



January 31, 2023

City of London
300 Dufferin Avenue
London ON N6A 4L9

Attn: Barb Westlake-Power, MPA; Deputy City Clerk; **Planning & Environment Committee**

Re: **Request to review and approve Community Plan & Incentives**

Dear Barb Westlake-Power, MPA; Deputy City Clerk

Hyde Park in Uptown London, situated in Northwest London, continues to grow exponentially within the existing BIA boundaries. This area is unique in that it connects outlying rural communities from both north and west to Hyde Park, the growing urban centre of the region.

The City of London approved the first official Hyde Park Community Plan in 1999 which highlighted the "Hyde Park Hamlet" being established along Hyde Park and Gainsborough Roads. This resulted in these roads being zoned as Business District Commercial (BDC) with a Main Street designation that was grandfathered into the current London Plan.

In reaction to, and because of the extensive road widening along Hyde Park Road in 2014/2015, fear that the Hyde Park Hamlet (running across Hyde Park and Gainsborough Roads), would be lost, spawned the then Business Association to pursue their BIA designation. A BIA would facilitate their ability to utilize CIP tools which would be integral to the regeneration and development of the Hyde Park Hamlet along Gainsborough Road.

The Hyde Park BIA designation was approved by Council in 2017 which has given them the ability to bring beautification, contribute towards community improvement initiatives, launching and growing events, and more to the area.

In sync with the BIA designation process, the Hyde Park Business Association took the first step six years ago in May 2017 by making the request to be added to the next Planning & Environment Committee (PEC) agenda for consideration of being added to the City's work-plan as it related to a new Hyde Park Community Improvement Plan (CIP). The request was reviewed and approved by committee.

The Hyde Park Community Regeneration Report was finalized by staff and presented to committee and council in 2019 *without* the recommendation for the requested CIP. The Hyde Park BIA respectfully disagrees with the 'rationale for recommended actions' stated in the report.

While Hyde Park Road has seen growth and diversification, Gainsborough Road itself, has seen very little activity and investment. The 2019 Regeneration report did not address the concerns on Gainsborough Road.

Hyde Park Business Improvement Association

"Businesses Working Together to Foster a Vibrant Community"



Contrary to the Hyde Park Community Regeneration Report, the Hyde Park BIA is not in a financial position to develop the hamlet, nor do we possess the planning skills or knowledge. As well, a key developer in the area has confirmed there is very little interest from the Developer Community to invest in the properties along Gainsborough Road.

Today, it is the goal of the Hyde Park business and surrounding community to achieve the vision of the Hyde Park Hamlet contained within Hyde Park's Official Community Plan and approved (by the City of London Council) 25 years ago. We envision a community hub comprised of small/medium businesses setting up and investing in small specialty retail shops and food establishments. This will increase pedestrian traffic, attract shoppers, and spur economic growth and social prosperity; A warm attractive destination place in the northwest corner of London for shopping, recreation, lifestyle and living.

We believe that investing in the Hyde Park Hamlet is a good investment for the city and that it aligns with London's existing 2019-2023 Strategic Plan as well as the developing draft 2023-2027 Strategic Plan:

- Supports economic growth, culture, and prosperity.
- Supports an environment where entrepreneurs, start-ups, businesses, and talent can thrive.
- The revitalization of this urban area will increase public and private investments.
- The Hyde Park Hamlet will work to strengthen our community by creating and increasing community gathering spaces in this neighbourhood.
- Supports mobility by creating a walkable space and place giving Londoners a strong sense of belonging and a sense of place increasing their well being and quality of life.
- The Hamlet fits within and enhances its surrounding community as identified in Hyde Parks Official Community Plan.
- Supports increasing tourism by attracting populations from neighbouring counties in proximity from the north and west.

We also believe we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to proactively shape the booming growth that is taking place in Hyde Park with thoughtful community planning and the right tools in place that a CIP can offer – before it becomes a reactive situation.

The Hyde Park Hamlet has little hope of becoming a reality without the financial help a CIP can offer to incentivize and regenerate Gainsborough Road both east and west of Hyde Park Road.

In alignment with this request, staff and the Hyde Park Board of Management is working on our four-year Strategic Plan and workplan to provide support for regeneration efforts and believes that steps needed to create the hamlet is our top priority. As such, we are respectfully requesting that the PEC Committee consider approving a CIP for the regeneration of Gainsborough Road and towards reaching the vision of the Hyde Park Hamlet.

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To address the London Plan criteria for establishing a CIP area:

Significant environmental, social or community economic development reasons for community improvement and as noted in the Regeneration Report:

- This area is one of London's fastest growing residential areas and we are experiencing growing pains that we anticipate will be amplified as growth continues.
- This area also has the highest rate of welcoming newcomers.
- This area is poised for a residential population boom with 10 development applications, two mixed use developments ready for occupancy this spring, along with a potential new affordable community to be developed within the BIA boundaries.
- The current plan for population growth lacks the characteristics and enhancements that the Hamlet will bring.

Deficiencies specific to Gainsborough Road include:

- Deficiencies in physical infrastructure on Gainsborough Road which would include decorative lighting as part of the streetscape and municipal parking facilities (to support the village and community building events).
- Future commercial areas with poor physical condition and visual quality including facades with reference to existing structures, some with historical value on Gainsborough Road.
- Vacant lands on Gainsborough Road west.
- There are major traffic and parking deficiencies in this area.
- Infrastructure costs related to enacting the commercial zoning, meeting building codes, etc.

CIP tools that the Hyde Park BIA believes will have great impact include:

- **Facade Improvement Loan** to improve existing structures as they convert to commercial use while enhancing and maintaining their unique characteristics as the Hamlet develops.
- **Upgrade to the Building Code Loan** to help alleviate costs such as those associated with the removal of the H17 Holding Provision that exists on these properties, Site Plan Consultations and resulting required infrastructure upgrades.
- **Tax or Development Charges Rebates** for new buildings or additions to accommodate small business.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and warm regards,

Donna Szpakowski
CEO & General Manager; Hyde Park Business Improvement Association
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