London
CANADA

DOWNTOWN REIMAGINED: CITY OF LONDON DOWNTOWN PLAN

July 2026

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that we are gathered on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron.

We acknowledge all the treaties that are specific to this area: the Two Row Wampum Belt Treaty of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy/Silver Covenant Chain; the Beaver Hunting Grounds of the Haudenosaunee NANFAN Treaty of 1701; the McKee Treaty of 1790, the London Township Treaty of 1796, the Huron Tract Treaty of 1827, with the Anishinaabek, and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum of the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee.

This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous people (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society. We hold all that is in the natural world in our highest esteem and give honour to the wonderment of all things within Creation. We bring our minds together as one to share good words, thoughts, feelings and sincerely send them out to each other and to all parts of creation. We are grateful for the natural gifts in our world, and we encourage everyone to be faithful to the natural laws of Creation.

The three Indigenous Nations that are neighbours to London are the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation; Oneida Nation of the Thames; and the Munsee-Delaware Nation who all continue to live as sovereign Nations with individual and unique languages, cultures and customs.

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Canadian Urban Institute / Institut Urbain du Canada
RE:PUBLIC
tate research
OOSTERBAAN STRATEGY
BELLEVILLE PLACEMAKING
ARUP
divercities
Carolyn Whitzman
Jim Yanchula

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Downtown London is at a pivotal moment, with an opportunity to renew and reimagine the city's cultural, economic, and civic heart for the next generation. Over the next decade, this Plan calls for bold action, strong partnerships, and sustained investment to create a Downtown that is vibrant, welcoming, and resilient: a place where people choose to live, work, gather, and invest, where historic spaces are reimagined for new opportunities, and where culture, public life, and everyday experiences come together to shape a Downtown that reflects London's ambitions and identity.

1.1 PURPOSE

Why a Downtown Plan?

As London continues to grow and change, the role of Downtown must evolve with it, particularly in the face of the accelerated shifts in work patterns, retail, and urban life that are reshaping downtowns across Canada and around the world. To respond to this necessary evolution, this Plan sets out a bold vision to renew and strengthen Downtown as the cultural, civic, and economic heart of the city. Structured around building vibrancy and enhancing programming; supporting innovation and entrepreneurship; enhancing liveability and community wellbeing; and developing modern and responsive governance and management, the Plan identifies the actions and strategies needed to reshape how Downtown functions with the aim to position Downtown London for long-term vitality, resilience, and continued relevance in the decades ahead.

What is the Downtown Plan Intended to Do?

The Downtown Plan is a strategic roadmap to guide the revitalization of Downtown London over the next decade. It sets out a clear direction for change, supported by phased Actions, key performance indicators (KPIs), and high-level costing to support implementation and accountability.

Rather than functioning as a detailed land use or design document, the Plan focuses on aligning priorities, coordinating investment, and enabling action. It builds on and complements existing Council-approved plans and initiatives, including the City's Economic Development Strategy (2026), and may inform future updates to the City's Official Plan, The London Plan, where required.

1.2 STUDY AREA

Study Area: What is the Focus Area of the Downtown Plan?

The Downtown Plan focuses on the area most considered by Londoners to constitute 'Downtown London'. The area extends generally from the Thames River in the west to Colborne Street in the east, and from Oxford Street in the north to the CN rail corridor in the south.

These boundaries were selected because they capture the places where Downtown's core functions are most concentrated and where change is most likely to have city-wide impact as it includes the City's primary civic and cultural institutions, major employment and commercial districts, key streets and destinations, and major hubs of the City's transportation network.

1.3 HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

The Plan's Organization

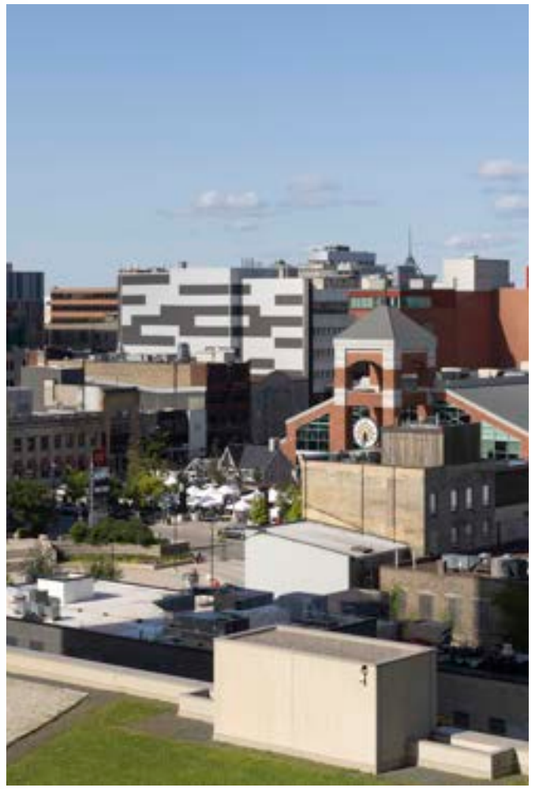
The London Downtown Plan is organized into four sections. Sections 1–3 establish the context for the Plan, including past and present data, trends in Downtown London, and the methodology used to develop the Plan. Section 4 outlines the detailed Actions and Big Moves intended to guide the revitalization of Downtown London. The Actions in Section 4 are organized around four core goals: transforming Downtown into a resilient, mixed-use neighbourhood; strengthening vibrancy through civic and cultural assets; unlocking creativity and innovation in underused spaces; and establishing effective governance and leadership to drive implementation. These goals are advanced through 58 Actions, culminating in four "Big Moves": a connected River District, vibrant public spaces, an expanded City of Music presence, and a flexible, effective governance structure.

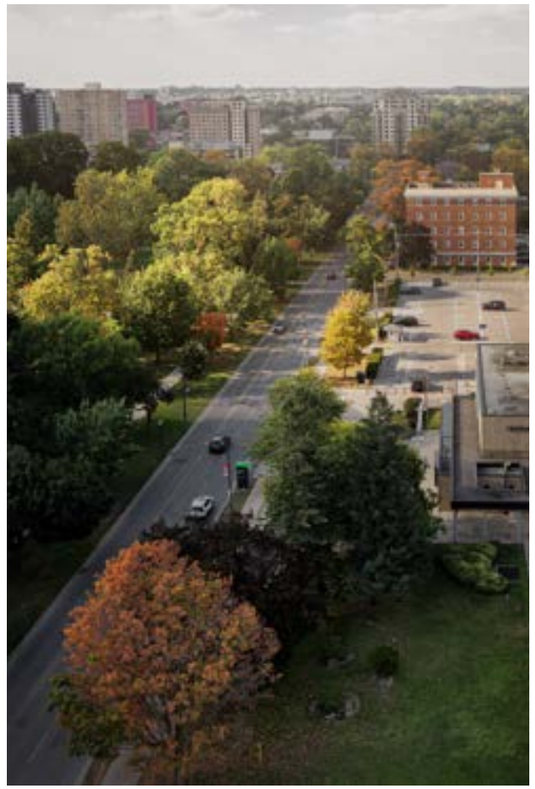
Section 5 outlines the implementation of the Plan. Implementation is structured to build momentum over time, pairing early "Quick Start" Actions (see Appendix A) created as part of the Background Study for this work, some of which are already underway - with short-term (years 1–4), medium-term (years 5–9), and longer-term (10+ years) initiatives to support sustained and visible change.

The Plan's Scope

The Plan provides direction across key areas including land use, mobility, public realm, culture, economic development, and environmental resilience. It identifies opportunities for investment and reinvestment, supports adaptive reuse and residential growth, and clarifies the roles of governance, partnerships, and downtown management in delivering results. It also reflects community priorities and is grounded in engagement, research, and best practices.

The Downtown Plan does not function as a Secondary Plan under the Planning Act, nor does it provide parcel-level zoning, detailed design, or capital project plans. It does not replace existing strategies or act as a comprehensive social services or programming plan. Instead, it serves as a unifying framework to guide decision-making, coordinate action, and focus investment in Downtown London.





2.0 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 PROCESS

This Plan was developed through a two-phase approach combining foundational analysis with action-oriented planning. Phase 1 established a clear understanding of Downtown London through research, data analysis, and early engagement to define key issues, opportunities, and directions, culminating in a comprehensive Background Study. Building on this work, Phase 2 focused on refining priorities, developing implementable actions, and establishing a clear framework for delivery including phasing, partnerships, and performance measures. Throughout both phases, ongoing collaboration with City staff, partners, and the broader community ensured that the Plan is grounded in local context and positioned for implementation.

	PHASE 1: BACKGROUND STUDY	+	PHASE 2: DOWNTOWN PLAN
ACTIVITIES & TASKS	• Site Visit • Review City of London Plans and Studies • Best Practice Research • Data Collection and Analysis • Develop Public Engagement Strategy • Establish Vision & Key Principles • Draft Immediate, Medium and Long-term Actions		• Identify key priorities • Refine all actions • Establish implementation steps and metrics • Develop Downtown Plan • Develop Detailed Implementation and Costing Plan • Support the City's Communication Staff to garner public attention
PUBLIC CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT	• Collaboration with City Staff • Report to Council and Committee(s) • In-person workshops, consultations and virtual engagements		• Collaboration with City Staff • Report to Council and Committee(s) • In-person workshops, consultations and virtual engagements
DELIVERABLES & OUTCOMES	• Engagement Strategy • Downtown Plan Background Study • Development of vision, framework, and actions to inform the Plan		• Final Downtown Plan with Implementation Plan, KPIs and Timelines

Figure 1 Approach and Methodology Diagram

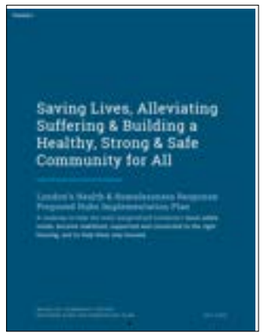
2.2 PLANNING PROCESS AND POLICY CONTEXT

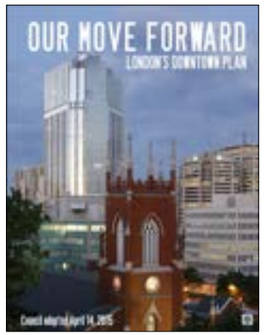
Key Plans and policies that informed the creation of the London Downtown Plan include:

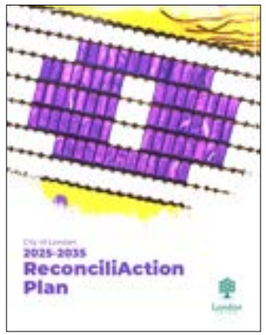
- Core Area and the Downtown Community Improvement Plans, 1996 and 2021
- Downtown Millennium Plan, 1998
- Our Move Forward: London's Downtown Plan, 2015
- The London Plan, 2016
- The Zoning By-law, 2016
- Our City, Our Culture – London's Cultural Prosperity Plan Report, 2018
- Core Area Action Plan, 2019
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2019
- Municipal Council's Strategic Plan 2023–2027
- Core Area Land and Building Vacancy Reduction Strategy, 2023
- Hubs Implementation Plan, 2023
- 2024–2027 Multi-Year Budget, 2024
- Victoria Park Secondary Plan, 2024
- Whole of Community System Response to Health and Homelessness in London, 2023
- ReconciliAction Plan, 2025

To ensure alignment with the City's broader policy framework, a review of 103 existing plans, policies, staff reports, and budget documents was undertaken, alongside relevant provincial planning policy. This review was used not only to understand the current policy landscape, but to also clarify how the Downtown Plan can build upon, align with, and help coordinate the full range of initiatives shaping Downtown London.

Rather than introducing a new standalone direction, the Downtown Plan acts as a unifying framework that recognizes these documents operate at different scales and with different purposes, bringing them together by identifying shared priorities, aligning actions, and providing a coordinated structure for implementation.







2.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This Plan is informed by a year-long engagement process that combined broad public outreach with targeted partner conversations. Engagement methods included surveys, social media and online platforms, in-person and virtual summits, public event tabling, focus groups, and one-on-one conversations.

Targeted outreach was conducted with representatives from cultural, economic, institutional, and community organizations, post-secondary institutions, tourism organizations, and business groups. A Downtown Advisory Group was also established to provide ongoing input, and additional engagement was undertaken with equity-deserving groups through partner-led consultations. A more detailed summary of engagement is included as Appendix C.

Over 5,500 participants

- **Online engagement:** 11,000 website visitors with over 4,500 survey and public comment responses
- **Virtual summits:** 100 participants
- **In-person summits:** 117 participants
- **Public event engagement:** 160 participants
- **High School and University engagement:** 100 students
- **Targeted interviews/focus groups:** 200+ participants
- **Advisory Group:** 6 members, meeting bi-monthly

WHAT WE HEARD: KEY THEMES

A Downtown that feels safe, welcoming, and supported. Participants emphasized the need for coordinated social supports, inclusive public spaces, and visible day-to-day management to improve comfort and trust.

A complete, lived-in Downtown. There is strong demand for a more residential, mixed-use downtown with everyday amenities. Supporting local and affordable businesses is key to creating consistent activity.

Culture and identity as drivers of activity. Participants called for more year-round programming, investment in cultural infrastructure, and expanded use of public art—including stronger Indigenous representation.

Accessible, connected, and comfortable. Better connections to the Thames River, parks, and key destinations, along with all-season public space design, are key priorities.

Clear implementation and sustained investment. Support for combining large catalytic investments with smaller, visible improvements, alongside tools to support businesses, reduce vacancies, and enable reinvestment.

3.0 EVOLUTION OF DOWNTOWN

3.1 KEY DATA AND CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 2 Historic Downtown London Commercial Core

The following represents a high-level summary of key data and statistics of the Downtown that shaped the Actions in this Plan. More details can be found in the Background Study created for this Plan.

Commercial and retail activity:
Downtown London's office and retail sectors are struggling with high vacancy rates that have grown significantly since 2019, leaving a notable share of commercial space empty and underused.

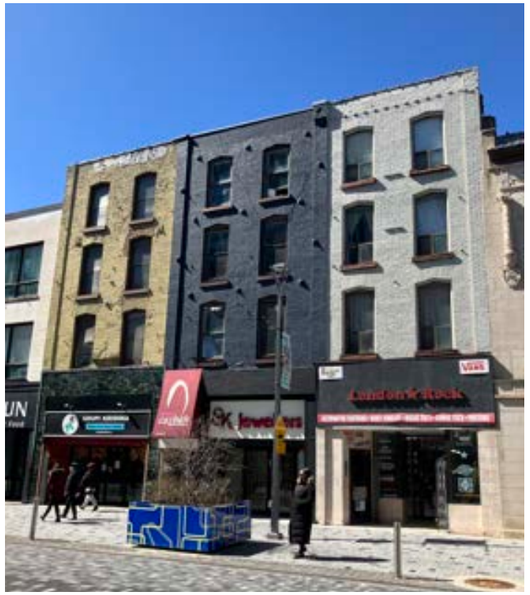
- **London has the highest office vacancy rate (31.5 per cent in Q1 2026)** of all the major downtowns tracked by CBRE, up from 13.6 per cent in 2019[1]
- **Downtown includes more than 660 commercial retail spaces** with storefronts concentrated on Richmond Street, Dundas Street and Wellington Street[2]
- **17 per cent of commercial retail spaces are vacant as of mid-2025**[3], representing nearly 350,000 square feet and approximately 130 empty storefronts[4]
- **77 per cent of retail spaces include service-oriented businesses** such as professional services, food, and entertainment, while only 23 per cent of retail spaces are occupied by traditional retail businesses. While this signals a shift in retail trends observed elsewhere in Canadian downtowns, it prevents downtown residents from being able to meet their daily needs within the Downtown boundary[5]
- **An aging historic building stock where costs to update and rehabilitate are high** has contributed to London's commercial vacancy challenges

Residents, social demographics and mobility:
Downtown London's residential population is growing faster than the rest of the city, and is distinctly young, diverse, and transit-oriented.

- **In 2025, more than 11,700 residents live in Downtown London**, up from 9,000 in 2021. This is a five-year growth rate of 29 percent[6] compared to an overall citywide rate of 18 percent growth[7]
- **The majority of residents (79 per cent) are renters and 95 per cent of households live in multi-family housing**[8]. Housing diversity, including more ownership opportunities, diverse unit types, size and housing forms, are needed to enable a variety of household types to live in the Downtown
- **Downtown residents are diverse** with nearly 50 per cent representing first- or second-generation immigrants and nearly one-third representing a visible minority
- **Households in the Downtown are young** (majority 20-34 years of age) and smaller at 1.7 persons per household, compared to the city-wide average of 2.4 persons per household[9], largely driven by the type of housing available in the Downtown
- **Downtown residents experience higher rates of unemployment** - 11.5 per cent compared to 6.1 per cent citywide, and are nearly equally split between white collar and service sector workers[10]
- **40 per cent of Downtown residents use public or active transportation**, compared to 15 per cent citywide. Opportunities to connect to the region and beyond are supported by the existence of the Via Rail station and a number of regional bus services in the Downtown[11]

Daytime population, visitors and amenities:
Downtown London draws a substantial daytime population of workers and visitors, supported by a broad range of cultural, recreational and institutional amenities.

- **43,000 people spend time in Downtown London daily**, including 37,000 workers or more than three times the number of residents[12]
- **Downtown hosts more than 800 events per year**, drawing nearly 2 million annual visitors[13]
- Downtown has 15,436 total parking spaces, 9,897 spaces are for public use, and 2,664 spaces are owned and/or operated by the City (17% of overall Downtown parking)[14].
- **Downtown is home to nearly 70 cultural, civic, institutional and recreational amenities.** Many of these spaces are located at the periphery of Downtown either along the riverfront or in the mature residential neighbourhoods on the eastern edge of Downtown



3.2 RECENT REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Since the 1998 Downtown Millennium Plan, Downtown London has been the focus of sustained and evolving revitalization efforts led by the City and its partners. These efforts have included a broad range of initiatives, from early programs such as façade improvement grants, streetscape upgrades, and downtown lighting, to more recent catalytic projects like the redevelopment of Covent Garden Market, development of Canada Life Place, creation of Dundas Place, and private and institutional investments in cultural and institutional assets such as the TAP Centre for Creativity, the move of the Central Library to the Core, and Fanshawe College's downtown campus.

Policy and planning initiatives have also played a key role, including the expansion of the Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP), the creation of Heritage Conservation Districts, the Downtown Design Manual, and the Our Move Forward plan, alongside more recent work through The London Plan and Core Area Action Plan. Together, these efforts have been supported by incentive programs, public-private partnerships, and ongoing public realm and placemaking investments. Across these initiatives, the focus has been on enhancing public spaces, preserving and leveraging heritage assets, attracting residential development, and supporting arts, culture, and small businesses as key drivers of activity and identity. Collectively, this work reflects a clear shift in direction from relying on traditional retail and office workers towards building a more diverse, mixed-use downtown.

These investments and the hard work behind them have established Downtown London as a key destination. While other cities struggle to bring new uses and users to their downtowns, London has added nearly 1,500 new units of housing between 2021-2025. As other cities struggle to keep up with aging infrastructure, London has invested more than $150 million in new infrastructure in Downtown. This includes enabling infrastructure to unlock 17,000 new residential units, a new transit network, cycling infrastructure, roadways, lighting, utility improvements, sidewalks and other enhancements to public space and rights-of-way, significant shoreline rehabilitation, flood control mitigation, and enhanced amenities at Harris Park and along the riverfront. While other cities look for opportunities to build better public spaces, London boasts a diversity of indoor and outdoor spaces with different characteristics, uses and seasonality from large events centres to small creative spaces.

Today, Downtown properties are valued at more than $2.4 billion[15], or nearly two-and-a-half times the value in 2015 ($1 billion in assessed value), when the City of London embarked on its update to the Downtown Plan with the creation of Our Move Forward. These investments have created the conditions for Downtown London to thrive, and this Plan is designed to build on these investments to move Downtown London into the next phase of its renewal.

3.3 EMERGING TRENDS SHAPING DOWNTOWNS

Like many Downtowns across North America, Downtown London is navigating a period of transition. Once defined by their role as dense, office-oriented employment centres and commercial retail cores, many downtowns are struggling to recapture the vibrancy and economic activity that once characterized them. Importantly, these challenges did not emerge overnight. While the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted and, in many cases, accelerated these pressures, in most cases it did not cause them. Advances in technology and evolving workplace practices had already begun to decentralize work. Technology and ease of online shopping had already begun to shift the make-up of traditional shopping districts away from traditional retail goods to more service-oriented businesses such as personal wellness, financial services or medical offices as well as experience-focused retail including cafes, restaurants and entertainment establishments.

This confluence of factors has resulted in downtowns that are struggling with persistently lower foot traffic, elevated office vacancies, and weakened demand for retail and service businesses. This is an important distinction to make because it results in vastly different revitalization approaches than those that would have been used in previous decades. The goal is not simply to return to a previous iteration of downtown, but rather to move forward.

The disruption to downtowns has been most acute in places that lack a diverse mix of uses and activities. Recent trends and new initiatives have demonstrated that downtowns with greater diversity, including residential populations, cultural institutions, educational facilities, and recreational amenities, have experienced stronger resilience and recovery. These environments sustain activity beyond traditional business hours, attract a broader user base, bring people for everyday experiences, and are better insulated against shifts in any single sector.

In this context, cities across North America are responding accordingly, re-evaluating the role of their downtowns and investing in diversification, placemaking, and adaptive reuse. London is part of this broader movement - facing challenges that are shared – and able to draw on a growing body of evidence and experience from other mid-sized peer cities. At the same time, London's downtown has its own history, assets, and community, and the strategies most likely to succeed are those grounded in that local context.

4.0 THE PLAN

4.1 DOWNTOWN LONDON: DIRECTION FOR THE NEXT DECADE

With a renewed sense of purpose, new cultural energy, and investment momentum, Downtown London will continue to be the city's cultural, economic, and civic heart where interactions with culture, commerce, and community are part of daily life.

Over the next decade, Downtown London will build momentum through practical and visible change and professional stewardship. Underused buildings and spaces will be given new life through new uses, partnerships, and adaptive reuse supporting new housing, budding entrepreneurship, and emerging industries, while preserving the character that makes the Downtown distinctive. A growing mix of residents and daily amenities and services will make the Downtown a location of choice, supporting everyday needs alongside a rich mixture of culture and activity.

Downtown London will be a place where people feel comfortable, welcome, and at ease in daily life. Lively and welcoming in every season, it will be a place to gather, celebrate, and experience arts, culture, and heritage that are distinctly London's. Streets, parks, and public spaces will promote a sense of ownership, shared responsibility, and belonging while enabling a lively and inclusive public life.

Urban, animated, and distinctive, the Downtown will be a reflection of what London aspires to be.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN

Summary of Downtown Plan Revitalization Approaches

The London Downtown Plan includes 58 Actions grouped under four key goals: A Downtown that is well-managed, vibrant, liveable, and creative and innovative. These Actions support a diversity of approaches to shape and revitalize Downtown for the next decade. The Actions also work collaboratively to create four Big Moves – a culmination of Actions that result in greater impact together than when implemented in isolation. These include a nimble governance structure, enhanced downtown public space, creating a 'River District', and supporting and championing London's designation as a City of Music. Each Big Move is delivered through a combination of Actions spanning public realm improvements, programming, partnerships, funding, and governance, reflecting the cross-cutting and collaborative nature of Downtown revitalization. Together, the Big Moves offer a framework for sequencing investment and effort, helping partners align around shared priorities and move from individual actions to collective impact.

The Actions in this Plan are further supplemented by a set of 10 Quick Start Actions, included in the Background Study and listed in Appendix A, to advance early efforts for increasing vibrancy and programming, promotion of Downtown, and enhancing public spaces, as well as addressing safety, security, parking and other mobility concerns.

The Actions prescribe a variety of tools to advance Downtown revitalization. This includes early work to evaluate current conditions and determine strategies, as well as a combination of incentives, funding, partnerships and new initiatives.

Approaches to the Downtown revitalization in this Plan are summarized below.

Assessing Current Conditions and Opportunities

Early Actions will assess current conditions and opportunities to establish the appropriate next steps for action. These Actions include the following studies, analyses, and targets:

- **Services and Amenities Gap Assessment** to evaluate the amenities and services to support a growing residential population in the Downtown as well as daily workers and visitors
- **Annual housing targets** to achieve the residential density established by The London Plan of 5,000 new units and to increase the population in the Downtown to 20,000 residents
- **Audits of Downtown rights-of-way and public space** to determine new opportunities for enhancements such as seating, shade structures, pedestrian infrastructure or other amenities
- **Assessment of music and performance venues** to identify facilities and venue needs not currently being met and to identify potential models to address gaps
- **Cultural Infrastructure Inventory and Gap Analysis** to create an inventory of infrastructure to support creative sectors and creative production, and to inform the 2027 City of London Cultural Prosperity Plan

Activating Vacant Retail and Office Space

A set of Actions are focused on addressing London's most dire challenges, namely high retail and office vacancies, and the need to provide additional everyday experiences in the Downtown. These Actions are focused on:

- **Downtown incubation spaces** in partnership with post-secondary institutions, non-profits, community anchors, and industry organizations through formal agreements, co-located programs, and shared facilities
- **Offering business support** to create a pipeline of businesses that can move from incubation to occupying downtown retail and commercial spaces
- **Enhancing and programming key Downtown spaces** including additional events, programming and physical improvements to create opportunities for spontaneous and everyday use
- **Developing a Night-time Economy Strategy** with a focus on music and complementary creative uses such as production spaces
- **Creating a Downtown Leasing and Occupancy Strategy** to actively match available spaces with tenants, including small businesses, cultural uses and emerging sectors and re-introducing the UPSTART program for short-term 'meanwhile' leases – a program that was successfully piloted in London in 2022
- **Downtown Land and Asset Strategy** to enable the City to identify, acquire, and assemble priority properties in order to own or lease properties, or advance redevelopment through pre-development work and partnerships with private developers including buildings, parking and vacant lots

Implementing Governance

To ensure the implementation of the Plan can be led efficiently and strategically, the Downtown Plan guides the City to establish a governance structure that enables the City to lead, partners to collaborate, and intended outcomes to be realized. This includes a new service area for the City of London in the form of a new Downtown Office focused on Plan implementation, as well as a new leadership structure. This leadership structure can be supported through a new arm's length organization – a Downtown Revitalization Authority – or a collaborative model including the City, Tourism London, Small Business Centre, London Economic Development Corporation, post-secondary, cultural and institutional partners, and others.

Modifying Incentives

The London Downtown Plan builds on and augments existing financial support including maintaining, modifying, or adding to existing incentives to drive private sector and community investment and involvement. The list of incentives includes those related to office conversions, public art installations, programming and space activations, residential development charge grants, meanwhile use leases, and fit-out grants for businesses and creative uses, including music and production spaces. A full summary of the incentives cited in the Plan are outlined in Appendix B.

Expanding on Existing Plans and Initiatives

Actions of the London Downtown Plan leverage existing plans and policies including The London Plan, City of London Strategic Plan (2023-2027), Zoning Bylaw update ("Rethink Zoning"), Mobility Master Plan, Real Property Acquisition Policy, Master Accommodation Plan, Dundas Street Corridor Plan, London's Cultural Prosperity Plan, Thames Valley Corridor Plan, One River Environmental Assessment, Our Move Forward Plan, Public Art and Monument Policy, Master Paddling Plan, ReconciliAction Plan, Corporate Asset Management Plan, the Parks and Recreation Plan, and the Parks and Recreation Area Bylaw to ensure complementary action across other municipal priorities.

Return on Investment and Steps to Implementation

The return on the City's investment is expected to be more than double the cost of implementation. This return will be in the form of property tax revenue, increased foot traffic, business retention and creation, new cultural spaces and opportunities, new tourism, business spend and increased visitors to Downtown, as well as new private sector development and investment. Section 4.4 includes a more detailed estimate of the Return on Investment of the London Downtown Plan.

An Implementation Plan, included in Section 5.0, establishes Actions, roles, timelines, and types of Actions to realize the intended outcomes of the Downtown Plan as well as a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure implementation and progress, and to enable adjustments as needed.

4.3 GOALS, ACTIONS AND BIG MOVES

Goal 1: A Liveable Downtown

Shifting Downtown from a primarily commuter-based district to a resilient, complete, mixed-use neighbourhood supported by a growing residential community and everyday services.

Why Liveability?
Downtowns across Canada have faced rising office vacancy rates since the pandemic as hybrid work patterns reshape urban cores. Central districts that once depended on weekday commuters are now rethinking what makes downtowns thrive.

The most resilient downtowns function as complete, mixed-use neighbourhoods where housing, essential services, retail, cultural institutions, and entertainment exist alongside employment. These areas attract people throughout the day, into the evening, and on weekends, not just during the standard workday.

Downtown London is well-positioned for this shift. With over 11,700 residents in 2025 and more than 1,500 new housing units permitted between 2021-2025, the area's residential population is growing rapidly. But population growth alone is not enough as residents need walkable access to groceries, healthcare, childcare, and daily services to make downtown a livable neighbourhood rather than just a place to sleep. The provision of services and new amenities will depend on a combination of public and private investment. This includes building on the new infrastructure investment in the City's core, combined with additional initiatives in this Plan to incentivize new businesses, creative uses, and private sector investment in key services.

Why this shift matters:

- **Economic stability** - A mixed-use downtown generates activity and spending seven days a week, reducing dependence on office tenants and insulating local businesses from fluctuations in commuter traffic
- **Quality of life** - Residents who can meet daily needs locally spend less time commuting and more time engaged in their community
- **Sustainability** - Compact, walkable neighbourhoods reduce car dependency and support climate goals and active transportation
- **Safety, inclusivity, and vibrancy** - Streets with consistent foot traffic feel safer and more welcoming than those that empty out after 5 p.m

The proposed Actions support Downtown London's evolution from a commuter-focused office district into a complete neighbourhood that serves residents, workers, and visitors alike with the services, amenities, transportation options, and inclusive public spaces that support daily life at all hours. These Actions include enhancement to the public realm with any future infrastructure renewal. With 25 blocks of the Downtown rebuilt in recent years, each block was assessed as part of the redesign process to add to the public realm where possible. Future opportunities will focus on maintenance, operations and enhancement of these additions, or any new additions, through additional capital improvements.

Objective 1:
Grow the Downtown's residential population to establish a stable, year-round base of daily population with associated supporting services and amenities.

Actions:

1.1 Conduct a Services and Amenities Gap Assessment to identify gaps in resident-serving amenities in the Downtown (e.g. grocery store, neighbourhood retail, childcare facilities, community spaces, fitness centres). Use this assessment to understand needs and opportunities for new or expanded services and amenities based on population targets, market demand, and available commercial spaces, and to inform a Downtown Leasing and Occupancy Strategy (Action 13.3)

1.2 Identify the current capacity and condition of City facilities and amenities in Downtown and evaluate opportunities for new or expanded amenities including: community centres, outdoor recreation spaces, youth and family amenities, dog-supportive amenities, and neighbourhood gathering spaces

1.3 Establish annual housing targets for the Downtown to meet or exceed the residential density targets in the Official Plan of 60 units per hectare to sustain neighbourhood-serving retail and services, amortize transit and infrastructure capacity, and support vibrancy. Established targets should be the basis for growth management in the Downtown including duration of incentives

Objective 2:
Expand the range of housing types and unit sizes to offer diverse housing options to balance the housing need of families, seniors, students, and diverse households.

Actions:

2.1 Use the 2025 Housing Needs Assessment to evaluate the existing housing stock and demographic trends, confirm housing demand, and align demand with new residential development in the Downtown

- **a.** Work with the development industry to identify the regulatory, market, and physical barriers that limit housing diversity to promote a balanced and complete neighbourhood
- **b.** Ensure that zoning regulations permit a diverse range of housing types and unit configurations in the Downtown including co-living, multi-generational housing, long-term care and residential care facilities
- **c.** Track new residential units by type, size and tenure to evaluate housing diversity and identify supply gaps in Downtown

2.2 Continue the Residential Development Charges Grant program to maintain incentives for residential development in Downtown (until the 60 units per hectare goal is reached) and consider additional incentives for the creation of larger, family-sized units (3 bedroom plus) in mid- and high-rise projects

Objective 3:
Maintain and expand affordable and attainable housing options to ensure Downtown remains inclusive and affordable.

Actions:

3.1 Work with London Community Foundation to seek continued support for the Whole of Community Response and the Fund for Change to build supportive housing with wrap around services to support vulnerable populations and track progress

3.2 Continue incentives for converting office spaces to residential units including new funding sources once Housing Accelerator Funds are exhausted

3.3 Establish a rental replacement policy to protect the loss of naturally occurring affordable housing

3.4 Evaluate the need for a Housing Acquisition Fund to protect existing affordable housing at risk of demolition including non-profit acquisition and preservation of at-risk buildings in the Downtown

Objective 4:
Strengthen connections between Downtown, adjacent neighbourhoods and the region to reinforce Downtown as the city's primary destination and expand access to Downtown for residents and visitors.

Actions:

4.1 Link Downtown to adjacent neighbourhoods and major institutional anchors (e.g., Western University, Fanshawe College, area hospitals) by advancing the Transit Priority Network and Cycling Network Plan with implementation of the Mobility Master Plan

4.2 Advance the implementation of a Downtown mobility hub that integrates regional transportation services (e.g. rail, intra-regional transit, airport connections) with London's local transit and active transportation networks, including improvements to Clarence Street for pedestrians as part of planned lifecycle renewal

4.3 Improve access to Downtown for visitors and infrequent riders by evaluating the feasibility of a tap-to-ride transit payment system to reduce barriers and encourage increased use of transit in alignment with the London Transit Commission's 2019 Ridership Growth Strategy fare strategies and transit uptake measures

4.4 Update the Old East Village Dundas Street Corridor Plan after the ten-year mark (2030) to strengthen development potential between Downtown and Old East Village to support infill development, business activity, and residential density along Dundas Street

Objective 5:
Transform access to, from, and within Downtown to strengthen connections, improve accessibility, and support vibrant, people-focused streets.

Actions:

5.1 Enhance wayfinding, lighting, signage, gateway features, and targeted activations to strengthen connections between the Thames Valley Parkway and the Downtown as part of planned capital improvements

5.2 Continue to advance road safety for all users through public communications and other road safety measures such as leading pedestrian crossings, no right-on-reds at key intersections, and signage to ensure efficiency of bus lanes and traffic priorities

5.3 Collaborate with anchor institutions through initiatives like 'Smart Commute' program to encourage active transportation between these institutions and Downtown including secure bike parking

Objective 6:
Enhance everyday comfort and experience in the Downtown by improving cleanliness, safety, accessibility, and quality of the public spaces and amenities.

Actions:

6.1 Strengthen the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) Team by tracking indicators of impact and actively engaging with peer communities to exchange proven strategies

6.2 Conduct an audit of Downtown rights-of-way and public space to identify additional opportunities for benches, planters, waste receptacles, small green or pause spaces, and shade features. The audit should inform future streetscape and park enhancements, including implementation of the Mobility Master Plan's Enhanced Pedestrian Areas, and support improvements for comfort, air quality, microclimate, weather protection, and reduce the urban heat island effect

6.3 Identify existing anchor institutions and spaces in the Downtown that could serve as 'third spaces' for a growing residential population as well as a daytime population of students, youth, and workers looking for additional social spaces to gather. Work with partners to implement a network of publicly available spaces especially during evening and weekend hours

Objective 7:
Enable innovative and flexible use of the riverfront and the public realm to support new residential development, public and private sector investment, and access to flexible open space in proximity to Downtown.

Actions:

7.1 Update policies and bylaws to allow temporary and ongoing commercial activity such as kiosks and mobile vendors in public spaces and rights-of-way to allow for greater activation along the riverfront

7.2 Use the site plan approval process to encourage new developments along the riverfront to include accessible pathways, view corridors, patios, and active frontages facing the river to provide visual and physical connections to the riverfront and access to public spaces

7.3 Promote ecological enhancement along the riverfront in alignment with the Thames Valley Corridor Plan. This should include the integration of Indigenous knowledge and stewardship practices and opportunities for learning and connecting with the river

BIG MOVE:

Developing a 'River District' at the Heart of the City

Position the Thames River as a defining feature of Downtown London by establishing a River District that integrates ecological enhancement, riverfront recreation, public realm improvements, programming, and urban development within a unified and community-focused framework while incorporating flood management and climate resilience into the design and use of riverfront spaces. This approach can support everyday use by residents and visitors, strengthen cultural and ecological connections, integrate Indigenous knowledge and stewardship, and support new residents and residential development that generate activity along the riverfront.

Related Actions: 1.1, 1.2, 3.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1, 8.2, 8.4, 10.2, 12.2, 16.1, 17.1, 17.2, Quick Start Action (QSA) 3, QSA 5, and QSA 7

How It Comes Together

Public Access and River Experience:
The work completed by the City in 2025, to enhance the Harris Park riverfront, provides an important foundation and early demonstration of what the River District can become. Future action can promote the pedestrian and cycling access between Downtown and the river to better connect visitors' experience between Downtown and the riverfront.

Programming and Activation:
Introduce coordinated, year-round programming along the riverfront including cultural events, seasonal activities, and low-impact daily uses to increase visibility, activity, and connection to the river, and build a distinct identity for the River District as a place to gather, explore, and connect with nature.

River-Oriented Development:
Encourage adjacent development that engages the river through active frontages, complementary uses (e.g., cafés, cultural spaces), and improved physical and visual connections between buildings and the river, to help reinforce the River District as a mixed-use neighbourhood anchored by the Thames River.

Ecological Restoration and Stewardship:
Advance riverfront enhancement to integrate Indigenous knowledge and support stewardship practices to support a healthy and resilient river system. Highlight the existing river access to characterize the Thames River as a connected "Blueway" between Downtown and other areas to support riverfront experiences while protecting sensitive areas as determined by the City's Paddling Plan, ReconciliAction Plan, Thames Valley Corridor Plan, One River Environmental Assessment, and the new Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Governance and Partnerships:
Highlight the work completed by the City in collaboration with conservation authorities, Indigenous communities, and key partners to align recreation, programming and urban initiatives within the River District. Sustained cross-departmental collaboration and external partnerships will enable delivery of a cohesive River District including prioritized and coordinated capital investments in riverfront enhancements and public realm improvements through City capital plans, external funding sources, and public-partnership opportunities.

Early Implementation Opportunities: The following reflects the coordination of several Actions that collectively serve to advance the Big Move:

- Build on the 2025 Harris Park riverfront enhancements to initiate pilot projects at key sites (e.g., Forks of the Thames, Harris Park, Ivey Park) to test integrated approaches to public realm improvements, programming, and recreation
- Initiate Indigenous-led engagement to inform stewardship, programming, and design priorities for the river corridor in alignment with the ReconciliAction Plan
- Launch a coordinated riverfront programming series, including seasonal events and low-impact daily activities, to increase visibility and use
- Identify early interventions (e.g., movable seating, wayfinding, pop-up concessions) to improve comfort and encourage everyday use

Goal 2: A Vibrant Downtown
Transform Downtown's public spaces into places of everyday vibrancy, seven days a week, across all seasons, supporting community life, economic vitality, and local culture.

Why Vibrancy?
Downtown's parks, plazas, streets, and riverfront are essential civic assets that shape the daily experience of residents, workers, and visitors. Strengthening key public spaces including Ivey, Harris and Victoria Parks, Forks of the Thames, Museum London, Covent Garden Market, Canada Life Place, the Central Library, and Dundas Place will enhance social interaction, support surrounding businesses, and anchor Downtown's continued revitalization.

Significant capital investments since the late 1990s, including Dundas Place in 2019, have established Downtown London as a major regional destination attracting nearly 2 million annual visitors. While Downtown has proven highly successful as an events destination, it now must evolve its public spaces into places of everyday vibrancy - active, welcoming, and animated across all seasons. Creating comfortable, flexible spaces for recreation, gathering, cultural expression, and informal daily use is critical to supporting community life, strengthening local identity, and encouraging repeat visitation.

Figure 3 Downtown London Programming Strategy. At the base of the programming pyramid is a focus on daily life and "weekly rendez-vous", where all types of people come for the atmosphere and ambiance at all hours of the day, and all year round. The proposed interventions for Downtown London, along with other Actions and phases of implementation, will re-enforce everyday activity and "daily life" as outlined in this programming strategy triangle. This approach supports everyday vibrancy by providing individuals with a reason to be in Downtown often. It also attracts targeted audiences that visit for special events by encouraging them to stay longer. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

Early investment in three priority public spaces identified in this Plan will create a connected network of vibrant, people-focused destinations for daily enjoyment. Concentrating placemaking, design improvements, and year-round programming in these locations will build momentum, increase regular use, and establish a proof of concept for more ambitious city-building initiatives that attract future investment. These Actions support economic development by increasing foot traffic, strengthening local business performance, and enhancing Downtown's attractiveness to investors, talent, residents and employers.

Recent progress in seasonal programming and creative use of public spaces has demonstrated the strength of London's cultural community. However, declining funding for programming and community partners is limiting the ability to sustain and expand successful initiatives. Continued investment in arts, placemaking, and local programming is essential to animate Downtown throughout the year, support creators and community organizations, boost nearby businesses, and reinforce confidence in Downtown London as a thriving cultural and economic centre.

The proposed Actions focus on leveraging existing programs, expertise and talent, and investing in the unique assets of Downtown to ensure that it continues to evolve into a vibrant and active area for a variety of users, at all times of the day and evening.

Case Study Calgary's River Hall. The project demonstrated the potential of river-facing commercial activity and strengthened community ties, validating the city's "place-led development" approach for the site's long-term future and more permanent development potential. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

Objective 8:
Enhance existing public spaces with new and improved amenities and expand recurring programming to support daily and weekly activity.

Actions:

8.1 Expand funding and resources for daytime and seasonal programming, in partnership with Indigenous and community cultural organizations, to support increased activation of Downtown streets and public spaces, and enhance diversity and vibrancy of programming in Downtown

8.2 Position Downtown London as the 'Winter City of Southwestern Ontario' through increased winter programming (in alignment with Action 8.1) to increase year-round visitation, animate public spaces in colder months, and strengthen Downtown's identity as an all-season destination

8.3 Integrate enabling infrastructure (e.g. power, lighting, seating, and weather protection) into public realm design standards and capital project requirements, prioritizing key Downtown corridors

8.4 Continue to engage with a diverse cross-section of individuals from the Downtown (residents, property and business owners, students) using a variety of methods to identify opportunities for new Downtown programming that reflects community interests and experiences

Case Study Edmonton's WinterCity Strategy promotes winter activation through design measures such as wind protection, maximizing sunlight, creative lighting, and supportive public infrastructure. The strategy has successfully enhanced winter life in Edmonton and serves as a model for other winter cities. (Image: Mack Male 2013, Creative Commons license)

BIG MOVE:

Elevating Downtown London's Key Public Spaces

Transform Downtown London's key public spaces into vibrant, everyday places by enhancing major sites including Victoria Park, Ivey Park, the Forks of the Thames, Covent Garden Market, and Dundas Place. This can be achieved through coordinated public realm improvements, enhanced connections, and aligned programming. This move addresses the many activities and programming led by multiple partners, including the City, to create a more cohesive system of spaces that will work together and facilitate the flow of people from the river and through Downtown. The goal is to increase foot traffic, extend the time people spend in these areas, and promote consistent, year-round use by residents, workers, and visitors.

Related Actions: 5.1, 6.3, 6.2, 7.1, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 9.3, 10.1, 10.2, 15.4, 16.1, 16.3, 17.1, 17.3, 18.2, Quick Start Action (QSA) 3, QSA 5, QSA 7

How It Comes Together

Enhanced Public Spaces:
Targeted public realm improvements at each of three key sites (Ivey Park, Rotary Square and Victoria Park) such as seating, shade, lighting, greenery, concessions (including alcohol sales), and family-friendly amenities to make spaces more comfortable, safe, and inviting for longer stays and everyday use. Introduce and expand flexible infrastructure (e.g., power, water, staging areas, movable furniture) to enable a wider range of events and informal activities across multiple sites.

Coordinated Programming:
Collaboration between various partners to align programming and event calendars across key destinations to ensure consistent activation, reduce overlap, and create a cohesive Downtown experience throughout the year.

Physical and Visual Connections:
Capitalize on recent capital investments and infrastructure renewal that have added new wayfinding, rebuilt streets, as well as new pedestrian, cycling and/or transit infrastructure. To leverage these investments, implementation of the Big Move to enhance and connect these spaces could be achieved by communicating the linkages between spaces, temporary signage or other visual clues (such as artwork) to support more frequent use of spaces.

Unified Identity: Develop a cohesive identity for the network of anchors through consistent branding, signage, and communications to reinforce Downtown as a connected system of destinations for residents, workers, and visitors.

Governance and Funding:
Led by the City of London in collaboration with London Downtown BIA (LDBA), Covent Garden Market, cultural organizations, and institutional partners to enhance spaces, coordinate programming, functions, and investment across sites. Provide ease of use and coordination including streamlined permitting, centralized booking, and collaborative promotional materials. Align recent and future capital investments in public realm improvements to support flexible infrastructure, and additional amenities to support programming of key anchors through implementation of this Plan. Identify additional funding opportunities and sponsorship or partnership opportunities.

Early Implementation Opportunities:
The following reflects the coordination of several Actions that collectively serve to advance the Big Move:

- Implement targeted quick-win public realm improvements at priority sites (e.g., movable seating, shade, lighting, temporary concessions) to improve comfort and usability including staffing, storage and security to ensure longevity. Recommend choosing one of the three sites in collaboration with partners to pilot aspects of the program for permanence. For example, beginning by working with Covent Garden Market on enhancements to Rotary Square, or working with City departments and partners to pilot family and nature-based programming and a concession at the riverfront to test options
- Launch a coordinated seasonal programming calendar across key anchors to pilot joint activation and test demand for year-round use and encourage visitors to multiple locations for longer stays Downtown
- Pilot new visual clues (such as temporary artwork) to link pedestrian connections and wayfinding between key anchors, particularly between Dundas Place, Covent Garden Market, and the Forks of the Thames
- Initiate a centralized booking and permitting approach to simplify access and enable more frequent and flexible use of public spaces
- Update necessary municipal bylaws to enable commercial activity in public spaces, and encourage activation on private patios to enhance the experience

Figure 4 Key indoor and outdoor spaces play a vital role in the revitalization of Downtown. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

The following descriptions include programming elements for the three identified spaces.

Ivey Park and Forks of the Thames including Harris Park:

Identify a central building or pavilion to anchor the space considering use of the building at 1 Dundas Street, park pavilion at south end of Ivey Park or the hardscape area at the eastern side of the park, and explore options for storage and concessions including any considerations for heritage requirements and characteristics.

Establish a terrace or patio effect by adding moveable tables and chairs, options for serving food, drink, and alcohol, and space for small performances with utility hook-ups to establish a gathering spot. Develop programming and temporary uses that expand activity in Ivey and Harris Parks including Indigenous engagement and involvement in both programming and design.

Leverage nearby attractions including Labatt Memorial Park and other nearby anchors (Museum London, Eldon House). Improve lighting and landscaping along the Thames Valley Parkway, and wayfinding between the riverfront and Downtown to encourage walking and biking to and from Downtown. Expand and improve playground equipment at Ivey Park.

Market (Rotary) Square:

Improve use of the square with permanent shade devices in summer, quality movable tables and chairs, a darker surface treatment of the square for comfort, a flexible performance area, more greenery, better permeability between the square and the market (fenestration, moveable doors), as well as Market Lane and King Street. Add licensed concessions and curated stalls to enhance food options for dining at the market to make Rotary Square the everyday "third place" of Downtown London.

Figure 5 Atwater Market, Montreal

Work with the Convent Garden Market and Dundas Place to enhance winter programming and connect programming with other major Downtown anchors and public spaces.

Victoria Park:

Enhance everyday amenities on hardscape areas of the park including seating, children's programming, and areas for small-scale performance space(s) to encourage everyday and seasonal use. Use additional winter lights and decorations or extended programming in winter to enhance cold weather usage. Pilot an expanded concession service to test viable options including location and management.

Consider long-term investment in bandshell renewal, enhanced public restrooms including additional cleaning and security, and permanent concession amenities. Any additions (temporary or permanent) would need to consider heritage assets in Victoria Park including underground archeological remains, and impacts to greenery, root systems and tree canopy.

Consider additional options for children's play spaces on neighbouring or nearby locations including a formal arrangement (MOU) with property owners for more youth-focused spaces and play structures to address the need for more outdoor recreation opportunities in the northern portion of Downtown.

Case Study Created in 2009, Winnipeg's Annual Warming Huts Competition is an internationally recognized art and architecture event held on ice. Each year, winning teams travel to Winnipeg to build warming huts that are installed along the Nestaweya River Trail for visitors to explore and enjoy. The competition has gained global attention and highlights how creative winter programming can enhance public spaces and attract tourism. (Images: CUI).

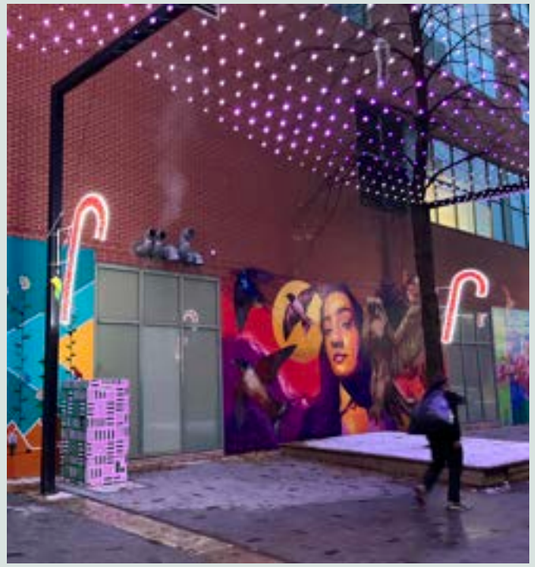
Objective 9:
Expand opportunities for artists and creative entrepreneurs to start, grow, and scale ventures that strengthen the identity, vibrancy, and historic character of Downtown.

Actions:

9.1 Review and consider amending the program requirements to improve access to the Vacant Commercial Space Fit-Out Grant for creative sectors by lowering the financial barriers (from the current one-to-one matching requirement) to improve access to space for artists and other creative users (galleries, studios, production and performance spaces)

9.2 Identify opportunities for new Incubation Spaces by working with creative sectors to quantify the need and affordability gap between market rents and what start-ups and creative industry users can sustain and identify opportunities for new Incubation Spaces. Establish formal agreements with post-secondary institutions, non-profits, community anchors, and industry organizations to create or expand incubation spaces and co-located uses

9.3 Work with education and other institutions to support the addition of public art, and temporary and permanent placemaking installations on public and private property in the Downtown including use of design competitions to jury new work (Example: Dalhousie School of Architecture installations on the Halifax waterfront, Warming Huts competition, Winnipeg)



Case Study Each year, The City of Philadelphia's Mural Arts program engages artists and communities in 50 to 100 public art projects, which leads to over 150 partnerships between the public and private sectors and injects $2.7 million dollars into Philadelphia's creative economy. (Image on the left: Wally Gobetz, 2008, Creative Commons license). (Image on the right: CUI, London)

Objective 10:
Strengthen the visual and experiential identity of the Downtown.

Actions:

10.1 Further invest in public art (through the Public Art and Monument Program) for beautification with consistent and increased funding including a coordinated Downtown mural program to install and maintain murals on public and private buildings (Example: Mural Arts Philadelphia programming)

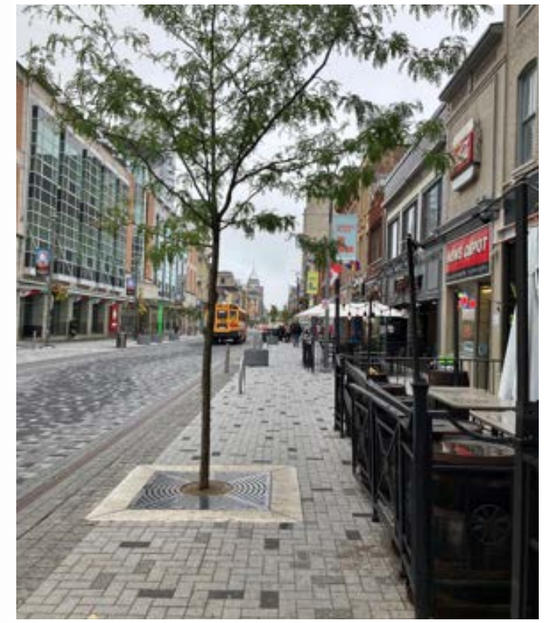
10.2 Support street activation and beautification by coordinating and promoting existing incentives programs, including the Boulevard Café Grant and Façade Improvement Loan. Work with the Downtown BIA to increase awareness and uptake of these programs and evaluate whether existing funding, geographic boundaries, or eligibility criteria require adjustment

Goal 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown
Reimagine and reinvent Downtown's built form, transforming underused buildings into catalysts for economic growth, cultural expression, and everyday activity.

Why Innovation and Creativity?
London is a city of makers and creators, supported by a fine-grain historic building stock, diverse retail spaces, and significant heritage properties that give Downtown its distinct character. Yet rising office and retail vacancies - approximately 1.3 million square feet of vacant office space and 350,000 square feet of vacant retail space, including roughly 130 empty storefronts - have left many buildings underused, weakening street activity, reducing foot traffic, and increasing perceptions of economic decline.

Although vacancy levels have remained relatively stable since 2023, current market shifts, including return-to-office requirements and new residential growth have not yet translated into meaningful commercial absorption. Combined with aging building stock and the high cost of modernization, this has created significant financial barriers to adaptive reuse, particularly for historic and heritage properties. Without intervention, underinvestment risks accelerating building obsolescence and undermining the character and vitality that define Downtown London.

Reimagining Downtown's built form is therefore essential. Transforming vacant and underused buildings into flexible spaces for employment, creative production, housing, and small business can turn existing assets into catalysts for economic growth, cultural expression, and everyday activity. London's strong creative sectors have already demonstrated the viability of adaptive reuse and co-location models when supported by the right financial tools and partnerships.



The proposed Actions focus on attracting new uses, coordinating office and employment attraction from across the region, reducing barriers to reinvestment, and leveraging the creative economy to bring renewed life to Downtown buildings. By repositioning underused spaces as hubs of innovation, culture, and daily activity, Downtown can strengthen its economic resilience while preserving the heritage character that makes it unique. This goal also directly advances the Economic Development Strategy's Investment Attraction and Retention pillar by enabling the reuse of underutilized assets, supporting priority sectors, and improving downtown investment readiness.

Objective 11:
Enable and attract a more diverse, innovative, and evolving tenant mix to significantly reduce office and storefront vacancy.

Actions:

11.1 Ensure a broad range of uses are permitted in the Zoning By-law update that support emerging industries and innovative business models, including co-working, incubation spaces, flexible workspaces, creative production, live-work, and institutional and cultural uses. Special consideration should be given to priority commercial main streets (Dundas and Richmond Streets) to support active commercial uses that contribute to vibrant, pedestrian-oriented districts

11.2 Work with the commercial real estate sector to identify attraction strategies for large office users and emerging industries to Downtown, focusing on the absorption and repositioning of underutilized office space

Case Study Calgary's Downtown Post-Secondary Institution Incentive Program supports the conversion of underused office space into educational facilities. Through a partnership between the University of Calgary and the City, a downtown office tower is being transformed to house the School of Architecture, Planning, and Landscape, supported by up to $9 million in grants. The project will bring approximately 1,200 students downtown, creating a more vibrant, campus-like environment and strengthening economic diversity in the core. (Image on the left: CUI). (Image on the right: University of Calgary).

Objective 12:
Facilitate the conversion and modernization of aging office and commercial buildings to support new uses.

Actions:

12.1 Identify under performing buildings or sites in the Downtown and work with owners and developers to identify the barriers to leasing, conversion, redevelopment, or modernization. Use this evaluation to identify municipal levers and inform policy, regulatory or financial mechanisms to unlock (re)development and targeted intensification. Align this Action with the Economic Development Strategy, ensuring priority sites are market-ready and actively positioned for investment

12.2 Review additional vacancy regulatory tools and the suite of incentives offered through the City's Community Improvement Plans and identify targeted policy levers to prioritize the area bounded by Queens Avenue, York Street, Waterloo Street and the riverfront where vacancy levels are highest

12.3 Expand the office conversions program to support non-residential adaptive reuse by identifying incentives or other tools that would trigger future educational, cultural or hospitality uses (post-secondary, hotels, cultural spaces, performance venues) to reduce long-term vacancy and lessen the risk of building obsolesce

Objective 13:
Position Downtown to incubate, attract and retain diverse and emerging industries.

Actions:

13.1 Relaunch and expand the 2022 UPSTART "Meanwhile Use" Program to enable short-term uses in vacant ground-floor and upper-storey spaces to incubate businesses, creative uses, and activities

13.2 Offer business incubation and support opportunities in the Downtown, including targeted supports for equity-deserving entrepreneurs, to increase the number, visibility, and long-term success of locally rooted businesses and contribute to a more authentic, vibrant, and diverse Downtown economy

13.3 Develop and implement a Downtown Leasing and Occupancy Strategy that actively matches tenants with available spaces with specific strategies for low-barrier market opportunities for equity-deserving entrepreneurs to increase participation, animate Downtown spaces, and reflect a more diverse and inclusive local economy

Case Study Kitchener's Square Peg Pop-Up Retail Space is designed to showcase and support emerging and active retail talent while activating the Kitchener downtown core. The space is operated by the City's Downtown Development Team and offers entrepreneurs short-term, low-risk opportunities to test concepts and connect with customers without the commitment of a permanent storefront. Square Peg serves as a key example of a City-led initiative, in a City-owned building, that supports vibrancy, business success, and local economic development in the centre of the downtown. (Image: Municipal Affairs and Housing Ontario, 2017, Creative Commons license).

Objective 14:
Position culture as a catalyst for revitalization by advancing infrastructure, access to space, and attracting investment.

Actions:

14.1 Undertake a Cultural Infrastructure Inventory and Gaps Assessment of facilities and publish an inventory of creative spaces for lease or programmed use. Use this assessment to inform the 2027 update to London's Cultural Prosperity Plan to align cultural programming, infrastructure, cultural sector development, and funding

14.2 Investigate a Creative Property Tax Subclass designation to stimulate the development of new spaces for the arts and culture sector, and implement, if advantageous, to support occupancy of commercial spaces by cultural sectors. (Examples: Toronto Creative Co-location Facilities Property Tax Subclass; Ottawa Small-business Tax Subclass)

Objective 15:
Support the growth of the music and night-time industries to enhance Downtown activity, utilize vacant spaces, and strengthen the nighttime economy, increasing the role of Downtown as a local and regional destination.

Actions:

15.1 Undertake a needs assessment of music venues and performance spaces to identify facilities and venue needs not currently being met, identify potential models (single performing arts facility or distributed network), and advance the preferred model in partnership with cultural and private sector operators

15.2 Amend the existing Vacant Commercial Space Fit-Out Grant with additional funding for soundproofing and acoustic treatment to better reflect the higher fit-out costs associated with studios, rehearsal spaces, and small-scale venues

Case Study Toronto's Creative Co-location Facilities Property Tax Subclass. In 2018, the City of Toronto introduced a tax subclass to support the sustainability and growth of creative enterprises and live music venues in the city. Eligible enterprises and venues may apply to be included under the property tax subclass and be relieved of 50% of their annual property tax obligations. (Image: Enloe Wilson, 2024, Creative Commons license).

15.3 Develop and promote a Downtown-focused investment attraction package for music, film, and other creative industries, leveraging the UNESCO designation to target music-tech, production, and digital media firms

15.4 Develop a Night-time Economy Strategy for Downtown, with a focus on live music and complementary uses

15.5 Explore partnerships with the London Transit Commission and regional transit operators, Tourism London, LEDC, and downtown anchors to develop 'Visit & Play' packages

BIG MOVE:

City of Music Canada

Leverage London's UNESCO City of Music designation to position Downtown as a vibrant and recognizable music hub by developing an ecosystem of music innovation, and a network of signature music destinations, venues, and experiences. This move aims to build on existing cultural assets and address gaps in music infrastructure, coordination, and visibility by creating a more cohesive and accessible music network that supports artists, attracts audiences, and contributes to Downtown innovation, economic development, vitality, and identity. This initiative supports the Economic Development Strategy's focus on creative industries, digital media, and music-tech as priority growth sectors.

Related Actions: 6.2, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 15.4, 15.2, 15.3, 15.5, 14.1, 14.2, 11.1, 12.3, 7.1, 13.1, 16,16.1, 18.1, 17.1, 17.3, 18.2, and Quick Start Action (QSA) 11

How It Comes Together

Venues and Performance Infrastructure: Support the development or enhancement of a range of music venues and performance spaces, from small and mid-sized venues to outdoor and non-traditional spaces, to accommodate diverse music genres and audiences. Undertake a feasibility study to understand performance space needs to evaluate whether new performance venues can be accommodated in existing or new dispersed spaces or whether a consolidated performing arts centre is needed.

Programming and Activation: Expand and coordinate live music programming, including recurring series, festivals, and pop-up performances, to ensure consistent and visible music activity throughout the year, and reinforce Downtown's music identity.

Artist and Industry Support: Identify additional resources to strengthen support for local artists and the broader music industry through access to space, funding, promotion, and partnerships with institutions and organizations. Work closely with artists, promoters, venue operators, educational institutions, and community organizations to co-develop programming, identify needs, and support a diverse and inclusive music ecosystem.

Public Realm and Identity: Integrate music into public spaces through infrastructure (e.g., stages, power, acoustics) and design that supports informal and programmed performances in parks, streets, and plazas. Use targeted branding, marketing, storytelling and signage that communicates London's UNESCO designation.

Governance and Funding: Led by Tourism London and the London Music Office, in collaboration with the new proposed Downtown Office, cultural organizations, venue operators, industry partners, and a Downtown Revitalization Authority to coordinate programming, promotion, and space development. Leverage a mix of public funding (municipal, provincial, federal), grants, sponsorships, and private investment to support venue improvements, programming, artist initiatives and new performance spaces as a dedicated UNESCO City of Music Fund.

Early Implementation Opportunities: The following reflects the coordination of several Actions that collectively serve to advance the Big Move:

- Pilot pop-up and temporary performance spaces in key locations (e.g., Dundas Place, Rotary Square, parks) using flexible infrastructure and streamlined permitting
- Conduct an evaluation of existing performance spaces to identify gaps and conduct a feasibility study to determine how to meet future needs through dispersed sites or a single performance facility
- Expand funding and seek support for local artists and event producers to increase the frequency and diversity of performances
- Develop and promote a unified Downtown music calendar and brand leveraging the UNESCO City of Music designation
- Identify and support 1–2 priority venues, sites or production spaces for upgrades or activation to anchor the emerging network of music destinations

Goal 4: A Well Managed Downtown
Create a modern and nimble leadership model to drive Downtown's revitalization through coordinated governance and strong cross-sector partnerships.

Why Governance?
Delivering the Actions of this Plan requires a nimble leadership model supported by clear governance, diversified funding, and strong cross-sector partnerships. Establishing a coordinated governance structure is essential to align City services, streamline approvals and incentives, and empower partners to lead where they are best positioned to act. This should include both improved municipal coordination and a public-private place management entity with the mandate and capacity to oversee aspects of Downtown revitalization. Engagement for this Plan identified dispersed leadership, overlapping policy boundaries, and divergent directions as key barriers to Downtown revitalization. By contrast, clear roles and responsibilities can simplify decision-making, strengthen accountability, speed implementation, and encourage investment.

Engagement also emphasized the opportunity for the City to strengthen its civic presence in the Downtown. Symbolically, a greater civic presence signals long-term confidence in Downtown's future. Beyond its symbolic importance, a stronger municipal involvement in Downtown's success can also play a practical and pivotal role in improving office and retail occupancy through strategic leasing, property acquisition or support for curated uses such as creative and community-serving spaces.

To deliver on the Downtown Plan, establishing a collective, coordinated leadership approach is critical to building momentum, unlocking investment, and ensuring Downtown revitalization is sustained over the long term. Actions are proposed to improve governance and clarify roles in order to advance Downtown revitalization, attract investment and establish new mechanisms to help the City deliver on the objectives of this Plan.

Case Study Following approval of its Greater Downtown Plan in 2021, Calgary established a Downtown Strategy business unit to coordinate downtown investments and initiatives. Similar to the proposed City of London Downtown Office, the unit leads office-to-residential conversions, public space activation, and capital projects that support downtown neighbourhoods. (Image: CUI).

Case Study In 2026, the City of Ottawa engaged the ByWard Market District Authority (BWDA), to implement the City's vision for the activation of the area. As an arm's length authority, the BWDA is nimble enough to effectively handle operations, such as coordinating with vendors, ordering and building amenities, while ensuring that activities remain aligned with City priorities. (Image: CUI).

Objective 16:
Establish a coordinated Downtown governance and leadership model with clear authority, accountability, and defined roles across the City and its partners.

Actions:

16.1 Establish a dedicated City of London Downtown Office with a clear mandate for coordination, implementation, and performance monitoring of the Downtown Plan. Position the office to work horizontally across departments and formalize links with key external partners (e.g. institutions, major landowners) to align efforts. Designate a senior-level position to lead the Downtown Office with delegated authority to coordinate across relevant departments, and to act as the primary point of accountability for Downtown Plan outcomes. Ensure that the Downtown Office coordinates closely with the implementation of and reporting on the Economic Development Strategy. (Examples: City of Calgary, Downtown Strategy Department)

16.2 Strengthen coordination across Tourism London, Film London, the Music Office, City Economic Development and Culture Services to identify work integration including shared performance indicators and opportunities for aligned governance structures that better connect London's cultural economy and economic development

16.3 Continue to employ coordinated teams including the Downtown Operations Team and the Enterprise Leadership Team to support ongoing collaboration, alignment, and effective service delivery

16.4 Review governance structures once the Downtown Office is established and evaluate the potential for a Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA) as an arm's length entity to manage and invest in Downtown as a strategic civic and economic asset. Consider a mandate encompassing place management, marketing and promotion, partner coordination, and strategic investment and activation. Assess models for governance and operations, including organizational structure, funding, staffing, and partnership opportunities, building on the foundation of MainStreet London and existing Downtown organizations

Objective 17:
Formalize collaboration among the City and key Downtown partners, including business, institutional, cultural, equity-deserving, and private sector partners.

Actions:

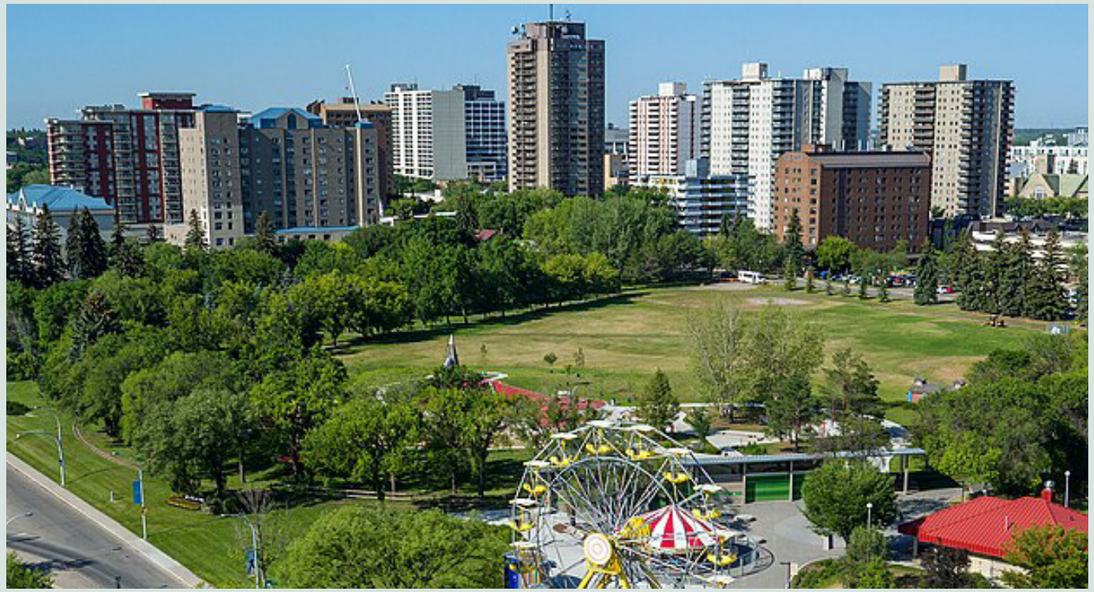
17.1 Establish a formal Downtown Partnership 'Champions' Table that brings together senior representatives from the City, Covent Garden Market, LEDC, cultural organizations, major institutions, Indigenous communities, and key private sector representatives to guide the implementation of the Downtown Plan including updates on work being done, areas for collaboration, and measures of success

17.2 Develop and implement a framework for Indigenous engagement and partnership to ensure Indigenous communities are active partners in the Downtown and its economy in alignment with the recommendations of the ReconciliAction Plan

17.3 Develop a "One Downtown" Communications Strategy that brings together City, Downtown BIA, and other actors engaged in marketing the Downtown to present a unified identity and promote events, assets, and opportunities

17.4 Pilot a regional peer-learning and knowledge-sharing network among comparable mid-sized cities to exchange best practices, coordinate approaches, and apply lessons learned to improve Downtown revitalization strategies and implementation

17.5 Investigate expanding the 'one-window' booking system to include new partners in order to expedite approvals for low-risk uses to support more frequent and flexible outdoor activation in Downtown



Case Study Several Canadian cities, including Saskatoon, pictured above, and Sudbury, have acquired downtown properties to support redevelopment and investment. In 2022, Saskatoon purchased three properties near a proposed event centre for $17 million, with lease and parking revenues expected to generate $320,000 annually. Similarly, Sudbury acquired downtown properties in 2023 to support a future event centre and attract private development. These examples demonstrate how strategic property acquisitions can support anchor projects, reduce vacancies, and stimulate downtown investment. (Image: Plattenbau, 2025).

Objective 18:
Clarify and formalize the City's role in development, adaptive reuse, and catalytic investment.

Actions:

18.1 Establish a dedicated Downtown approvals stream or 'concierge service' that provides a single point of contact to troubleshoot issues, and guide applicants through municipal processes and coordinate reviews

18.2 Align and bundle existing CIP financial incentives into a coordinated, user-friendly Downtown Funding Program with a single application process and clear alignment to the Downtown Plan's Objectives and Actions to support new investment in Downtown

18.3 Establish and implement a Downtown Land and Asset Strategy or amend the City's Real Property Acquisition Policy to enable the City to identify, acquire, and assemble priority properties including buildings, parking, and vacant lots. This may include land banking of key sites to own, lease, or advance redevelopment through pre-development work and partnerships with private developers

BIG MOVE:

Establishing a Nimble Downtown Governance Structure

Create a modern and nimble leadership model to drive Downtown's revitalization, through coordinated governance and strong cross-sector partnerships.

Establish a coordinated Downtown governance and leadership model with clear authority, accountability, and defined roles across the City and its partners. This Big Move has two core components, sequenced over time: (1) the creation of a new City of London Downtown Office, to lead implementation of the Downtown Plan; and (2) a proposed Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA), a mid-term Action to create an arm's length entity to manage, activate, and invest in key Downtown initiatives and strategic civic assets.

In the short-term, the Downtown Office will work horizontally across City departments and with key external partners (e.g. LDBA, institutions, major landowners) to advance key Actions of the Plan including, programming and enhancement of public spaces, creating incubator and community spaces, filling vacancy, and undertaking policy and regulatory changes to enable more activity and investment in Downtown. The Downtown Office will serve as the primary point of accountability for Downtown Plan outcomes.

In the medium-term, the Plan recommends the creation of an arm's length Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA) to address identified organizational and operational challenges related to investment coordination and Downtown management. Building on the foundation of the Millennium Plan (1998), the creation of MainStreet London, and Our Move Forward (2015), the DRA would proactively manage Downtown as a strategic civic and economic asset to assist in its revitalization. A mandate for this organization, as determined by the City, could include improved coordination across public spaces, marketing, investment attraction, and strategic activation. While other approaches could be considered, including an enhanced mandate for an existing organization, or other partnership-based governance structures, the benefit of a standalone organization is the ability to complement the work of existing organizations and initiatives. A standalone organization is also able to supplement the work of the City, while reducing risks to the municipality, to achieve a holistic vision for Downtown. A DRA would not duplicate work already underway but identify and fill existing gaps and jurisdictional barriers to Downtown revitalization. Organizations of this type can vary in mandate and complexity based on the identified needs and gaps, and have seen tremendous success in other North American cities including the National Capital Commission, Ottawa; ByWard Market Development Authority, Ottawa; Calgary Municipal Development Corporation; Centre Venture and The Forks North Portage Partnership, Winnipeg; The Bentway, Toronto; 3CDC Cincinnati; and the Downtown Detroit Partnership.

Related Actions: 16, 16.1, 18.1, 17.1, 17.3, 17.4, 18.3

How It Comes Together

Clear Mandate and Functions: Establish the City of London Downtown Office and define a focused mandate to lead implementation of the London Downtown Plan including roles, responsibilities, timelines, reporting structures, and required resources. This could include, but is not limited to, identifying ways of consolidating or streamlining processes, overseeing modifications to incentives and initiatives, identifying specific 'concierge' services, collaborating to oversee implementation of the Plan's Actions with partners and other City divisions, providing regular updates to partners, 'Champions' and Council, and other administrative processes (see proposed mandate for the Downtown Office below).

Evaluation of Governance and Delivery Models: Once the City of London Downtown Office is established, undertake a review of existing Downtown governance structures, mandates, operational responsibilities, and service delivery functions for the Downtown to identify gaps, overlaps and opportunities for improved coordination to address the Actions in this Plan. Consider governance and operational model options for an arm's length Authority (Downtown Revitalization Authority) to address identified needs and gaps, in alignment with the Downtown Plan, including consideration of organizational structure, authorities, staffing, financial implications, risks, partnership opportunities, and implementation requirements.

Figure 6 CMLC, Calgary (Image: CUI)

This work could build on MainStreet London's foundation while establishing an expanded mandate and sustainable funding model suited to the scale of the Downtown Plan.

A proposed mandate for a Downtown Revitalization Authority would also clarify and align the respective roles of City departments, Covent Garden Market, and other organizations to ensure complementary responsibilities. A governance model would include representation from the City and key Downtown partners, with clear roles, decision-making authority, and reporting relationships to ensure accountability and alignment with City priorities. A final recommended organizational structure and governance model would be brought for Council consideration.

Operating Model and Capacity: Implement the approved governance model through a phased approach, beginning with coordination and partnership functions, with opportunities to expand responsibilities over time. Develop an operational structure with dedicated staff and resources to lead day-to-day coordination, program delivery, partnership development, and implementation of priority initiatives. Establish a Board of Directors drawn from the private sector, institutional partners, community organizations, and City representation accountable through a clear mandate, transparent reporting, and performance metrics, but not replacing City operations such as the Downtown Office, or operational teams such as road maintenance or infrastructure delivery. International examples such as The Forks in Winnipeg or the Downtown Detroit Partnership illustrate how these models have driven sustained revitalization in comparable mid-sized cities.

Sustainable Funding: Establish appropriate resourcing to achieve the goals of the Downtown Plan including capital, operational and staffing for new City functions (City of London Downtown Office), and a funding structure for a DRA informed by models such as LEDC, that includes municipal contributions alongside diversified revenue streams (e.g., levies, sponsorships, grants, partnerships, and earned revenue) to reduce reliance on the City and ensure long-term organizational stability.

Coordination and Partnership: Formalize relationships with key partners including the LDBA, Covent Garden Market, cultural organizations, institutions, and private sector partners to align efforts, reduce duplication, and maximize impact.

Capacity Building and Authority: Build internal capacity for a Downtown Revitalization Authority over time, including staff, data systems, communications, and partnerships, with clear performance measures, reporting requirements, and regular review processes to ensure accountability and continuous improvement. Consider the necessary tools to act effectively, such as the ability to manage or influence key public spaces, enter into partnership agreements, and support or lead strategic property acquisition or initiatives.

Early Implementation Opportunities: The following reflects the coordination of several Actions that collectively serve to advance the Big Move:

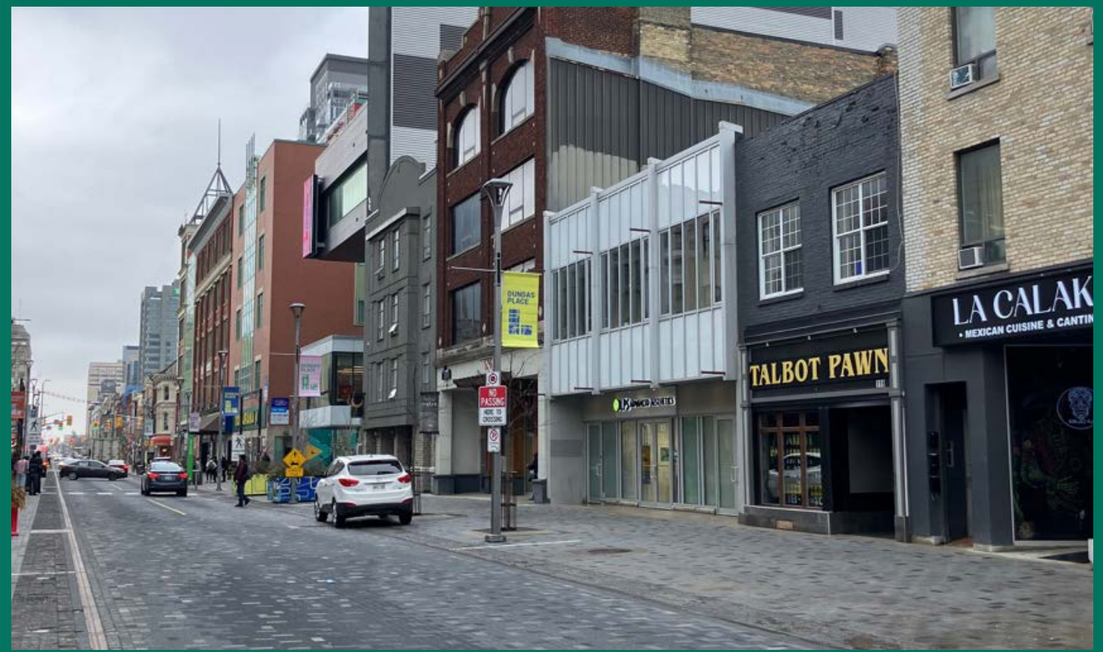
Component 1: Downtown Office

- Establish a Downtown Office at the City of London with roles and responsibilities including collaborative methods with other Divisions
- Streamline processes and establish a concierge service for Downtown inquiries and approvals such as business licensing, patio permits, rights-of-way easements, sign permits, and other administrative processes
- Coordinate Downtown Plan implementation with other City divisions and partners
- Pilot a regional peer-learning and knowledge-sharing network among comparable mid-sized cities
- Initiate joint marketing and communications efforts to present a unified Downtown identity and test coordinated promotion
- Provide quarterly updates to the 'Champions' table as established by this Plan, and annual reporting on Downtown Plan progress to Council

Figure 7 Place Laval, Ville de Gatineau , QC (Image: CUI)

Component 2: Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA)

- Review existing operational and governance structures; evaluate potential models for a Revitalization Authority, including structure, funding, staffing, authorities, risks, and implementation requirements
- Engage MainStreet London and existing Downtown partners in the design of the DRA to ensure continuity and buy-in
- Define a mandate for a DRA, including timelines, responsibilities, and resourcing, with clear roles between the City, LDBA, Covent Garden Market, and other bodies and determine next steps in organizational formation
- Launch a pilot project to coordinate roles and functions between City staff and the Authority to align programming, marketing, and operations across key Downtown spaces and partners
- Begin recruitment of core leadership and staff to build internal capacity to lead on targeted implementation efforts



City Of London Downtown Office

The mandate of a proposed City of London Downtown Office would include but is not limited to:

- Oversee the overall implementation of the Downtown Plan
- Identify ways to streamline administrative processes of the municipality to support implementation of the Downtown Plan; including, but not limited to, simplifying heritage processes, incentive processes, and permitting processes
- Streamline business licensing, patio permits, rights-of-way easements, sign permits and other Downtown-specific administrative processes as identified through implementation of the Downtown Plan
- Identify adaptive re-use opportunities, land use regulations and other initiatives to expand diversity of uses in Downtown
- Oversee implementation of Community Improvement Plan incentives, evaluation of their effectiveness and any revisions needed to ensure intended outcomes
- Identify a Downtown-specific concierge service to address Downtown challenges or assist in directing inquiries related to Downtown to the appropriate departments
- Provide regular (quarterly) updates to the 'Champions' table (formed to advise on implementation of this Plan as per Action 17.1) and annual reporting on Downtown Plan progress to Council
- Align implementation and reporting on the Downtown Plan and Economic Development Strategy

4.4 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Investment in Downtown, both public and private, increases the value of assets, encourages new investment, draws workers, visitors, and residents. This in turn increases property tax revenue, brings clients to new and existing businesses, fills hotel rooms that increases revenue through the municipal accommodation tax, brings new residents to Downtown, and gets more people on local and regional transportation networks – all of which create investment attraction for Downtown, the city and the region.

The following is a summary of expected outcomes of Downtown revitalization:

- Increase in daily activity and vibrancy in Downtown
- Creation of new jobs in the creative, cultural, and hospitality sectors
- Improvement in the quality and accessibility of public spaces
- Strengthening of the riverfront as a recreational and ecological asset
- Investment attraction and support for local businesses
- Downtown that reflects the diversity and creativity of the community
- Increase in visitors at all times of the day to create a collective sense of safety, animation, and staying power to the Downtown

There is currently more than $2.4 billion in assessed properties, generating $50 million in property tax revenue annually[16]. In the past ten years, Downtown's revenue generation has increased by $22 million annually (up from $28 million in 2016). Residential buildings are strong revenue-generating assets, contributing just over 50 percent of the total revenue in Downtown. Additional residential development will continue to drive this trend with anticipated spin-off effects on office and other commercial space to serve residents, and as density of uses increase based on the Actions in this Plan. (Note: A re-assessment of existing buildings has not been done since 2016 therefore it is not known whether the value of existing properties has changed and by what amount thus limiting an evaluation of trends in assessed value in the past decade).

There is significant value in investing in Downtown as revenue will continue to increase through continued investment. Downtown represents 0.5 per cent of the land area of the City of London yet generates 5.4 percent of overall property tax revenue. The Downtown Plan can build on this momentum. With increased development and re-investment in the Downtown (predominantly new residential development in the near term) and increased assessed value of properties in the Downtown as revitalization happens, the return on public investment will exceed the public funding committed through implementation of the London Downtown Plan.

Case Study In the mid-2000s, property owners in New York City's Meatpacking District partnered to transform an underused area with high vacancies into a vibrant destination for retail, culture, and innovation. Through the nonprofit Chelsea Improvement Company, they invested in public realm improvements, neighbourhood services, and new public spaces in collaboration with the City. These targeted investments helped attract major technology and creative-sector tenants, turning the district into a thriving hub for business, tourism, and cultural activity. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

To identify a return on investment, a method of using the direct and indirect multipliers is used to identify economic uplift in the form of private investment, job creation, increased value of assets leading to higher revenue generation, business creation and retention, and higher rates of spend in the Downtown.

The following direct and indirect multipliers represent typical metrics applied to Downtown placemaking, economic development and revitalization plans:

- **Placemaking enhancements:** Case studies and research identify that for every $1 in public investment results in $6-10 in private investment[17]
- **Arts and Culture investment:** For every public dollar invested in arts and culture, the sector generates $29 in economic activity[18]
- **Programming and placemaking:** Contributes to increased pedestrian traffic at a rate of 20-35%, and an estimated increase in revenue for local businesses of 10-15%[19]

Case Study Village des Écluses, in Pointe-des-Cascades, QC, transformed a formerly abandoned summer theatre site in Pointe-des-Cascades into a vibrant, multi-use destination featuring outdoor recreation, cultural programming, and camping accommodations. Led by the Parc du Canal de Soulanges, the revitalization combined placemaking improvements, local partnerships, food and beverage offerings, and year-round programming to create a financially self-sustaining hub. Within two seasons, attendance grew from fewer than 10,000 visitors to more than 65,000 annually, demonstrating the impact of strategic investment and community-focused activation. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

Case Study Domino Park, created as part of the Domino Sugar redevelopment in Brooklyn, demonstrates how strategic public space investments can generate significant economic and community value. Reimagined as a highly programmed waterfront destination with active recreation, public gathering spaces, and landscape features, the $50 million park catalyzed substantial land value growth. Following its construction, the park and surrounding development parcels experienced dramatic valuation increases, highlighting the strong return on investment associated with high-quality public realm improvements. (Image: Belleville Placemaking)

Based on anticipated activity and investment over a ten-year implementation period, public investment is expected to yield nearly $100 million in new property tax revenue, more than double the estimated costs of implementation including both capital and operating funding, as well as increased visitation, private investment, job creation and local spend.

Using the established metrics for economic return on investment, the following could be expected for Downtown London over the period of implementation:

- **An investment of $2.5 million in enhancing and programming three key downtown spaces:** Ivey Park and the Forks of the Thames, Rotary Square, and Victoria Park could generate approximately $15 million in private-sector investment, representing a 6:1 return on investment.
- **An increase of $300,000 annually for community programming could generate approximately $8.7 million per year in economic activity**, based on the spending impacts associated with the arts and culture sector, including expenditures on accommodations, transportation, food and beverage, ticket sales, and other downtown activities.
- **Achieving the target of 5,000 new residential units in Downtown over a ten-year period is expected to generate approximately $1.75 million in annual municipal revenue, or a cumulative $96 million over 10 years.** While some residential growth would occur without intervention, the proposed Actions and incentives are intended to accelerate revitalization and stimulate additional residential and commercial development.
- Based on the current daytime population of 43,000 people, **full implementation of the strategy could increase downtown pedestrian activity by 15,000–20,000 additional people per day**, significantly strengthening vibrancy, business activity, and overall downtown vitality.

In addition to these quantifiable metrics, there are both qualitative and harder to measure metrics like an increased sense of pride, longer time spent in Downtown or more frequent visits, increased physical comfort, sense of safety, and desire to spend more time in Downtown.

5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The Implementation Plan outlines a framework to realize the Actions and initiatives of the London Downtown Plan. It provides general guidance to the City of London and partner organizations responsible for leading individual Actions. The plan identifies Actions and indicates the Primary Lead(s), Partners, Timeline, and Budget/Costing by order of magnitude for each Action. These categories are defined as follows:

- **Lead(s) and Partners:** The main organization(s) to lead and facilitate the implementation process and any other organizations or parties interested and able to support the primary lead(s) in implementing the Actions of the London Downtown Plan
- **New vs. Existing Action:** Identifies new Actions versus existing Actions that should be continued or modified
- **Type of Action:** Actions are categorized based on the following types:
  - **Plan/Policy:** Changes or implementation to existing, or drafting of new plans and policies
  - **Study / Strategy:** Assessments, Gap Analyses, Strategies
  - **Incentives:**Grants, incentives, CIP programs, and etc.
  - **Capital Investment:** Capital funding approved through a business case
  - **Programming:** Events, activities and other programming
  - **New Initiative:** Initiatives that include multiple mechanisms: capital, operating, programming such as the River District
  - **Partnerships:** Public-Private, Institutional
  - **Communications or Engagement:** Future engagement and communications efforts
  - **Governance:** Leadership and decision-making
- **Timeline:** The Downtown Plan categorizes its Actions along four main timeframes: quick start actions, short, mid, or long-term. The results of implementation are anticipated to continue beyond this timeline thus Actions are identified based on timeframe to initiate action, as follows:
  - **Quick Start Actions*:** Quick Start Actions to be initiated immediately
  - **Short-Term:** Actions to be initiated within 1-4 years of plan adoption
  - **Mid-Term:** Actions to be initiated 5-9 years after plan adoption
  - **Long-Term:** Actions to be initiated after 10+ years of plan adoption
- **Budget/Costing:** For the purpose of estimating costs, Actions are costed using the following categorizations to identify order of magnitude for each Action:
  - **$** = < $100,000
  - **$$** = $100,000 - $500,000
  - **$$$** = $500,00 - $2,500,000
  - **$$$$** = >$2,500,000
- **Key Performance Indicator:** Metrics for measuring progress on Downtown Plan implementation. This includes lagging and leading indicators. Progress is measured both through qualitative and quantitative indicators including change over time of an indicator such as more housing units created or completion of a study, as well as a set number of targets (e.g., 60 housing units per hectare).
- **Abbreviations used for organizations and entities in "Lead, Partners column":**
  - **ABCs** (Agencies, Boards, Commissions) organizations: Including but not limited to Covent Garden Market, Eldon House, London Public Library, Museum London, Conservation Authorities, Transportation and Utilities (London Hydro, London Transit Commission), events venues (RBC Place, Canada Life). Some of these organizations are listed separately given their prominence in the Downtown and involvement in Plan implementation
  - **CGM:** Covent Garden Market
  - **COL:** City of London: includes City Council, City departments, and associated City staff
  - **DC:** Development Community made up of private and non-profit developers
  - **DRA:** Downtown Revitalization Authority (*DRA is included in list of leads and partners, should the organization be created)
  - **Indigenous:** Indigenous Community or Member
  - **LAC:** London Arts Council
  - **LCC:** London Chamber of Commerce
  - **LCF:** London Community Foundation
  - **LEDC:** London Economic Development Corporation
  - **LDBA:** London Downtown Business Improvement Association
  - **LPL:** London Public Library
  - **LTC:** London Transit Commission
  - **ML:** Museum London
  - **SBC:** Small Business Centre
  - **TL:** Tourism London
  - **Other:** Post-secondary, private owners, other organizations not captured in this list

It is anticipated that progress will be measured in alignment with the Economic Development Strategy, including indicators such as commercial vacancy rates, business activity, investment levels, and employment growth in the Downtown.

*Quick Start Actions were included in the Background Study for the Downtown Plan brought to Council in November 2025 and are being considered for feasibility and implementation in early 2026.

City of London Downtown Plan: Implementation Matrix

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
1. Grow the Downtown's residential population to establish a stable, year-round base of daily population with associated supporting services and amenities.	**1.1**	Conduct a Services and Amenities Gap Assessment to identify gaps in resident-serving amenities in the Downtown (e.g. grocery store, neighbourhood retail, childcare facilities, community spaces, fitness centres). Use this assessment to understand needs and opportunities for new or expanded services and amenities based on population targets, market demand, and available commercial spaces, and to inform a Downtown Leasing and Occupancy Strategy (Action 13.3).	COL, LDBA	New	Study / Strategy	Short-term	$	Completion of gaps analysis and identification of services and amenities required
	1.2	Identify the current capacity and condition of City facilities and amenities in Downtown and evaluate opportunities for new or expanded amenities including: community centres, outdoor recreation spaces, youth and family amenities, dog supportive amenities and neighbourhood gathering spaces.	COL	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$$	Assessment of City facilities and amenities based on population growth thresholds
	1.3	Establish annual housing targets for the Downtown to meet or exceed the residential density targets in the Official Plan of 60 units per hectare to sustain neighbourhood-serving retail and services, amortize transit and infrastructure capacity, and support vibrancy. Established targets should be the basis for growth management in the Downtown including duration of incentives.	COL, DC	Existing	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$	Residential density; new units in pipeline (leading indicator) based on development permits; new housing starts (CMHC); housing density (units per hectare) - Target 60 units per hectare

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
2. Expand the range of housing types and unit sizes to offer diverse housing options to balance the housing need of families, seniors, students, and diverse households.	**2.1**	Use the 2025 Housing Needs Assessment to evaluate the existing housing stock and demographic trends, confirm housing demand, and align demand with new residential development in the Downtown. **a.** Work with the development industry to identify the regulatory, market, and physical barriers that limit housing diversity to promote a balanced and complete neighbourhood. **b.** Ensure that zoning regulations permit a diverse range of housing types and unit configurations in the Downtown including co-living, multi-generational housing, long-term care and residential care facilities. **c.** Track new residential units by type, size and tenure to evaluate housing diversity and identify supply gaps in Downtown.	COL, DC	Existing	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$	Updates to Zoning Bylaw to ensure housing diversity, unit diversity based on building permits
	2.2	Continue the Residential Development Charges Grant program to maintain incentives for residential development in Downtown (until the 60 units per hectare goal is reached) and consider additional incentives for the creation of larger, family-sized units (3 bedroom plus) in mid- and high-rise projects.	COL, DC	Existing	Incentives	Short-term	$$	New units in pipeline based on development permits; # of family-sized units (e.g. 3 bedroom) constructed based on certificate of occupancy

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
3. Maintain and expand affordable and attainable housing options to ensure downtown remains inclusive and affordable.	**3.1**	Work with London Community Foundation to seek continued support for the Whole of Community Response and the Fund for Change to build supportive housing with wrap around services to support vulnerable populations and track progress.	LCF, COL	Existing	Partnerships	Short-term	$$$$	Number of supportive housing units constructed; number of clients served
	3.2	Continue incentives for converting office spaces to residential units including new funding sources once Housing Accelerator Funds are exhausted.	COL, DC	Existing	Incentives	Short-term	$$$$	Office vacancy absorption; number of housing units created through office conversion
	3.3	Establish a rental replacement policy to protect the loss of naturally occurring affordable housing.	COL	New	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	Number of existing units replaced as part of a redevelopment (annually)
	3.4	Evaluate the need for a Housing Acquisition Fund to protect existing affordable housing at risk of demolition including non-profit acquisition and preservation of at-risk buildings in the Downtown.	COL	New	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	Number of housing units acquired/ protected

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
4. Strengthen connections between Downtown, adjacent neighbourhoods and the region to reinforce Downtown as the city's primary destination and expand access to Downtown for residents and visitors.	**4.1**	Link Downtown to adjacent neighbourhoods and major institutional anchors (e.g., Western University, Fanshawe College, area hospitals) by advancing the Transit Priority Network and Cycling Network Plan in alignment with Mobility Master Plan.	COL, LTC	Existing	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	New transit or bike lane connections; increase mode share for active transportation
	4.2	Advance the implementation of a Downtown mobility hub that integrates regional transportation services (e.g. rail, intra-regional transit operators, airport connections) with London's local transit and active transportation networks, including improvements to Clarence Street for pedestrians as part of planned lifecycle renewal.	COL, Other (Transportation Operators)	Existing	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	Engagement with partners; progress on the project
	4.3	Improve access to Downtown for visitors and infrequent riders by evaluating feasibility of a tap-to-ride transit payment system to reduce barriers and encourage increased use of transit in alignment with the London Transit Commission's 2019 Ridership Growth Strategy fare strategies and transit uptake measures.	LTC, COL	New	Study / Strategy	Long-term	$$	Completion of a feasibility study to implement tap-to-ride system
	4.4	Update the Old East Village Dundas Street Corridor Plan after the ten-year mark (2030) to strengthen development potential between Downtown and Old East Village to support infill development, business activity, and residential density along Dundas Street.	COL	Existing	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	Completion of the Plan update; number of policies that promote infill development, business activity, and residential density

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
5. Transform access to, from, and within Downtown to strengthen connections, improve accessibility, and support vibrant, people-focused streets.	**5.1**	Enhance wayfinding, lighting, signage, gateway features, and targeted activations to strengthen connections between the Thames Valley Parkway and the Downtown as part of planned capital improvements.	COL	New	New Initiative	Mid-term	$$$	Public space investment ($)
	5.2	Continue to advance road safety for all users through public communications, and other road safety measures such as leading pedestrian signals, no right-on-reds at key intersections, and to ensure efficiency of bus lanes and traffic priorities.	COL, LTC	Existing	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$$	Targeted communications and other efforts
	5.3	Collaborate with anchor institutions through initiatives like 'Smart Commute' program to encourage active transportation including secure bike parking between these institutions and Downtown.	COL, ABCs	Existing	Partnerships	Short-term	$	Smart Commute reporting metrics

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
6. Enhance everyday comfort and experience in the Downtown by improving cleanliness, safety, accessibility, and quality of the public spaces and amenities.	**6.1**	Strengthen the Coordinated Informed Response (CIR) Team by tracking indicators of impact and actively engaging with peer communities to exchange proven strategies.	COL	Existing	Partnerships	Short-term	$	Number of indicators tracked (e.g. calls diverted from emergency response teams)
	6.2	Conduct an audit of Downtown rights-of-way and public space to identify additional opportunities for benches, planters, waste receptacles, small green or pause spaces, and shade features. The audit should inform future streetscape and park enhancements, including implementation of the Mobility Master Plan's Enhanced Pedestrian Areas, and support improvements for comfort, air quality, microclimate, weather protection, and reduce the urban heat island effect	COL, LDBA	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$$	Completion of the audit; number of streets/spaces assessed
	6.3	Identify existing anchor institutions and spaces in the Downtown that could serve as 'third spaces' for a growing residential population as well as a daytime population of students, youth and workers looking for additional social spaces to gather. Work with partners to implement a network of publicly available spaces especially during evening and weekend hours.	COL, ABCs	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$	Number of third spaces identified

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 1: A Liveable Downtown								
7. Enable innovative and flexible use of the riverfront and the public realm to support new residential development, public and private sector investment, and access to flexible open space in proximity to Downtown.	**7**	**Big Move:** Position and pilot a 'River District' in the Downtown by integrating existing river access, recreation, ecological stewardship, public realm investment, commercial opportunities, placemaking, and river-oriented private development to drive activation, investment, and year-round use along the riverfront.	COL, DRA, LDBA, DC, TL, Indigneous	New	New Initiative	Short-term	$$	Increase in foot traffic
	7.1	Update policies and bylaws to allow temporary and ongoing commercial activity such as kiosks and mobile vendors in public spaces and rights-of-way to allow for greater activation along the riverfront.	COL, DRA, Other (vendors)	New	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$	Number of kiosks and mobile vendors (by number of business licenses); increase in foot traffic
	7.2	Use the site approval process to encourage new developments along the riverfront to include accessible pathways, view corridors, patios and active frontages facing the river to provide visual and physical connections to the riverfront and access to public spaces.	COL, DC, Other (design community)	New	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$	Number of site approvals that incorporate the design standards
	7.3	Promote ecological enhancement along the riverfront in alignment with the Thames Valley Corridor Plan. This should include the integration of Indigenous knowledge and stewardship practices, and opportunities for learning and connecting with the river.	COL, Indigenous	New	Capital investment/ Partnerships	Mid-term	$	Actions across current plans to address ecological enhancement

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 2: A Vibrant Downtown								
8. Enhance existing public spaces with new and improved amenities, and expand recurring programming to support daily and weekly activity.	**8**	**Big Move:** Elevating Downtown London's Key Public Spaces. Enhance and activate key Downtown spaces (Victoria Park, the Forks of the Thames, Covent Garden Market, and Dundas Place) through targeted public realm improvements, enhanced pedestrian connections, and coordinated programming and operations to support everyday use and year-round activation	COL, DRA, CGM, LDBA, TL	New	New Initiative	Short-term	$$$$	Increase in foot traffic
	8.1	Expand funding and resources for daytime and seasonal programming, in partnership with Indigenous and community cultural organizations, to support increased activation of Downtown streets and public spaces and enhance diversity and vibrancy of programming in Downtown.	COL, DRA, LDBA, LAC, TL, Indigenous, ABCs	Existing	Programming	Short-term	$$$$	Number of events; investment in programming
	8.2	Position Downtown London as the 'Winter City of Southwestern Ontario' through increased winter programming (Action 8.1) to increase year-round visitation, animate public spaces in colder months, and strengthen downtown's identity as an all-season destination.	COL, TL, DRA, LDBA, TL	Existing	Programming	Short-term	$	Number of events; Investment in programming
	8.3	Integrate enabling infrastructure (e.g. power, lighting, seating, and weather protection) into public realm design standards and capital project requirements, prioritizing key Downtown corridors.	COL	Existing	Plan / Policy	Long-term	$	Update of design standards; progress on enhancements (# and type of projects)
	8.4	Continue to engage with a diverse cross-section of individuals from the Downtown (residents, property and business owners, students) using a variety of methods to identify opportunities for new Downtown programming that reflects community interests and experiences.	COL, LDBA	Existing	Communications and Engagement	Short-term	$	Number of individuals and organizations engaged; number of new events offered

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 2: A Vibrant Downtown								
9. Expand opportunities for artists and creative entrepreneurs to start, grow, and scale ventures that strengthen the identity, vibrancy and historic character of Downtown.	**9.1**	Review and consider amending the program requirements to improve access to the Vacant Commercial Space Fit-Out Grant for creative sectors by lowering the financial barriers (from the current one-to-one matching requirement) to improve access to space for artists and other creative users (e.g. galleries, studios, production spaces).	COL, LDBA, DRA, TL	Existing	Incentives	Short-term	$$	Program review; number of grants offered
	9.2	Identify opportunities for new Incubation Spaces by working with creative sectors to quantify the need and affordability gap between market rents and what start-ups and creative industry users can sustain, and identify opportunities for new Incubation Spaces. Establish formal agreements with post-secondary institutions, non-profits, community anchors, and industry organizations to create or expand incubation spaces and co-located uses.	COL, DRA, ABCs, TL, LEDC	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$$$	Number of individuals and organizations engaged; at least one incubation space created
	9.3	Work with educational and other institutions to support the addition of public art, and temporary and permanent placemaking installations on public and private property in the Downtown including use of design competitions to jury new work.	ABCs, COL, LAC, ML, LPL, Other (private owners, artists)	New	Partnerships	Mid-term	$$	Number of installations

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 2: A Vibrant Downtown								
10. Strengthen the visual and experiential identity of the Downtown.	**10.1**	Further invest in existing public art (through the Public Art and Monument Program) for beautification with consistent and increased funding including a coordinated Downtown mural program to install and maintain murals on public and private buildings.	COL, LAC	Existing	Capital investment	Mid-term	$$$	Number of art installations/murals
	10.2	Support street activation and beautification by coordinating and promoting existing incentives programs, including the Boulevard Café Grant and Façade Improvement Loan. Work with the Downtown BIA to increase awareness and uptake of these programs and evaluate whether existing funding, geographic boundaries, or eligibility criteria require adjustment.	COL, LDBA	Existing	Incentives	Short-term	$$$	Increase in incentive uptake; # of new patios

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown								
11. Enable and attract a more diverse, innovative, and evolving tenant mix to significantly reduce office and storefront vacancy.	**11.1**	Ensure a broad range of uses are permitted in the Zoning By-law update that support emerging industries and innovative business models, including co-working, incubation spaces, flexible workspaces, creative production, live-work, and institutional and cultural uses. Special consideration should be given to priority commercial main streets (Dundas and Richmond Streets) to support active commercial uses that contribute to vibrant, pedestrian-oriented districts.	COL, LEDC	Existing	Plan / Policy	Short-term	$	Complete the By-law update with commercial flexibility
	11.2	Work with the commercial real estate sector to identify attraction strategies for large office users and emerging industries to Downtown, focusing on the absorption and repositioning of underutilized office space	COL, DRA, LEDC, Other (realtors)	New	New Initiative	Mid-term	$$	Office absorption (sq ft)

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown								
12. Facilitate the conversion and modernization of aging office and commercial buildings to support new uses.	**12.1**	Identify under performing buildings or sites in the Downtown and work with owners and developers to identify the barriers to leasing, conversion, redevelopment, or modernization. Use this evaluation to identify municipal levers and inform policy, regulatory or financial mechanisms to unlock (re)development and targeted intensification. Align this Action with the Economic Development Strategy, ensuring priority sites are market-ready and actively positioned for investment.	COL, DRA, DC, LDBA	New	New Initiative	Short-term	$	Retail and office absorption (sq ft); number of conversions, renovations or redevelopment sites (building permits)
	12.2	Review additional vacancy regulatory tools and the suite of incentives offered through the City's Community Improvement Plans and identify targeted policy levers to prioritize the area bounded by Queens Avenue, York Street, Waterloo Street and the riverfront where vacancy levels are highest.	COL, DC	Existing	Incentives	Mid-term	$	Program review for targeted incentives; retail and office vacancy absorption in the target area
	12.3	Expand the office conversions program to support non-residential adaptive reuse by identifying incentives or other tools that would trigger future educational, cultural or hospitality uses (post-secondary, hotels, cultural spaces, performance venues) to reduce long-term vacancy and lessen the risk of building obsolesce	COL, DRA	New	Incentives	Mid-term	$$$$	Uptake in non-residential office conversions

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown								
13. Position Downtown to incubate, attract and retain diverse and emerging industries.	**13.1**	Relaunch and expand the 2022 UPSTART "Meanwhile Use" Program to enable short-term uses in vacant ground-floor and upper-storey spaces to incubate businesses, creative uses, and activities.	COL, DRA, LDBA	New	New Initiative	Short-term	$	Number of tenants served by Upstart program; # of recipients of the UPSTART program that take on a permanent location in Downtown.
	13.2	Offer business incubation and support opportunities in the Downtown, including targeted supports for equity-deserving entrepreneurs, to increase the number, visibility, and long-term success of locally rooted businesses and contribute to a more authentic, vibrant, and diverse Downtown economy	SBC, LEDC, Indigenous	New	New Initiative	Short-term	$$	Number of incubation opportunities offered; number of years in business; retail and office absorption
	13.3	Develop and implement a Downtown Leasing and Occupancy Strategy that actively matches available spaces with target tenants, including small businesses, cultural uses, and emerging sectors with specific strategies for low-barrier market opportunities for equity-deserving entrepreneurs to increase participation and reflect a more diverse and inclusive local economy.	COL, DRA, SBC, LEDC	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$$	Number of tenants and spaces matched; number of equity-deserving entrepreneurs matched with opportunities

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown								
14. Position culture as a catalyst for revitalization by advancing infrastructure, access to space, and attracting investment.	**14.1**	Undertake a Cultural Infrastructure Inventory and Gaps Assessment of facilities and publish an inventory of creative spaces for lease or programmed use. Use this assessment to inform the 2027 update to London's Cultural Prosperity Plan to align cultural programming, infrastructure, cultural sector development, and funding.	COL	New	Study / Strategy	Short-term	$	Complete and publish the inventory
	14.2	Investigate a Creative Property Tax Subclass designation to stimulate the development of new spaces for the arts and culture sector, and implement, if advantageous, to support occupancy of commercial spaces by cultural sectors.	COL	New	Incentives	Mid-term	$	Evaluation and feasibility of Subclass designation for creative uses.

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 3: A Creative and Innovative Downtown								
15. Support the growth of the music and night-time industries to enhance Downtown activity, utilize vacant spaces, and strengthen the night-time economy, increasing the role of Downtown as a local and regional destination.	**15**	**Big Move:** 'City of Music'. Develop and support a network of signature music destinations and experiences in Downtown (e.g. a dedicated district, performance spaces, and/or recurring programming) that leverage the UNESCO City of Music designation to strengthen Downtown's profile as a music hub and establish London as a 'City of Music Canada'	TL, COL, LCC, DRA	Existing	Programming/ Partnerships	Mid-term	$$$$	Increase in foot traffic
	15.1	Undertake a needs assessment of music venues and performance spaces to identify facilities and venue needs not currently being met, identify potential models (single performing arts facility or distributed network), and advance the preferred model in partnership with cultural and private sector operators	TL, COL, LCC	New	Study / Strategy	Short-term	$$	Completion of Needs Assessment and study of alternatives; progress on the preferred model
	15.2	Amend the existing Vacant Commercial Space Fit-Out Grant with additional funding for soundproofing and acoustic treatment to better reflect the higher fit-out costs associated with studios, rehearsal spaces, and small-scale venues.	COL	Existing	Incentives	Mid-term	$$	Number of grants for music industry uses
	15.3	Develop and promote a Downtown-focused investment attraction package for music, film, and other creative industries, leveraging the UNESCO designation to target music-tech, production, and digital media firms.	TL, COL, LCC, ABCs	New	Communications and Engagement	Short-term	$	Number of businesses in the creative industry opened, retained
	15.4	Develop a Night-time Economy Strategy for Downtown, with a focus on live music and complementary uses.	COL, LDBA, DRA, TL, CGM, LEDC, ML, LPL	New	Study / Strategy	Mid-term	$	Completion of a Night-time Strategy; growth of nightime economy (# of venues, businesses, events)
	15.5	Explore partnerships with the London Transit Commission and regional transit operators, Tourism London, LEDC, and downtown anchors to develop 'Visit & Play' packages.	TL, COL, LTC, LEDC, ABCs, ML, Other (operators, venues, festivals)	New	Communications and Engagement	Mid-term	$	Packages created; hotel occupancy

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 4: A Well Managed Downtown								
16: Establish a coordinated Downtown governance and leadership model with clear authority, accountability, and defined roles across the City and its partners.	**16**	**Big Move:** Establish a nimble Downtown Governance Structure to drive Downtown's revitalization, through coordinated governance and strong cross-sector partnerships to lead on Plan implementation, place management, programming, coordination, strategic investment and activation.	COL	New	Governance	Short-term	$$	New governance structure implemented
	16.1	Establish a dedicated Downtown Office with a clear mandate for coordination, implementation, and performance monitoring of the Downtown Plan. Position the office to work horizontally across departments and formalize links with key external stakeholders (e.g. institutions, major landowners) to align efforts. Designate a senior-level Downtown position to lead the Downtown with delegated authority to coordinate across relevant departments, and to act as the primary point of accountability for Downtown Plan outcomes.	COL, LDBA, DC, ABCs	New	Governance	Short-term	$$$$	Downtown Implementation branch created; annual reporting and State of Downtown report (biennial)
	16.2	Strengthen coordination across Tourism London, Film London, the Music Office, City Economic Development and Culture Services to identify work integration including shared performance indicators and opportunities for aligned governance structures that better connect London's cultural economy and economic development.	COL, TL, LEDC	New	Governance	Mid-term	$	Identified areas of work integration
	16.3	Continue to employ coordinated teams including the Downtown Operations Team and the Enterprise Leadership Team to support ongoing collaboration, alignment, and effective service delivery.	COL, LDBA, CGM, TL	Existing	Governance	Short-term	$	Existence of coordination teams
	16.4	Review governance structures once the Downtown Office is established and evaluate the potential for a Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA) as an arm's length entity to manage and invest in Downtown as a strategic civic and economic asset. Consider a mandate encompassing place management, marketing and promotion, stakeholder coordination, and strategic investment and activation. Assess models for governance and operations, including organizational structure, funding, staffing, and partnership opportunities, building on the foundation of MainStreet London and existing Downtown organizations	COL, LDBA, CGM, LEDC	New	Governance	Mid-term	$	Review of governance structure and established next steps

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 4: A Well Managed Downtown								
17. Formalize collaboration among the City and key Downtown partners, including business, institutional, cultural, equity-deserving, and private sector partners.	**17.1**	Establish a formal Downtown Partnership 'Champions' Table that brings together senior representatives from the City, BIA, Covent Garden Market, LEDC, cultural organizations, major institutions, Indigenous members, and key private sector representatives to guide the implementation of the Downtown Plan including updates on work being done, areas for collaboration, and measures of success.	COL, DC, LDBA, CGM, Indigenous, ABCs, LCF	New	Partnerships	Short-term	$	Champions table established; quarterly meetings scheduled
	17.2	Develop and implement a framework for Indigenous engagement and partnership to ensure Indigenous communities are active partners in the Downtown and its economy in alignment with the recommendations of the ReconciliAction Plan	COL, Indigenous	Existing	Partnerships	Short-term	$$	Establish and implement a framework for on-going engagement
	17.3	Develop a "One Downtown" Communications Strategy that brings together City, BIA, and other actors engaged in marketing the Downtown to present a unified identity and promote events, assets, and opportunities.	COL, LDBA, TL, DRA	New	Communications and Engagement	Short-term	$	Create and implement the communications strategy
	17.4	Pilot a regional peer-learning and knowledge-sharing network among comparable mid-sized cities to exchange best practices, coordinate approaches, and apply lessons learned to improve Downtown revitalization strategies and implementation.	COL	New	Communications and Engagement	Short-term	$	Peer learning network established; quarterly meetings scheduled
	17.5	Investigate expanding the 'one-window' booking system to include new partners in order to expedite approvals for low-risk uses to support more frequent and flexible outdoor activation in Downtown.	COL, CGM, LDBA, DRA	New	Partnerships	Short-term	$$	Refinement of permitting processes

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline	Budget/ Costing	KPI (metric)
GOAL 4: A Well Managed Downtown								
18. Clarify and formalize the City's role in development, adaptive reuse, and catalytic investment.	**18.1**	Establish a dedicated Downtown approvals stream or 'concierge service' that provides a single point of contact to troubleshoot issues, guide applicants through municipal processes and coordinate reviews.	COL	New	Governance	Short-term	$	Service delivery improvements identified and implemented
	18.2	Align and bundle existing CIP financial incentives into a coordinated, user-friendly Downtown Funding Program with a single application process and clear alignment to the Downtown Plan's objectives and actions	COL	Existing	Incentives	Short-term	$	Uptake in incentive applications
	18.3	Establish and implement a Downtown Land and Asset Strategy or amend the City's Real Property Acquisition Policy to enable the City to identify, acquire, and assemble priority properties including buildings, parking, and vacant lots. This may include land banking of key sites to own, lease, or advance redevelopment through pre-development work and partnerships with private developers	COL, LEDC, DRA	New	Plan / Policy	Mid-term	$	Completion of a Strategy or amendments to RPAP

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline
Quick-start actions* The following actions were included in the November 18, 2025 Background Study for the City of London Downtown Plan						
Objective 7	**1**	Evaluate expanding the place-making mandate of Dundas Place to other strategic locations in the Downtown. Additional opportunities exist in Downtown for placemaking. Utilizing existing resources, the Dundas Place team can activate additional locations to increase vibrancy, attract new visitors, and diversify current programs. Possible locations include Victoria Park, Ivey Park, Golden Jubilee Square and Rotary Square.	COL, LDBA	Existing	Programming	Quick Start Actions
Objective 11	**2**	Support patios and signage in Downtown to promote economic activity and vibrant streets. Assess the number of patios and new signage issued over a 24-month period and identify opportunities to streamline processes, improve communications and awareness of signage-related incentives, offer concierge services, target certain streets or areas of Downtown to create a clustering effect, or reduce fees to encourage more patios and generate more economic activity in Downtown. Consider a temporary, seasonal staff secondment to implement.	COL, LDBA	Existing	Governance	Quick Start Actions
Objective 7	**3**	Activate Rotary Square with moveable bistro chairs, tables and shade devices. The addition of moveable tables and chairs and small shade devices on Rotary Square will signal the completion of the square and the flexibility of patrons to make use of the space. In the long-term, stationary sunshades could be added once the positioning of temporary moveable furniture determines the ideal location of such elements while considering flexibility for use of the space for events and markets. Additional activation features, such as a stage for performances, as well as informal activities such as chess or other games could be added to enliven the square.	CGM, COL	Existing	Programming	Quick Start Actions

*Actions have not been costed given that they are being evaluated for implementation by City Staff.

Objective	Action		Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline
Quick-start actions* The following actions were included in the November 18, 2025 Background Study for the City of London Downtown Plan						
Objective 7	**7**	Test alternate venues to activate the core of Downtown including collaboration between the City, Covent Garden Market and Canada Life Place to support large-scale events. Consider connecting Covent Garden Market and Canada Life Place with use of the parking lot at Canada Life, Golden Jubilee Square, Rotary Square and Talbot Street. As 2026 is London's 200th Anniversary, this could serve as an opportunity to test a location for a large event. Additional elements to consider include a road closure on Talbot Street between Dundas and King or York Streets, more programming on Golden Jubilee Square and the parking lot adjacent to Canada Life Place, and linking events to other public spaces such as the riverfront, RBC Place, and Victoria Park.	COL, CGM, LDBA, TL	Existing	Programming	Quick Start Actions
Obective 8	**4**	Evaluate the 'Vacant Commercial Space Fit-out Grant' at the one-year mark (spring 2026) to identify uptake and opportunities for more enrollment. Evaluation should consider additional outreach and discussion with the business community, criteria adjustments, or new eligibility for current businesses with an existing lease period of not less than two years to update their space or add enhancements that would allow for expansion of services or product offerings.	COL, SBC, Other (business owners)	Existing	Incentives	Quick Start Actions
Objective 11	**5**	Work with the City's Public Art and Monuments Program to enhance Dundas Place with projection artwork. Identify existing funding source(s), including a collaboration with a local arts organization or education institution to curate new projection artwork in Downtown. Package and promote the new projections as an experience in Downtown.	COL	Existing	Programming	Quick Start Actions

*Actions have not been costed given that they are being evaluated for implementation by City Staff.

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline
Quick-start actions* The following actions were included in the November 18, 2025 Background Study for the City of London Downtown Plan						
Objective 17	**6**	Identify coordinated information and staff between Dundas Place, Tourism London and Downtown London BIA for readily available information to visitors at a central location. To maximize impact, utilize the front space of Dundas Place to celebrate and provide information about the Downtown, such as a business directory, events listing, map, and historical information about the Downtown, and consider mirroring this on the myLondon app for Downtown. Information could be tailored to specific populations such as youth/students and Downtown residents, or organized around special event themes. This staff position could also be identified for other roles in activating Downtown.	COL, TL, LDBA	New	New Initiative	Quick Start Actions
Objective 5	**8**	Enhance and communicate parking information and evaluate alternatives to the Honk app. Due diligence by staff to identify technology solutions for parking and wayfinding (app, digital signs, etc. including review of current commitments to the Honk app) to create ease of parking and efficiency to avoid frustration from drivers and lessen congestion caused by cars circling the Downtown looking for parking. Interim measures include exploring opportunities to link or create an API feed to Parkopedia, with the appropriate disclaimers, for efficiency purposes; and provide a digital map of all public and private parking lots offering hourly parking with rates including street parking in a user-friendly format on the City's website.	COL	New	New Initiative	Quick Start Actions

*Actions have not been costed given that they are being evaluated for implementation by City Staff.

Objective		Action	Lead, Partners	New vs. Existing Action	Type of Action	Timeline
Quick-start actions* The following actions were included in the November 18, 2025 Background Study for the City of London Downtown Plan						
Objective 4	**9**	Identify a regional bus or transportation depot/ designated drop-off to consolidate opportunities for regional travel and additional drop-off points on Clarence Street with consideration for proximity to London Transit stops and access to VIA Rail. Continue discussions with regional providers to explore coordinated solutions and confirm interim steps with staff as part of planning for a long-term mobility hub under consideration by the City for 2027+.	COL, LTC, TL	New	Study / Strategy	Quick Start Actions
Objective 4	**10**	Pilot late night buses. Pilot (free) late night bus service to encourage use and test ridership patterns (consider for large events or strategic times to encourage more visits to Downtown).	LTC, COL	New	New Initiative	Quick Start Actions

*Actions have not been costed given that they are being evaluated for implementation by City Staff.

Appendix A: Quick Start Actions

To support in the development of the Downtown Plan, the following Quick Start Actions have been identified. These actions allow for immediate implementation while the Downtown Plan is being developed:

1. **Evaluate expanding the place-making mandate of Dundas Place to other strategic locations in the Downtown.** Additional opportunities exist in Downtown for placemaking. Utilizing existing resources, the Dundas Place team can activate additional locations to increase vibrancy, attract new visitors, and diversify current programs. Possible locations include Victoria Park, Ivey Park, Golden Jubilee Square, and Rotary Square.

   Rationale: The existing programming and placemaking on Dundas Place and Market Lane has proved successful in bringing individuals to Downtown and activating otherwise under-utilized spaces. Through trial and error, the team at Dundas Place has identified successful approaches in Downtown that could be scaled or replicated in other locations to increase attendance, encourage individuals to visit multiple locations in Downtown, and test new programming to cater to under-served audiences such as residents or youth/students.

2. **Support patios and signage in Downtown to promote economic activity and vibrant streets.** Assess the number of patios and new signage issued over a 24-month period and identify opportunities to streamline processes, improve communications and awareness of signage-related incentives, offer concierge services, target certain streets or areas of Downtown to create a clustering effect, or reduce fees to encourage more patios and generate more economic activity in Downtown. Consider a temporary, seasonal staff secondment to implement.

   Rationale: A key aspect of activating Downtown is creating activity on the street that extends outside of storefronts, especially in the warmer months. Evaluations of patio programs have demonstrated an economic uplift for businesses and increased foot traffic from patios. Dundas Place was designed with consideration of patios and other activations. The City waived patio fees as a COVID relief program resulting in uptake in patios. An evaluation of patio and signage applications including outreach to recipients would identify opportunities to support more businesses and more visual signs of economic activity.

3. **Activate Rotary Square with moveable bistro chairs, tables and shade devices.** The addition of moveable tables and chairs and small shade devices on Rotary Square will signal the completion of the square and the flexibility of patrons to make use of the space. In the long-term, stationary sunshades could be added once the positioning of temporary moveable furniture determines the ideal location of such elements while considering flexibility for use of the space for events and markets. Additional activation features, such as a stage for performances, as well as informal activities such as chess or other games could be added to enliven the square.

   Rationale: The completion of the rebuild of Rotary Square provides an opportunity to refresh the informal use of the space. Currently the picnic tables are stationary and there is little shade in the warm months. Consider funding sources to purchase moveable bistro chairs and tables along with shade devices to support more casual use of the square and activation of the exterior of the market to drive visitor attraction. This would also serve to offer more comfortable seating and shade in Downtown – a need that was communicated by individuals during engagement sessions. A limited number of bistro chairs and tables have been placed at various spots along Dundas Place for a positive outcome. Adding additional activation creates a vibrant space that encourages visitors to explore, linger, shop, and share with others about their positive experiences.

4. **Evaluate the 'Vacant Commercial Space Fit-out Grant' at the one-year mark (spring 2026) to identify uptake and opportunities for more enrollment.** Evaluation should consider additional outreach and discussion with the business community, criteria adjustments, or new eligibility for current businesses with an existing lease period of not less than two years to update their space or add enhancements that would allow for expansion of services or product offerings.

   Rationale: The Vacant Commercial Space Fit-out Grant was created in spring 2025 to help businesses move into vacant downtown spaces by funding eligible renovations to support business incubation. Evaluation at the one-year mark can be used to assess eligibility criteria, uptake and potential updates to the program.

5. **Work with the City's Public Art and Monuments Program to enhance Dundas Place with projection artwork.** Identify existing funding source(s), including a collaboration with a local arts organization or education institution to curate new projection artwork in Downtown. Package and promote the new projections as an experience in Downtown.

   Rationale: Projection artwork has been tested at events such as Nuit Blanche as well as in other cities to brighten streets and Downtowns in the evenings and as part of a Winter Strategy. A small amount of funding would offer the opportunity to expand the program with more curated artists. Using projections in the Downtown can serve two purposes: 1) to highlight and support local artists including partnerships with local organizations and educational programs; 2) to brighten Downtown streetscapes making them feel more lively, illuminating dark areas to support feelings of safety, and highlighting architectural character. This is also an opportunity to initiate a stronger relationship with student organizations to help create student-friendly initiatives around the core.

6. **Identify coordinated information and staff between Dundas Place, Tourism London and Downtown London BIA for readily available information to visitors at a central location.** To maximize impact, utilize the front space of Dundas Place to celebrate and provide information about the Downtown, such as a business directory, events listing, map, and historical information about the Downtown, and consider mirroring this on the myLondon app for Downtown. Information could be tailored to specific populations such as youth/students and Downtown residents, or organized around special event themes. This staff position could also be identified for other roles in activating Downtown.

   Rationale: Based on engagement, the Dundas Place location office (179 Dundas Street) has the potential to offer information to visitors in addition to providing a public restroom. The space is centrally located and has a desk for information but no staff to act in this role. Conversely, while Tourism London offers information, its doors are often locked and its location less central. Collaboration between Tourism, the City and the BIA to identify a role and position for this person at Dundas Place would fill the need for a one-stop location for visitors to receive information in a central place. Providing information about and celebrating the Downtown will help people (re)discover the interesting and unique sights and experiences in the Downtown.

7 **Test alternate venues to activate the core of Downtown including collaboration between the City, Covent Garden Market and Canada Life Place to support large-scale events.** Consider connecting Covent Garden Market and Canada Life Place with use of the parking lot at Canada Life, Golden Jubilee Square, Rotary Square and Talbot Street. As 2026 is London's 200th Anniversary, this could serve as an opportunity to test a location for a large event. Additional elements to consider include a road closure on Talbot Street between Dundas and King or York Streets, more programming on Golden Jubilee Square and the parking lot adjacent to Canada Life Place, and linking events to other public spaces such as the riverfront, RBC Place, and Victoria Park.

Rationale: The growth of events that have exceeded the capacity of current locations combined with the need to preserve the greenspace and tree cover in Victoria Park suggests that alternate locations are needed for large events in the Downtown. This approach helps activate other areas of the Downtown and makes greater use of existing spaces, distributing events more evenly throughout the core. Linking events across the Downtown will create more pedestrian traffic and encourage visitors to get to know more of Downtown London, including more economic activity.

8 **Enhance and communicate parking information and evaluate alternatives to the Honk app.** Due diligence by staff to identify technology solutions for parking and wayfinding (app, digital signs, etc. including review of current commitments to the Honk app) to create ease of parking and efficiency to avoid frustration from drivers and lessen congestion caused by cars circling the Downtown looking for parking. Interim measures include exploring opportunities to link or create an API feed to Parkopedia, with the appropriate disclaimers, for efficiency purposes; and provide a digital map of all public and private parking lots offering hourly parking with rates including street parking in a user-friendly format on the City's website.

Rationale: The Honk app has been identified as challenging to use causing frustration for drivers in the Downtown. Other cities have piloted digital tools that enable a driver to identify parking by proximity to a final destination, cost and duration thus minimizing the time a driver must spend looking for parking and providing assurance of available parking before one arrives in the Downtown.

9 **Identify a regional bus or transportation depot/designated drop-off t**o consolidate opportunities for regional travel and additional drop-off points on Clarence Street with consideration for proximity to London Transit stops and access to VIA Rail. Continue discussions with regional providers to explore coordinated solutions and confirm interim steps with staff as part of planning for a long-term mobility hub under consideration by the City for 2027+.

Rationale: The arrival of several bus services since the closure of the Greyhound Bus service has resulted in uncoordinated regional bus services and the use of limited curb space for drop-offs happening in various locations in the Downtown. Coordination of drop-offs offer reliability for customers and ease of movement between transportation options (London Transit buses, VIA Rail).

10 **Pilot late night buses.** Pilot (free) late night bus service to encourage use and test ridership patterns (consider for large events or strategic times to encourage more visits to Downtown).

Rationale: Through our engagement, we heard that buses that stop running at 11 pm or midnight especially on weekends significantly limits the ability of young adults and others who rely on public transit, such as service workers, to get home safely and inexpensively.

Appendix B: Summary of Incentives

The London Downtown Plan builds on and augments existing financial support including maintaining, modifying or adding to existing incentives to drive private sector and community investment and involvement. The table below lists the incentives cited in the Downtown Plan and summarizes whether the incentive is new or existing as well as the action that is recommended:

Incentive	New or existing?	Recommended action
All incentives	Existing and new	Evaluate the impact of and consider targeted incentives based on geographic boundaries to prioritize areas with the highest levels of vacancy to focus incentives in the area from Queens Avenue to York Street and the riverfront to Waterloo Street.
Residential development charges grant	Existing	Extend existing incentives and consider additional incentives for large units of 3-bedrooms or more
Office-to residential conversion	Existing	Extend existing incentives
Office conversions for adaptive reuse	New	Create new incentive for non-residential use
Vacant Commercial Space Fit-Out Grant	Existing	Extend existing incentives and consider criteria adjustments for creative uses
Fit-out Grant for music and creative production	Existing	Expand existing incentives with additional funding for soundproofing and acoustic treatment to better reflect higher fit-out costs
Creative Facilities Property Tax Subclass	New	Explore new opportunity
Incentives for street activation, including waiving or reducing encroachment fees for patios, signage and awnings	Existing	Extend or expand existing
Incentives for daytime and seasonal programming	Existing	Increase existing funding
Incentives for façade improvement	Existing	Extend existing
Public Art and Monument funding including murals	Existing	Expand existing
UPSTART "Meanwhile Use" Program	Relaunch	New funding for program refresh

Appendix C: Summary of Engagement

Building on the first phase of engagement, the Consultant Team undertook a second round of conversations and discussions with key partners, participants, and community voices across arts and culture, local business, economic development, and related areas. Input was gathered through one-on-one conversations, group discussions, and in-person and virtual summits. The summaries below provide a more detailed view of Phase 2 engagement for the London Downtown Plan, and they consolidate input into cross-cutting themes that reflect shared challenges, opportunities, and directions for action. Wherever possible, this feedback informed the actions identified in the Plan.

Safety and Wellbeing

- Safety and comfort were recurring concerns across all engagement streams, including references to visible drug use, boarded-up storefronts, and fear of crime as barriers to enjoying and spending time downtown.
- Participants consistently emphasized that activation efforts must be paired with social supports, noting that programming and investment alone will not succeed without expanded shelters, harm reduction services, and stronger partnerships with frontline service providers.
- There was a strong call for more inclusive approaches to safety, including improved lighting, maintenance, and the design of spaces that support vulnerable populations while making others feel more comfortable using downtown.
- Safety, cleanliness, and overall perception were identified as major barriers to economic recovery, directly affecting business attraction, leasing decisions, and overall foot traffic in the core.

A Complete Downtown: Daily Needs and Everyday Experience

- Downtown was consistently described as needing more everyday amenities to function as a complete neighbourhood, with a grocery store repeatedly identified as a key missing anchor to support residents, workers, and students.
- There was strong interest in expanding third spaces such as cafés, lounges, and informal gathering places that support daily use and provide alternatives to nightlife-focused destinations.
- Food, cafés, and after-school activities were identified as important existing reasons people—particularly younger participants—currently spend time downtown, suggesting that these everyday uses are already a foundation to build on.
- Participants noted the importance of diversifying ground-floor uses, with interest in more community-oriented and creative businesses rather than retail uses that generate limited activity at street level, such as cheque-cashing or cannabis-focused storefronts.
- Overall, participants emphasized the need to create more reasons to stay longer downtown, through a mix of services, programming, and everyday destinations that support both routine use and social activity.

Arts, Culture, and Activation

- Arts and culture were consistently identified as central to downtown revitalization, contributing to vibrancy, identity, and long-term economic resilience.
- Participants highlighted the importance of building on existing cultural assets, including music, festivals, film, public art, markets, and institutions already contributing to downtown activity.
- Music was identified as a major strength, with strong interest in making it a visible through-line in downtown strategy, alongside opportunities to better support live music and performance spaces.
- There was also interest in supporting the broader creative economy, including film production, design, and maker spaces, and connecting these industries more directly to downtown spaces and programming.
- Participants emphasized that successful downtowns are built through everyday activation, not just large events, with a need for regular programming and visible daily activity.
- There was strong support for enabling artist use of vacant spaces, particularly through affordable or subsidized rents that allow temporary and creative uses to activate underutilized properties.
- Four-season programming was identified as a key gap, with many noting that while summer activity is strong, winter programming and infrastructure need improvement.
- Indigenous engagement and local identity were emphasized as foundational elements, particularly in areas connected to the river and culturally significant spaces.
- Overall, there was a call for a more ambitious and confident long-term vision that positions arts and culture as central to the downtown identity and transformation.

Mobility, Access, and Connectivity

- Parking availability and cost were consistently raised as major concerns, with suggestions ranging from increased supply to better management strategies and event-based approaches.
- Transit was identified as a key barrier, particularly for youth participants who often rely on walking and transit to access downtown. Concerns focused on limited-service hours, weak connectivity, and difficulty getting to and from the core during evenings and weekends.
- There were mixed views on cycling infrastructure, with some participants supporting improvements and others expressing concern about impacts on parking availability and road space.
- The Thames River and Thames Valley Parkway were widely identified as underused assets, with strong interest in better connections, signage, lighting, and programming to integrate them into downtown activity.
- Improvements to lighting, snow clearing, and overall public realm quality were seen as critical to making downtown more accessible, comfortable, and usable year-round.

Economic Development, Vacancy, and Investment

- Vacancy was identified as a major issue, particularly for ground-floor storefronts and underused commercial properties, with many noting its impact on overall downtown perception.
- Participants emphasized the need for a more proactive approach to business attraction and space matching, moving beyond passive leasing toward active outreach and brokerage-style support.
- There was recognition that different strategies are needed for office attraction, small business and retail, and creative and temporary uses, reflecting the diversity of downtown spaces and users.
- Barriers for businesses include complex permitting processes, unclear requirements, and lack of navigation support, making it difficult for new and existing businesses to succeed.
- Participants expressed interest in tools such as incentives, grants and loans, more flexible permitting, and patio and sidewalk activation policies to support businesses.
- Public investment and partnerships were seen as necessary to de-risk action and attract private sector participation, particularly in a challenging market context.
- Safety and perception were repeatedly noted as directly impacting business attraction, retention, and long-term investment confidence.
- Stronger connections to jobs, internships, entrepreneurship, and industry presence were also identified as important to retaining students and emerging talent in the city after graduation.

Governance, Leadership, and Implementation

- A consistent theme across all engagement was the lack of clear leadership and accountability for downtown initiatives.
- Participants called for a dedicated downtown-focused lead or coordinating entity to drive implementation, align partners, and maintain momentum.
- There is a need for clearer roles and coordination across key organizations, including the City, BIA, MainStreet London, and economic development partners.
- Strong support was expressed for arm's-length or partnership-based models that can deliver programs more flexibly and efficiently.
- Participants emphasized the importance of sustained funding, coordinated action, and avoiding fragmented initiatives to ensure long-term success.
- There was also interest in costed options and flexible implementation pathways, particularly given potential changes in council priorities.
- Indigenous engagement was identified as essential not only in planning but also in implementation and governance structures.
- Younger participants also emphasized the importance of downtown feeling more welcoming and intentionally inclusive, with clearer outreach, targeted promotion, and more visible signals that spaces and events are meant for them.
- More coordinated municipal leadership and visible investment were seen as critical to building confidence and demonstrating commitment to downtown revitalization.

Appendix D: Glossary

Adaptive reuse: Process of repurposing an existing structure for a new use to adapt to changing infrastructural needs.

Affordable housing: The City of London's Housing Stability Action Plan defines affordable housing as housing which does not exceed 30% of a household's income.

Arm's length organization: Organization that is funded and established by a government, but which is operated by an independent board. Under this structure, the organization remains accountable to the public, but day-to-day operations are directed by the independent board of directors.

Business Improvement Area (BIA): An association of property owners and tenants of commercial and industrial zoned properties within a defined area, under the governance of a board of management, that carry out improvements and promote economic development within their boundary.

Community Improvement Plan (CIP): A plan for a designated zone within a municipality aimed at strengthening communities and business districts. The plan outlines strategies for revitalization, such as changes to land use policies, land acquisition and rehabilitation, and the provision of financial incentives.

Complete community: A place where people can live, work, shop, and access services in close proximity.

Concierge service (context: municipal approvals): A specialized service offered by a municipality whereby municipal staff guide and support applicants through municipal approval processes.

Creative Sectors: Includes but not limited to visual arts, performance, music, film, written and published works as well as the production spaces and locations of the creation and display of creative works.

Cultural infrastructure: Physical assets and spaces that support cultural products, activities, and industries. This includes spaces for cultural performances or exhibitions, such as performance halls and galleries, and spaces for cultural creation, such as offices and art studios.

Downtown Office: The City of London Downtown Office would lead and coordinate the implementation of the Downtown Plan by streamlining municipal processes, overseeing incentive programs, supporting adaptive re-use and land use initiatives, and improving service delivery for Downtown stakeholders. The Office would also serve as a central point of coordination and accountability, aligning Downtown initiatives while providing ongoing reporting, monitoring, and strategic guidance to Council and implementation partners.

Downtown Revitalization Authority (DRA): The DRA would serve as an arm's length entity focused on the long-term management, investment, and revitalization of Downtown as a strategic civic and economic asset. Building on the foundation of existing Downtown organizations, the DRA would lead place management, marketing and promotion, stakeholder coordination, and strategic investment and activation initiatives through a coordinated governance and operational model.

Equity-deserving groups (also called equity-denied groups): Groups of people who have been historically disadvantaged and underrepresented in positions of power and economic influence due to societal and systemic barriers. These groups include, but are not limited to women and girls, racialized persons, those that identify as 2SLGBTQ2+, Indigenous, and people with disabilities.

Gateway feature: Visual marker placed at the entrance of a district or community to create a sense of arrival in a new place.

Heritage Conservation District: District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act for the purpose of conserving cultural heritage values, with an emphasis on the collective character of the area.

Infill development: Development that occurs on underutilized land within existing urban areas, making more efficient use of existing infrastructure.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI): In the context of this Plan, a KPI refers to a quantifiable indicator used to evaluate the success of a policy or action.

"Meanwhile Use" Program: A program whereby space is allocated for a temporary use while it is vacant.

Mixed-use: A form of development whereby land uses, for example, residential and commercial uses, are interwoven or "mixed," rather than spatially separate.

Mobility hub: A station that connects various transportation modes.

Naturally occurring affordable housing: Housing (often older units) that is rented at below-market rents without subsidies.

Pedestrian-oriented: Urban design that prioritizes the pedestrian experience over the flow of vehicular traffic.

Placemaking: Practice of transforming public space into a vibrant and accessible place that enhances quality of life, social cohesion, economic value, and the cultural health of the area. It involves designing and activating spaces with the people who use them, and can include adding benches and other seating, performance spaces, public art, etc.

Public realm: All publicly owned indoor or outdoor space that is accessible to any member of the public.

Right-of-way: Publicly owned land used as an infrastructure corridor, which includes roads, sidewalks, and utility infrastructure.

Streetscape: The appearance and character of a street.

Third space (also called third place): Places that offer opportunities for informal social connections outside of work and home. Third places can be public or private.

Urban heat island effect: Phenomenon whereby urban areas experience warmer temperatures than nearby rural areas due to greater hardscaping, less greenery, and tightly built buildings that trap heat.

View corridor: A three-dimensional space that frames or offers a clear and unobstructed line of sight on a view of a significant landmark.

Wayfinding: The act of finding one's way to a particular place. Wayfinding can be enhanced with signage and easily identifiable landmarks.

Wraparound services: Services tailored to help individuals with complex needs maintain permanent housing.

Appendix E: Acknowledgements

Consultant Team

Canadian Urban Institute (Lead)

- Mary Rowe, Senior Advisor
- Jennifer Barrett (MCIP, RPP), Project Manager and Sr. Policy Lead
- Toma Beit-Arie, Planning, Policy & Research
- Berta Kaisr, Planning, Policy & Engagement
- Emily Wassmansdorf, Communications
- Sierra Potvin, Research & Policy Intern
- Renna Cukier, Research & Policy Intern

Re:Public Urbanism

- Paul Hicks (MCIP, RPP), Planning, Policy Lead
- Michelle Blom, Urban Design Advisor
- Ranee Leung, Senior Urban Designer
- Rosalie Joly-Simard, Junior Planner

Oosterbaan Strategy

- Catherine Oosterbaan (Ec. D), Economic Development Lead

Tate Economic Research Inc.

- Sameer Patel (PLE), Economic & Market Analysis Lead

Belleville Placemaking

- Jerome Barth, Placemaking Lead
- Jerome Glad, Placemaking Lead

Arup

- Ana Sasic, Transportation Advisor
- Margaret Parkhill, Senior Transportation Advisor
- Sankranti Patel, Transportation Advisor
- Rahemeen Ahmed, Green Infrastructure Advisor

Divercities Advisory Inc.

- Abigail Moriah, Equity Engagement Lead
- Sameer Patel, Equity Engagement Advisor
- Ruth McGill, Equity Engagement Coordinator

Additional Expertise

- Carolyn Whitzman, Housing Policy Consultant
- Jim Yanchula, Local Knowledge Consultant

City of London Project Team

- Mike Macaulay, Manager, Community Improvement & Urban Regeneration
- Simona Rasanu, Senior Planner, Community Improvement & Urban Regeneration
- Abby Miller, Policy & Program Analyst, Community Improvement & Urban Regeneration
- Ryan Craven, Manager, Core Area Programs
- Brian Nourse, Manager, Engineering Planning
- Joel Gillard, Division Manager, Road Operations
- Andrew Sercombe, Manager, Public Communications
- Kim Forgetta, Senior Communications SpecialistStrategic Communications

Advisory Group

- Kristin Nielsen, Downtown BIA, Board Member
- Mike Smith, Joe Kool's and Toboggan Brewing Co., Owner
- Jill Wilcox, Jill's Table, Owner
- Adam Carapella, Tricar, Vice President
- Diane Silva, London Community Foundation, President and CEO
- Heather D. Chapman, London Downtown Condominium Advocacy Group (LDCAG)

Project Participants

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Divercities' Engagement

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Community and Institutional Partners

London Downtown BIA

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London Downtown BIA Businesses

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Additional Engagement

London Transit Commission, Canada Life Place, 100 Kellogg Lane, Gibson Gallery, Grand Theatre, London Arts Council, London Small Business Centre, RBC Place London, London Police Service, Old East Village Business Improvement Area, London Community Foundation, TAP Centre for Creativity, Goodwill Industries, London InterCommunity Health Centre, TMD | The Marketing Dept., Heron College and St Paul's Cathedral, CitiPlaza, Richmond Tavern, Jonathon Bancroft-Snell Gallery, Midtown Community Organization, London Downtown Condominium Advocacy Group (LDCAG), Argyle BIA, TechAlliance of Southwestern Ontario, Hyde Park Business Improvement Area, Hangar 9, London Environmental Network, RBC Commercial Financial Services, Attic Books, Main Street London, London Society of Architects, London Central Secondary School, H. B. Beal Secondary School, Adam Thompson, Naomi Nadea, Ahmer Khan, and Harina Mokanan

City of London Staff Engagement

City Manager's Office; Strategy, Innovation and Economic Development; Tourism London; Environment and Infrastructure; Finance Supports; Legal Services; Housing and Community Growth; Neighborhood and Community Wide Services; and Social and Health Development

Planning Document Inventory

List of all plans and policy documents reviewed as part of the planning context analysis.

- Downtown Concept Report, 1984
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DOWNTOWN REIMAGINED: CITY OF LONDON DOWNTOWN PLAN

Canadian Urban Institute / Institut Urbain du Canada
RE:PUBLIC
tate research
OOSTERBAAN STRATEGY
BELLEVILLE PLACEMAKING
ARUP
divercities
Carolyn Whitzman
Jim Yanchula