:** To address Core Area land and building vacancy there are efforts underway in the community to attract small businesses to the Core Area. This work is intended to provide supports that cultivate potential storefront retail and office businesses to occupy vacant commercial space. The City of London plays a part in vacancy reduction, being it is a significant occupant tenanted Core Area commercial office space (in addition to its occupancies in City-owned properties). Additional current City actions include reviewing parking standards and policies to proactively re-direct the use of land away from surface parking lots to increase the amount of “developable” land available in the Core Area.
- 5. Providing Information and Education:** Current actions focus on the identification of best practices, informing the community about vacancy rates, and providing information about activities, initiatives, and opportunities in the Core Area. By engaging people in discussion about the Core Area, it increases awareness and understanding of Core Area vacancy and opportunities that exist to live, work, and invest in the Core Area.

2.5 Expected Results

The expected results of the current actions have been distilled into three themes. Themes are presented in alphabetical order.

- 1. Improved Marketability:** Improved marketability is measured by metrics such as the change in the percentage of ground floor vacancies per year, improved building maintenance, reduction in the number of required clean ups, improved curb appeal of buildings, increased demand for vacant space or new space, improved perception of the Core Area, and the number of vacant buildings re-purposed and available for occupancy.
- 2. Increased Investment:** Current actions support and incentivize increased private sector investment in the Core Area. Metrics include the number of approved applications for grant and loan programs, the amount of grants and loans, the construction value of the projects completed, and the number of new residential units created, including affordable units.
- 3. Increased Occupancy of Vacant Land and Buildings:** Current actions reduce Core Area land and building vacancy and increase occupancy. The amount of land available for development, office, retail, and land vacancies, positive space absorption, number of spaces occupied, the square footage of space occupied, and how many businesses are attracted to the Core Area is being measured.

Section 3.0: Next Steps

3.1 Next Steps with Current Actions

The actions documented in this report are being implemented in 2022. Each of the current actions are monitored to evaluate their indirect or direct impact on Core Area land and building vacancy. Additional actions may be implemented throughout the remainder of 2022. Results of the current actions will be collated and reported on, as per the Terms of Reference, in early 2023.

3.2 The Development of the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Strategy

Phase 2 of the Terms of Reference is focused on the development of the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy. The following stages will be implemented over the next 18 months:

Stage 1: Conduct a Vacancy Study (Currently Underway)

- Define the structure, framework, definitions for the vacancy study
- Implement methods to determine the extent of land and building vacancy and issues affecting marketability
- Collate results into a database to inform the data collection in Stage 2

Stage 2: Facilitate Research

- Develop data collection tools
- Manage the logistics for data collection
- Facilitate research methods

Stage 3: Analyze Data

- Analyze the data
- Review other strategies
- Complete a gap analysis, thematic analysis, statistical analysis

Stage 4: Prepare the Strategy

- Develop recommendations
- Prepare the Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy
- Submit the report for Committee and Council Review

Municipal Council will be kept apprised of progress and will be provided key deliverables upon their completion.

Section 4.0: List of Current Actions

The following 35 current actions being implemented in 2022 help to reduce Core Area land and building vacancy. Current actions are reported in alphabetical order.

#1 Additional Residential Unit Loan Program

The Additional Residential Unit Loan Program provides a loan of up to \$20,000 for the creation of an additional residential unit (ARU) within an existing residential building or on the same property (e.g. above a detached garage, in a coach house). By off-setting costs associated with creating new additional residential units, the program has the potential to increase the number of additional affordable units in the Core Area.

#2 Affordable Housing Development Loan

The Affordable Housing Development Loan program provides a loan for each affordable rental unit created. A minimum of five affordable rental units must be created. The amount of the loan depends on the level of affordability being provided compared to Average Market Rent (AMR), the location of the project, and whether the developer pays property taxes. This program provides financial assistance to off-set the upfront costs associated with creating new, affordable housing units.

#3 Affordable Housing Matching

The Affordable Housing Matching program connects individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness to affordable housing. The matching process is completed through a coordinated access system. Individuals who meet the criteria have access to 61 affordable housing units with support.

#4 Brownfield Community Improvement Plan

The Brownfield Community Improvement Plan offers four grant programs that help cover the costs of remediating a contaminated property. This program promotes remediation and redevelopment of brownfield sites that might otherwise remain vacant or underutilized.

#5 City of London State of the Downtown Reports: 2003 – 2019

A State of the Downtown Report has been prepared every two years since 2003 to provide information about the impacts of City and private investment in the Downtown. The State of the Downtown Report includes a series of metrics providing Council with a status report of how the Downtown is changing over time (e.g the amount of vacant commercial space, the number of new residential units, building permit activity). Further these reports identify trends to be addressed through policy, regulation, and program changes.

#6 A Conceptual Framework for Regional Transportation in London

The Conceptual Framework for Regional Transportation in London identifies opportunities to integrate different modes of regional travel, with a particular focus on rail, local transit, and regional and inter-community bus systems. As Southwestern Ontario continues to increase in population and employment, regional transportation issues and the need to get ahead of rapid growth will become increasingly important. London will play a pivotal role as the largest urban centre and primary service hub in the region and the place where highway, railway, public transit, and regional bus networks converge.

#7 Core Area Action Plan

The Core Area Action Plan is a comprehensive set of actions and initiatives to create a healthy and resilient Core Area. The Core Area Action Plan outlines short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives such as Core Area Ambassadors, a Dundas Place “field house” operations base, dedicated and proactive Municipal Compliance, and Core Area activations programming to help address homelessness and health issues, safety and security, creating a positive business environment, and attracting more people to the Core Area.

#8 Core Area Diversion Pilot

The Core Area Diversion Pilot is a partnership project between the London Police Service and the City of London Social and Health Development service area. The project is supported by Housing Stability Services through Coordinated Informed Response and Life Stabilization through Ontario Works teams. The Core Area Diversion Pilot supports individuals to divert from street involvement in the Core Area that would cause involvement with the London Police Service or justice system. Peer Outreach Workers with lived experience connect individuals experiencing homelessness to services and supports, provide crisis intervention and de-escalation support, and offer housing readiness supports.

#9 Core Area Newsletter

The City of London issues a quarterly newsletter to the public summarizing, communicating, and celebrating actions taking place within the Core Area. The newsletter is a tool for disseminating information to stakeholders (both current and prospective) regarding actions taking place in the Core Area. This newsletter is also a product that can be shared with prospective investors or other interested parties.

#10 Core Area Safety Audit Grant

Through the Core Area Safety Audit Grant, the City provides grants of up to 50 percent of the total cost of property modifications to implement safety improvements, up to a maximum of \$10,000 per property. The Core Area Safety Audit Grant assists property owners in implementing Core Area Safety Audit recommendations necessary to improve safety and remove safety hazards.

#11 Covid Response

To support individuals living unsheltered during the COVID-19 pandemic, 26 comfort stations were placed throughout the Core Area. Comfort stations included washroom and hand sanitizing facilities and provided an essential service for London's most vulnerable. They also helped to keep sidewalks, alleys, vestibules, private spaces, and vacant buildings free of human waste.

#12 Discontinue Commercial Surface Parking Lots

Commercial surface parking lots provide temporary vehicle parking in the Core Area. Many surface commercial parking lots in the Core Area are permitted by way of a temporary zone as they are not long-term permitted uses. The gradual discontinuation of temporary zones in the Downtown that permit surface commercial parking will facilitate the redevelopment of the vacant lands to more efficient and active land uses.

#13 Downtown Action Plan – Proactive Municipal Compliance

The purpose of the Downtown Action Plan – Proactive Municipal Compliance is proactive enforcement of applicable by-laws with a focus on property standards and yard/lot maintenance. The program addresses building maintenance issues. This allows for positive quality of life, leading to the reduction of negative factors for vacant space occupancy.

#14 Downtown and Old East Village Residential Development Charges Grant

The Residential Development Charges Grant provides a grant equal to a rebate of Development Charges for residential units constructed. Developmental Charges are required to be paid up-front at the time the building permit is issued. The Residential Development Charges Grant grants back a portion of the residential Development Charges paid by the applicant over a 10-year schedule, until 100% of the residential Development Charges have been repaid to the applicant.

#15 Downtown Community Improvement Plan

The Downtown Community Improvement Plan provides the basis for the loan and grant programs the City of London offers. In 2017, the boundary of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan expanded to include Richmond Row. In 2021, the City of London amended the Downtown Community Improvement Plan to include performance measures and indicators of success to evaluate the impacts of the grant and loan programs.

#16 Downtown Design Study – Concept and Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Study – Concept and Design Guidelines are the current urban design guidelines for the Downtown. These design guidelines apply to any new development in the Downtown and any modifications to existing buildings to accommodate new uses. The design guidelines result in improved urban design of new buildings, better relationships between old and new development, and conservation of the heritage character of heritage designated properties.

#17 Downtown London Heritage Conservation District Plan

The Downtown London Heritage Conservation District Plan was designated in 2013 to recognize the heritage character of the area and conserve its character defining elements (heritage attributes). The Downtown London Heritage Conservation District Plan includes design guidelines to help manage change and ensure that new development is compatible with the area's heritage character.

#18 Downtown Parking Strategy

The Downtown Parking Strategy explores how to address existing surface parking lots and the creation of new ones in the Downtown area. The Downtown Parking Strategy divided the Downtown into sectors and outlined a series of criteria to evaluate requests for temporary use extensions or the creation of new parking spaces underground or in a parking garage. The Downtown Parking Strategy will minimize the number of temporary surface parking lots and encourage development of this vacant land.

#19 English Street Reconstruction (Sewer Density Increase)

The English Street Reconstruction involves upsizing the existing sanitary sewer to increase the available sewer density capacity within the area. Increasing the available density capacity provides the option for high density planning or conversion of commercial to residential (as residential requires more density capacity than commercial parcels).

#20 Façade Improvement Loan

The Façade Improvement Loan provides loans for building façade improvements up to a maximum of \$50,000 or half the value of the work, whichever is less. Loans are paid back at 0% interest over a 10-year period. The Façade Improvement Loan incentivizes owners to upgrade their properties.

#21 Heritage Community Improvement Plan

There are two grant programs available through the Heritage Community Improvement Plan to promote building rehabilitation in conjunction with new development on property designated pursuant to Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Heritage Community Improvement Plan grant programs provide an incentive to conserve, rehabilitate, and occupy heritage buildings that could be vacant or underused in the Core Area, as well as support intensification on the property while conserving the property's heritage attributes.

#22 Housing Enterprise Action Team

The Housing Enterprise Action Team is a cross-functional action table that seeks to facilitate the development of affordable housing in support of the Roadmap to 3,000 Affordable Housing Units Action Plan. The Housing Enterprise Action Team will provide City Service Areas an opportunity to discuss and manage issues related to applications for affordable housing developments, as well as monitor successes and report out to a City Steering Team and the Senior Leadership Team.

#23 Lease of Office Space in Core

Realty Services administers multiple commercial leases for office space in the Core Area comprising 117,964 of leased space for several City Service Areas. In April 2022, the lease of 60,480 square feet of office space at Citi Plaza will be extended for another 5 years. Leased space at the Central Library will also be extended, subject to Council approval in 2022.

#24 The London Plan

The London Plan is London's Official Plan. It includes specific strategies and policies for the Core Area and direction on the nature, form, and intensity of development. The London Plan provides the policy basis for zoning by-law regulations and other measures to reduce Core Area land and building vacancy. The implementation of the policies and strategies in the London Plan may impact office, retail and land vacancies, changes in the amount of office space, housing units, and vacant land available, and the amount of pedestrian activity in the Core Area.

#25 Our Move Forward – London's Downtown Plan

Our Move Forward – London's Downtown Plan is a formal Guideline Document under the London Plan. It includes a planning framework, strategic directions for future development, ten transformational projects to improve London's Downtown over time, tools including policy statements, and implementation targets. Each section is integrated with the others to establish a focused strategy of continuing the revitalization effort in the Downtown.

#26 Parking Standards Review

The Parking Standards Review involves a review of the City of London's current parking standards for uses currently in Zoning By-law Z-1. A number of North American municipalities have either reduced or removed parking standards and allow the market to determine the amount of parking required. By reducing the need for parking, it may make development more economical, take up less land, and encourage use of transit or alternative forms of transportation.

#27 Protected Major Transit Station Areas

Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs) are the areas that surround and include existing and planned higher order transit stations or stops in accordance with the Planning Act. Most of the Core Area is subject to PMTSA policies in the London Plan because they apply to Downtown, Transit Villages, and Rapid Transit Corridors. The protection of high intensity nodes and corridors for future development will eventually result in less vacant land. By directing growth to these nodes and corridors it reduces building vacancies.

#28 Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Tax Grant

The Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Tax Grant rebates a portion of the municipal tax increase that results from the rehabilitation of an existing building or the construction of a new building. A percentage of this tax increment is rebated back to the property owner each year, for ten years. The grant encourages property owners to create more residential spaces by reducing the financial burden of development.

#29 Review Definition of "Parks" in Zoning By-law Z-1

This action explores revising the existing definition of "Parks" in Zoning By-law Z-1 to defer any activities which go on in City parks to the Parks and Recreation By-law. This revision would allow all events and activities to be regulated by the Parks and Recreation By-law. Indirectly, this could make parks more active, creating more activity in the Core Area, possibly attracting more tourists and businesses, while maintaining access to public space.

#30 Strategic Plan for the City of London: 2019-2023

The Strategic Plan for the City of London: 2019 – 2023 refers to the Core Area in the Building a Sustainable City, Growing our Economy, and Strengthening Our Community focus areas. Strategies included in the plan focus on growth, intensification, and revitalization of Downtown, using existing infrastructure and replacing surface parking lots, increasing public and private investment in Downtown, and increasing access to supports for entrepreneurs and small businesses. There are also strategies related to increasing housing options, implementing urban design guidelines, engaging Londoners in culture, maintaining heritage resources, decreasing crime, and creating community gathering places.

#31 Upgrade to Building Code Loan

The Upgrade to Building Code Loan provides loans to property owners who improve their buildings related to Ontario Building Code requirements. The loan can be up to a maximum of \$200,000 or half the value of the work, whichever is less. Loans are paid back at 0% interest over a 10-year period. The loan program incentivizes owners to upgrade their properties so that the space may be filled with a business.

#32 Victoria Park Secondary Plan (PEC Public Participation Meeting Scheduled May 9, 2022 for Recommended Secondary Plan)

The Victoria Park Secondary Plan provides a more comprehensive vision for future development and redevelopment within the area, expanding on the general policies of The London Plan. Existing plans, policies, regulations, and guidelines applying to properties around Victoria Park have been considered to create the development framework and to provide clarity and consistency in reviewing future applications. Any future development application will be evaluated on a site-by-site basis for conformity to the applicable Official Plan policies, Secondary Plan policies, and Heritage Conservation District Plans.

#33 Winter Response Day/Night Drop Ins

The Winter Response Day/Night Drop Ins offered services for individuals to get in out of the cold, warm up, rest, eat, and engage with services. Each drop in provided space for 50 people. Capacity was met every day for the duration of the project. Individuals who were restricted from, or refuse to go to shelters were able to sleep and stay warm indoors.

#34 Winter Response Shelter Sites

Winter Response Shelter Sites offered temporary 24/7 trailer shelter communities for up to 60 people who were experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The Winter Response Shelter Sites included a large building used as common space for community meals, washrooms, showers, support meetings, etc. Individuals experiencing homelessness were provided shelter and intensive supports. Many individuals secured permanent housing.

#35 Zoning By-Law Z-1

The Zoning By-law Z-1 implements The London Plan and includes permitted uses and regulations for each zone. A New Zoning By-law to implement The London Plan policies is currently in development. Section 20 (Downtown Area Zone) and Section 25 (Business District Commercial Zone) apply to most of the lands in the Core Area and identify the permitted uses and regulations to allow future development.