Council-Elect Engagement Conversations
Summary of Themes and Priorities

Introduction

Civic Administration spoke individually to City Council members following the 2022 Municipal Election, gathering input on what Londoners told them through conversations during the election period. Council members were asked the following three questions:

- What were the top three to five priorities you heard while engaging with Londoners over the last few months (door-to-door, social media, meetings, etc.)?
- What was the most common issue you heard about when talking to Londoners over the last few months?
- What do you think Council should achieve in the next 4 years?

This document outlines the common themes identified by Council members, as well as summary points to expand on how those themes were framed. It is important to note that, while common themes have been compiled, there was a great deal of overlap between the identified themes.

Themes are listed alphabetically.

What were the top three to five priorities you heard while engaging with Londoners? What was the most common issue?

Affordability

Cost of Living

- Affordability was a very common thread across many other topics; not just about housing or taxes, but broadly. Groceries, basic needs, housing costs, utilities, transportation, etc. are all seen as adding cost pressures.
- Residents are concerned for themselves and their own ability to maintain or improve their quality of life; they're also concerned for their families. Concerned that children won't have same opportunities; concern for aging parents on fixed incomes.
- Concerns about the prospect of rising taxes were most often expressed through a broader affordability lens – not just "don't raise taxes", but don't add to the broader affordability issue.
- Concerns about rising inequality and poverty, especially child poverty.

Housing

- Affordability and availability of housing was a very common theme – including rental units, right-sizing (growing families looking for more space; empty-nesters/retirees looking to downsize)
- Many in precarious housing situations; owners who bought during peak housing prices, now facing rising interest rates; concern among renters who worry about how they would afford a new place if they had to move out; concerns about the rise of "renovictions", negative experiences with landlords.
- Many people in precarious housing situations – lack of affordability, poor state of repair, nowhere to move to so can't leave where they are.
- There were also residents, particularly those who have relocated to London from larger urban centres (including the GTA, Vancouver, international centres), who prioritized London because of affordability relative to their previous homes.

Community Safety

- Residents are concerned about police response times being too long.
- Perception of increased crime within neighbourhoods, especially theft/break-ins; perception that non-violent crimes are not pursued
- Residents recognized and often expressed concern for the challenges faced by emergency service providers, especially safety risks and high levels of burnout for first responders.
- Core area safety was a concern city-wide; residents concerned about coming downtown because of perception that it is unsafe/unwelcoming.
- Frequently linked to Safety for Women and Girls priority, as well as urban design concerns (e.g., street lighting)

Homelessness

- Concerns about homelessness were universal across all areas across the city; residents are seeing the impacts of homelessness first-hand in their own neighbourhoods. No longer a primarily Core Area focused concern.
- Perception that current approach is no longer working; Many different opinions from residents about what should be done and who should be responsible, all agree that “something needs to change”.
- Often connected to broader community safety; concerns about personal safety, perceptions of encampments, safety of those living in encampments.

Infrastructure

Neighbourhood Infrastructure

- There was widespread recognition of, and appreciation for, outdoor recreational amenities – parks, greenspaces, paths and trails, playgrounds, community centres, etc., often related to the pandemic (e.g., people staying closer to home, focusing on outdoor activities)
- Residents frequently expressed the desire for more neighbourhood amenities, and/or had greater attention to how existing amenities are resourced and maintained.
- Local development – some residents expressed feeling ignored by development processes, or that their concerns about developments were not being addressed.
- Many residents expressed acceptance for the need for increased density but want to see density that fits within the existing neighbourhood.
- Perceived need for greater collaboration between the City, organizations, developers, and other stakeholders to ensure growth and development reflect changing neighbourhood demographics and needs.

Roads

- Residents frequently expressed frustration with the number and duration of construction projects, both within neighbourhoods and across the city.
- Some observed that the level of frustration was inversely correlated with how obvious the benefits were; opposition to projects was less when the benefits of the project were more evident to the individual.
- Local traffic concerns were a frequent topic of conversation with residents; speeding on residential streets, availability of crosswalks, traffic lights, etc., road redevelopment (sidewalk installation, local construction, etc.), cut-through traffic, potholes, etc.

Transit/Active Transportation

- Conversations about public transit tended to focus on access and reliability: improving connectivity for those who live and/or work in areas with lower levels of service; the need for reliable transit for those who work late or early shifts; and the availability and reliability of paratransit services.
- Transit was often linked to affordability and safety; it was also expressed as a gender issue, an equity issue, an accessibility issue.
- Cycling infrastructure was a common topic of discussion, but divisive. Some residents supportive of recent work and interested in further expansion; others opposed to recent work, don't want it to continue.
- There was a uniting concern regarding cycling infrastructure around safety in places where there can be conflicts between bikes and cars; where lanes merge, at cross streets and driveways, around parking lanes, etc.
- While many residents expressed a desire for improved travel around the city, there was a similar flip side as in affordability – those who have relocated to London from busy urban centres see getting around London as relatively quick and easy.

What do you think Council should achieve in the next four years?

Affordability

- Use any and all municipal levers to help maintain or improve affordability in London.
- Find solutions to address housing affordability: work with other levels of government; encourage diverse types of housing; encourage redevelopment of underused property.
- Maintain municipal services without putting undue burden on residents through property taxes.
- Recognize broader affordability challenges when setting property tax rate targets.

Community Safety

- Londoners should feel safer in their neighbourhoods.
- People should feel safer traveling around the city, especially in the downtown core.

Core Area

- Make people feel safe and welcomed in the downtown.
- Leverage recent investments, address challenges, and make downtown a destination.
- Make sure the downtown goes in the right direction.

Environment and Climate Change

- Continue to make progress towards London's climate change mitigation and adaptation, including the Climate Emergency Action Plan.
- Protect and enhance London's natural assets – green spaces, the Thames River, naturalized areas, trails, etc.

Equity and Inclusion/Safe City for Women and Girls

- Maintain focus on efforts to make London a safe city for women and girls.
- Be a leader in applying gender and equity considerations to policy and action.
- Make London a more equitable, welcoming, inclusive, and accessible city.

Growth and Development

- Prioritize sustainable growth, spread across the city
- More of an equalization in terms of growth – not so concentrated in small parts of the city – encouraging growth in targeted areas

Homelessness

- Make progress on ending homelessness.
- Be proactive and work with community partners.
- More tailored responses – no “one-size fits all” approach.
- Not just affordable housing, but deeply affordable; not just new units, but units with supports.

Leadership and Collaboration

- London should be leading regional and provincial conversations.
- Take a wider perspective – work with regional partners to address exurban growth, broader municipal challenges.
- Be more active in telling London’s story across the country and around the world; London should be a leader in attracting both talent and business.
- Work together – as a council, as a community, and with partners outside our borders. Act as facilitators and advocates for a united community approach.

Quality of Life for Londoners

- Londoners’ lives should be better than they are now.
- More inclusive, more welcoming, more accessible; no one left behind.

Responsiveness

- Residents should feel like they’ve been well served.
- More direct engagement with residents, more community conversations, more opportunities for residents to impact local decisions.
- Improve public consultation and communication practices.

Transportation

- Make it easier to get around the city, get residents where they need to be when they need to be there.
- Look ahead, make decisions that will prepare the transportation network for future generations.