

# OUR MOVE FORWARD

## LONDON'S DOWNTOWN PLAN

Council adopted April 14, 2015





Ivey Park located at the Forks of the Thames.

## Acknowledgements

This document would not have been possible without the guidance and contribution of the many City Staff members and stakeholders that participated in the process.

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# OUR MOVE FORWARD

## LONDON'S DOWNTOWN PLAN

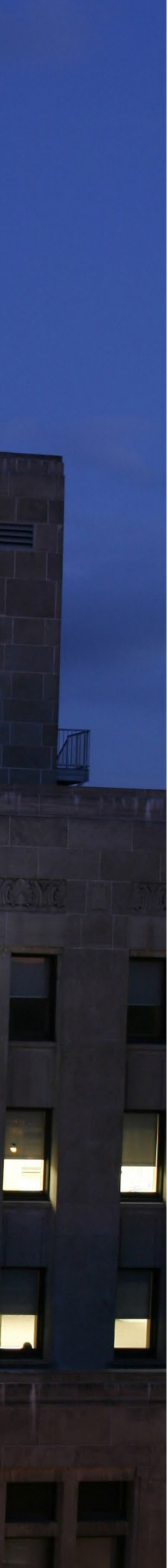
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# INTRODUCTION

Downtown London at night looking south down Richmond Street.





Downtown London plays an important role in the life of Londoners. It is the cultural heart and the original neighbourhood of our city. The downtown is, and has historically been, a critical employment centre and economic engine. It is a pillar of the community and provides the basis for our future prosperity by attracting people to live and invest in London.

A strong downtown is one that exemplifies civic pride and showcases the true nature of the city. Downtown investment needs to encourage a public realm that is second to none in creating a people place that says “this is a great place to be.”

The *Downtown Millennium Plan*, prepared in November of 1998, was the last significant Downtown Plan implemented by London’s City Council. Fifteen years later, the *Downtown Millennium Plan* was recognized by the International Downtown Association with a Pinnacle Award. Well over \$100 million was invested in London’s downtown as a result of that Plan for a series of projects and initiatives. They included the John Labatt Centre (now Budweiser Gardens), Central Library, Covent Garden Market, Forks of the Thames improvements, downtown

lighting, a new Main Street program and an expanded range of incentive programs.

The success of these investments has been evident. The *Downtown Millennium Plan* noted that downtown assessed property value had declined dramatically between 1992 and 1996. This downward trend has been reversed since the completion of the *Downtown Millennium Plan*. Most recently, the 2013 *State of the Downtown* report identified an increase in downtown area assessed property value of \$388 million between 2002 and 2013 and our downtown’s assessed property value just reached the \$1 billion mark.

*Our Move Forward*, too, places an emphasis on public and private partnership initiatives that will create interest for private sector investment. It recognizes that downtown London is London’s face to the world.

A successful downtown is key for retaining and attracting business investment in London. A strong downtown tells the world that London is vibrant, interesting, exciting and enriching. It signals to investors that London is a captivating choice when attracting and retaining a high-quality labour force. It exudes the kind of success that breeds investment confidence.



This Plan is adopted as a guideline document under Chapter 19 of London's Official Plan. It is a result of background studies undertaken since 2009, which includes the *Downtown Master Plan Background Study* completed in June 2010. The Plan is also influenced by a number of parallel projects, such as the *Downtown Design Manual*, the *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan* (Council approved April 2012), and the *Downtown London Parking Study* currently being completed. The "Smart Moves" *Transportation Master Plan* and the *Cultural Prosperity Plan*, both completed in 2013, provide further guidance to this Plan.

This Plan is rooted in an extensive public engagement process which included four public workshops attended by over 400 individuals, an online survey which was completed by over 250 individuals, a web page specifically created for the project, correspondence multiple times with the 1,400 land owners in the downtown, and specific meetings with downtown interest groups.

The most recent public engagement session took place in October 2013, at which the ten Transformational Projects were unveiled and an online survey asking for feedback on these projects was released. The responses from this engagement session and survey further informed

the policies and helped to prioritize the projects in this final Plan.

What is evident from this feedback is that recreating Dundas Street is a top priority and a clear next step in the revitalization of the downtown. Londoners also feel strongly about the need for more street trees and the general "greening" of the downtown streets and public spaces. Reconnecting with the Thames River is also strongly supported, as is providing better infrastructure for transit services, pedestrians and cyclists.

The engagement process helped to solidify the vision for downtown and chart a path forward. The key conclusion of the process is that people are passionate about London's downtown and its continued revitalization. Our community has a very strong emotional attachment to our downtown. The large number of people who took an interest in attending the community engagement opportunities and the enthusiasm with which they spoke is clear evidence of this.

Emerging from all of the public opinion and feedback, along with the vision established by Council on November 15, 2010, the vision statement on the next page is crafted to summarize Londoners' aspirations for the future of the downtown.





# DOWNTOWN VISION

London's face to the world. A vibrant destination. A unique neighbourhood.



Photograph taken at the October 2013 meeting.



# DOWNTOWN VALUES

## LEADERSHIP

As we move ahead into the future, the City of London has a leadership role to play to ensure that investment in the downtown maintains its position as the “heart” of the community and ensures that the overall vision can be weaved together with the various partnerships that will need to be formed to ensure success.

## PROSPERITY

A prosperous downtown helps to invigorate the entire city. The lasting memory of what we as Londoners and the world think of our city is characterized by the downtown. Through this Plan, and its implementation, we look to maintain and improve on the prosperity of downtown and our city.

## SUSTAINABILITY

A great place is one that is adaptable and resilient to various societal, economic and environmental changes over time. Sustainability requires an integrated decision making process to ensure all parties involved can be part of delivering the final vision and a forward-looking approach that recognizes the challenges of climate change.

## LIVABILITY

A thriving downtown is one that has been designed for people. The vitality of a place is directly related to people’s ability to contribute economically and socially to a particular neighbourhood or city. Creating a livable downtown will help to ensure that during the day this neighbourhood is an exciting place to be and at night it is safe and vibrant. People must come first in everything that we do.

## INNOVATION

Innovation leads to better places; it pushes leaders and citizens to continually build upon the strong foundations that exist in the cultural heritage passed down to us. Innovation and the creativity, cultural vitality, intellectual capacity and entrepreneurial skills that give rise to it are essential for all forms of growth and development. The City of London is committed to finding new answers and approaches to our downtown.

## PARTNERSHIP

No single entity can create a place or a downtown. Creative partnerships between both the private and public sector are needed to ensure over the long term that downtown remains a great place to be. The City of London will look to form partnerships to assist with delivering the overall vision of this Plan. Through these partnerships we will create a better downtown and a better London.

## INCLUSIVITY

A successful downtown is a place that includes all. The “heart” of our city must be one that beats for all citizens - a place where families, individuals and groups can come together. Downtown must provide a warm welcome to citizens and tourists alike; it must send a message that it is a great place to be for everyone.

## EXPERIENCE

All the planning we do will consider the experience that people will have downtown. We will create great places and spaces that provide for a wide array of rich and fulfilling experiences that keep people coming back again and again.

## HERITAGE

As the birthplace of the city, the downtown is rich in cultural heritage; this heritage sets the downtown apart from other neighbourhoods. When planning for new development, integration with the existing heritage will be a foremost consideration.

# OUR MOVE FORWARD

*Our Move Forward* is organized into five sections, which include the:

1. Planning Framework
2. Strategic Directions
3. Transformational Projects
4. Tools
5. Implementation and Targets

Each of these sections is integrated with the others to establish a focussed strategy of continuing the revitalization effort in the downtown.

The Planning Framework considers the existing downtown context and establishes a framework for future public and private investment.

The Strategic Directions section outlines the pillars of the Plan - the over-arching directions that will help realize the Vision. These key directions are then further organized into specific projects and other initiatives.

The Transformational Projects describe specific areas of improvement in the downtown, ultimately improving the overall experience for visitors and residents alike. These projects will be pursued over the long term as future budgets are developed and opportunities arise to implement them.

The Tools section includes policy statements consistent with the Official Plan and proposes organizational, operational, and financial means for achieving the Plan's vision and values.

The final section, Implementation and Targets, discusses the timing associated with the initiatives and Transformational Projects and establishes a system to prioritize these to help direct budgeting and planning in future years.



Market Lane




Budweiser Gardens



Covent Garden Market



# PLANNING FRAMEWORK

An aerial photograph of a city skyline. In the foreground, a multi-lane road (Riverside Drive) curves through a landscape of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. Several cars and a red truck are visible on the road. In the background, a dense urban skyline rises against a clear blue sky with a few wispy clouds. The skyline includes various high-rise buildings, some with glass facades reflecting the sky, and others with more solid, grey exteriors. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

View of the  
downtown  
looking down  
Riverside Drive.





The Planning Framework is a critical look at the characteristics of the downtown and its context. This analysis establishes the existing conditions and sets the groundwork for the subsequent sections of the Plan. This allows the projects and initiatives found later in this Plan to build on the past two centuries of development and evolution of the downtown.

The Planning Framework provides contextual, demographic and economic information that sets a framework that is intended to guide the future direction of public and private investment in London's downtown. It also

provides the foundation for the subsequent sections of *Our Move Forward*. The Strategic Directions, Transformational Projects, Tools, and Implementation and Targets are the components that will ultimately be used to implement the Plan.

*Our Move Forward* provides detailed information and direction for public investment that will influence the downtown's future success. As with all public investment, it is a complex process that requires partnerships between municipal, provincial and federal levels of government as well as the private sector.



The 2013 assessed property  
value of downtown is over

**\$1,000,000,000.**



## Defining the Downtown

The most frequently used boundary for planning purposes is that of the Official Plan's Downtown Designation, illustrated on Map 1. However, there are several other defined boundaries which fall within the downtown area that serve various functions.

MainStreet London was established in 1999 in response to the *Downtown Millennium Plan*. This organization's efforts to recruit tenants and improve the streetscape is focussed within the MainStreet London boundary. This boundary coincides with the Downtown Official Plan Designation.

The *Downtown Community Improvement Plan* establishes a legal basis for providing municipal financial incentives to private property owners in the downtown. Several incentive and loan programs provided through the City of London are now available to property owners within this

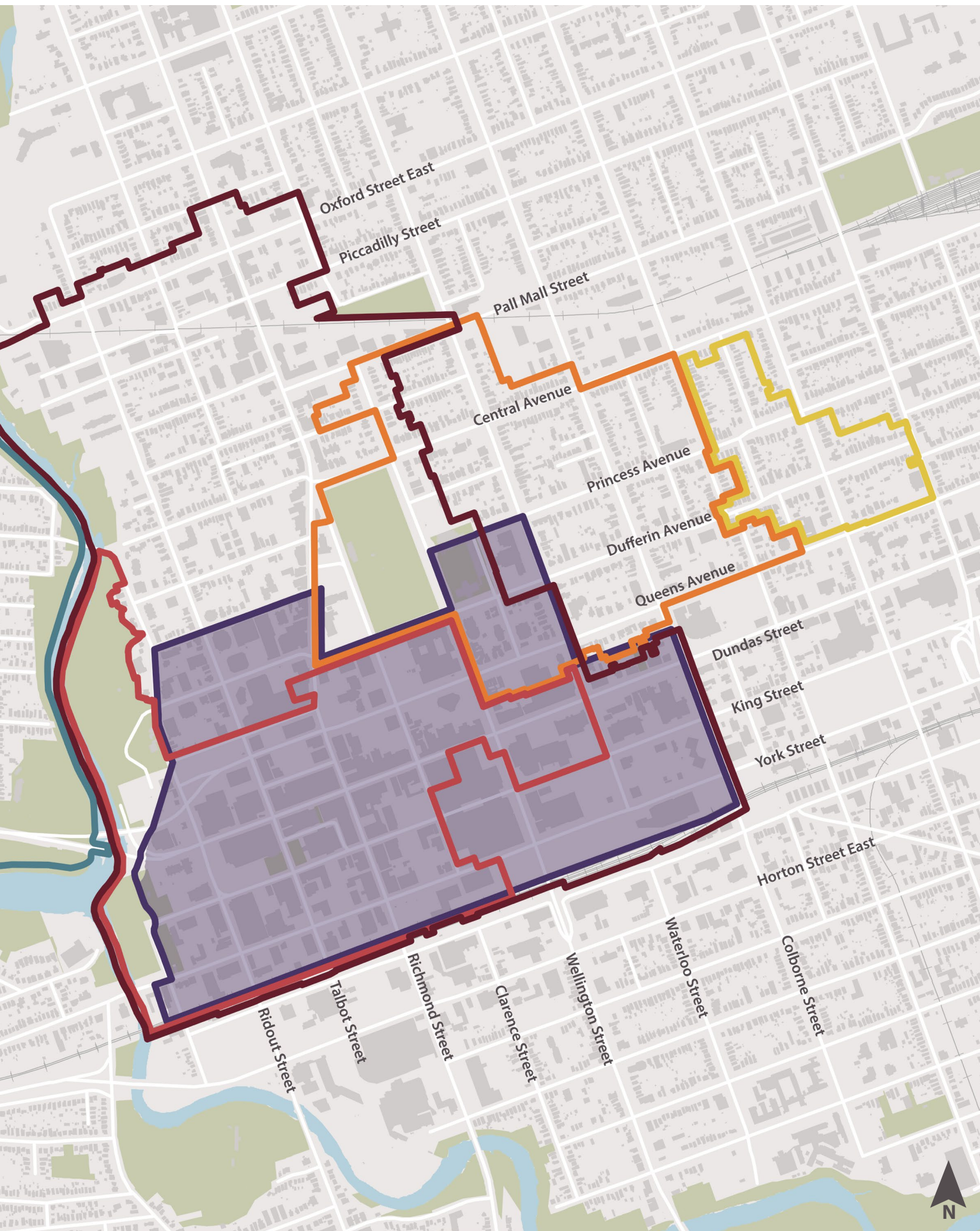
area. This area also coincides with the Downtown Official Plan Designation.

The Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) is managed by the London Downtown Business Association. Through the collection of levies from business owners in this area, the Business Association oversees projects that support the improvement of the downtown and promote it as a business and shopping area. In December 2014, the BIA was expanded primarily northward, beyond its original Queens Avenue-area boundary to include properties fronting onto Oxford Street, as illustrated.

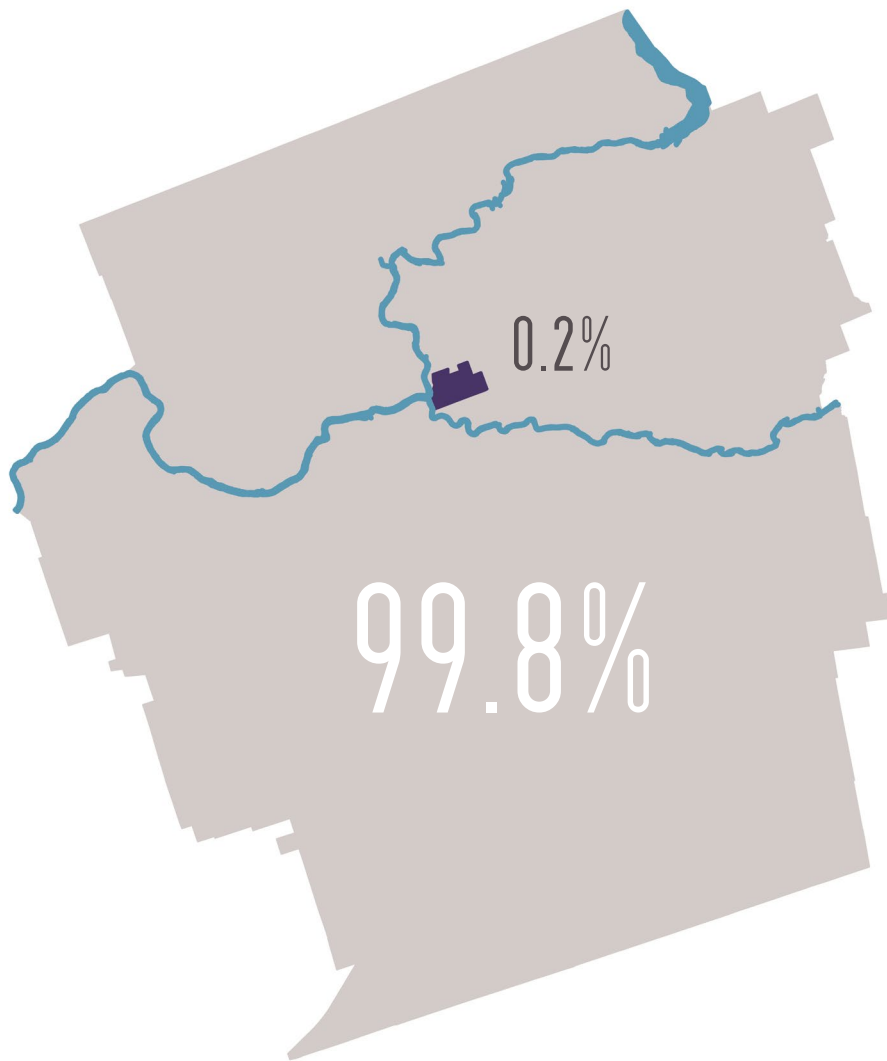
Four Heritage Conservation Districts, including West Woodfield, East Woodfield, Blackfriars/Petersville, and the Downtown, are located within the downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods. These Heritage Conservation Districts establish a policy framework to protect, conserve, and enhance the heritage character described in their respective heritage conservation district plans.

Map 1:  
Downtown  
Boundaries







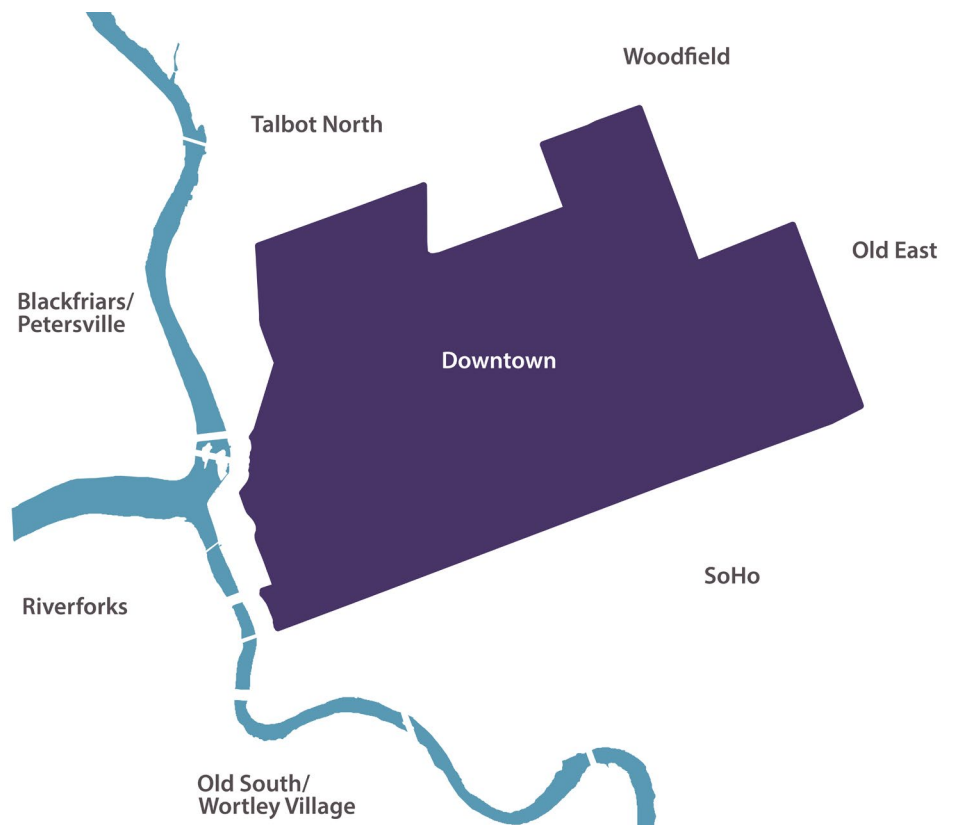


## The Downtown Context

London's downtown is geographically central to the city and located at the forks of the Thames River. It represents approximately 0.2 percent of the total land area of the municipality, and generates 4 percent of the property taxes which are generated throughout the city.

## Surrounding Neighbourhoods

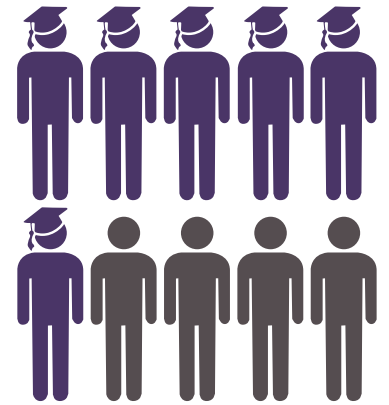
The downtown is surrounded by the distinct neighbourhoods of Talbot North, Woodfield, Old East, SoHo, Old South/Wortley Village, Riverforks, and Blackfriars/Petersville.



## The Downtown as a Place to Live

The downtown is home to over 4,000 residents -- more than 50 percent of whom are between the ages of 20 and 34 years old. This relatively young population is well-educated, with 62 percent of the population having attained post-secondary education at a university or college level. Approximately 20 percent of downtown residents are foreign born, the majority of which immigrated from Europe and Asia.

The downtown population has been increasing steadily since the 1990s at a substantially faster growth rate than the city as a whole. Between 1996 and 2011, the downtown's population increased by nearly 60 percent. This trend is not showing any signs of slowing down. In fact, the downtown is currently experiencing a residential construction boom, with the recently completed Renaissance residential towers and several hundred more units planned or proposed for the upcoming years.



**6 in 10** downtown residents have post-secondary education.



## The Downtown as a Place to Do Business

The downtown has continually maintained its status as the office employment centre of London, with over 80 percent of the city-wide office space and 303 jobs per hectare. Much of this success can be linked to strong City policies supporting the downtown in this role since the early 1990's.

The 2013 *State of the Downtown* report indicated improvements to the storefront vacancy rates and a stabilizing environment in terms of business openings and closures. As well, over the 2008-2014 period, 22 grants and 75 loans have been issued over the years which contributed to restoring and rehabilitating buildings within the downtown.



Map 2:  
Contextual  
Analysis

## Contextual Analysis of the Downtown

The intention of this analysis is to understand the context in which the downtown currently exists. Establishing this framework allows us to build on the downtown's strengths and provide solutions to possible weaknesses.

The major thoroughfares identified on Map 2 illustrate the primary connections to and from the downtown and the important linkages to the adjacent neighbourhoods. Many of these thoroughfares are also primary commercial corridors within the downtown. As well these corridors generally carry high volumes of traffic and are well served by transit.

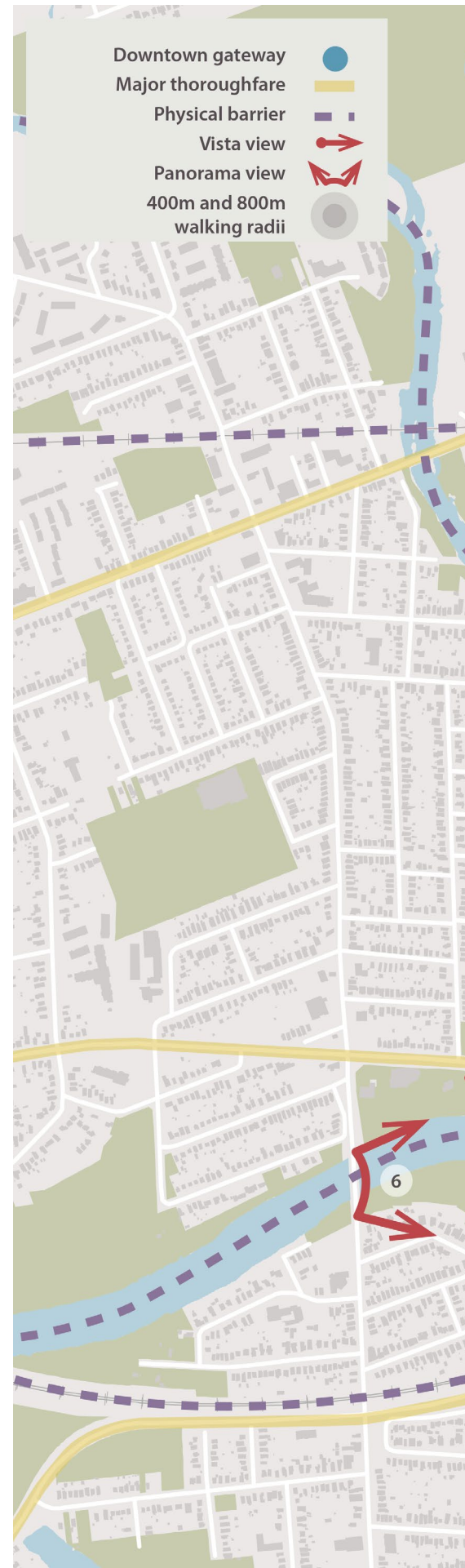
The physical barriers identified include the river and train

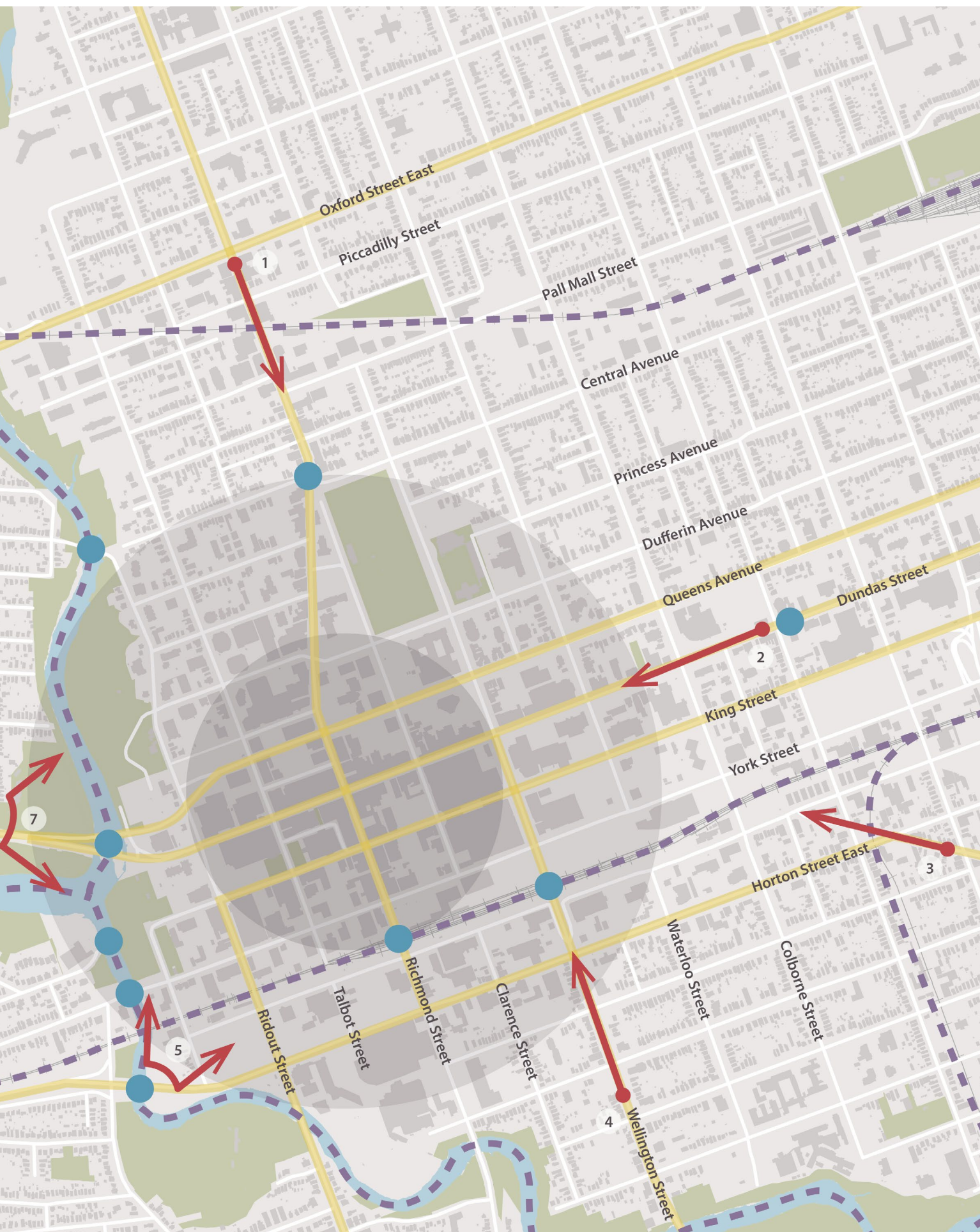
corridors. These are permanent physical elements that may provide obstacles to accessing the downtown.

While there are many points of entry into the downtown, there are only a select few that represent true gateways into the downtown. These gateways signify a point where there is a distinct change in the environment that indicates entry into the downtown.

The 400 metre and 800 metre walking radii represent approximately 5 minute and 10 minute walking distances, respectively. The 400 metre radius is typically accepted as the maximum distance that people are willing to walk to take transit.

Significant views to the downtown are identified on Map 2 and discussed in more detail on the following page.







## Views

Within the downtown area there are both vista and panorama views, identified on Map 2. Vista views are generally views directed down a corridor and originate from a specific point, whereas panorama views are wide-angle that show a larger landscape. These views are important to consider when new development is taking place, as development within these views will be particularly visible when entering the downtown.

1



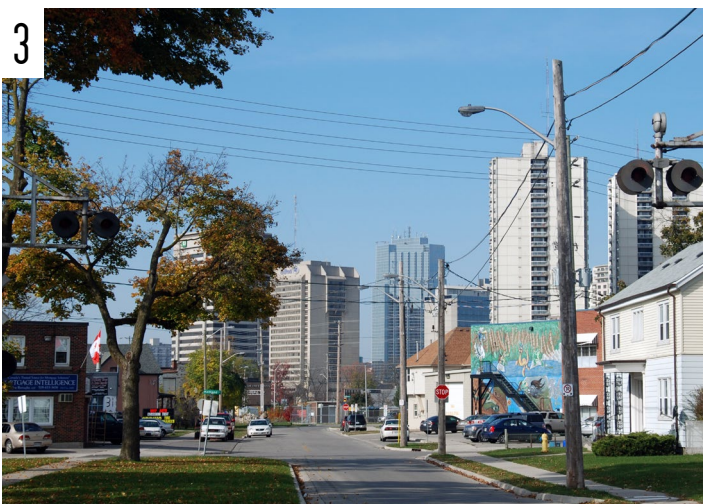
Richmond Street Looking south from Oxford Street.

2



Dundas Street Looking west from Colborne Street.

3



Looking northwest from Horton Street and Hamilton Road.

4



Looking north from Wellington Street.



5



Looking northeast from the Forks of the Thames.

6



Looking east from Wharnccliffe Road.

7



Looking east from Riverside Drive.



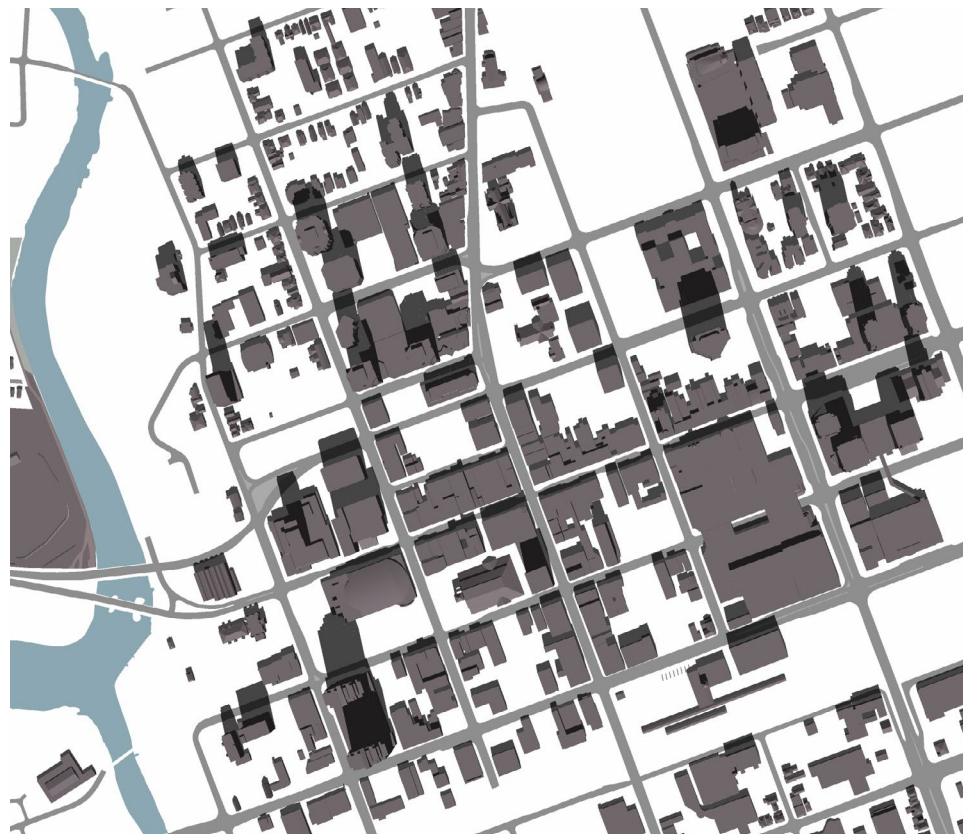
## Shadows

Providing a balance of sunlight and shade is an important consideration for sidewalks, parks and other public spaces. Sunlight can change the conditions and experience of a space, directly influencing the usage of a public plaza or the success of sidewalk retail.

Tall buildings, intuitively, cast the longest shadows and have the greatest influence on sunlight penetration. Simple design measures, such as providing stepbacks, can greatly increase the hours of daylight experienced at grade-level in the adjacent spaces.

The following shadow diagrams illustrate the spring equinox as a baseline for comparison to the summer and winter solstices, which have the longest shadows throughout the year.

### Spring Equinox



Summer Solstice



Winter Solstice



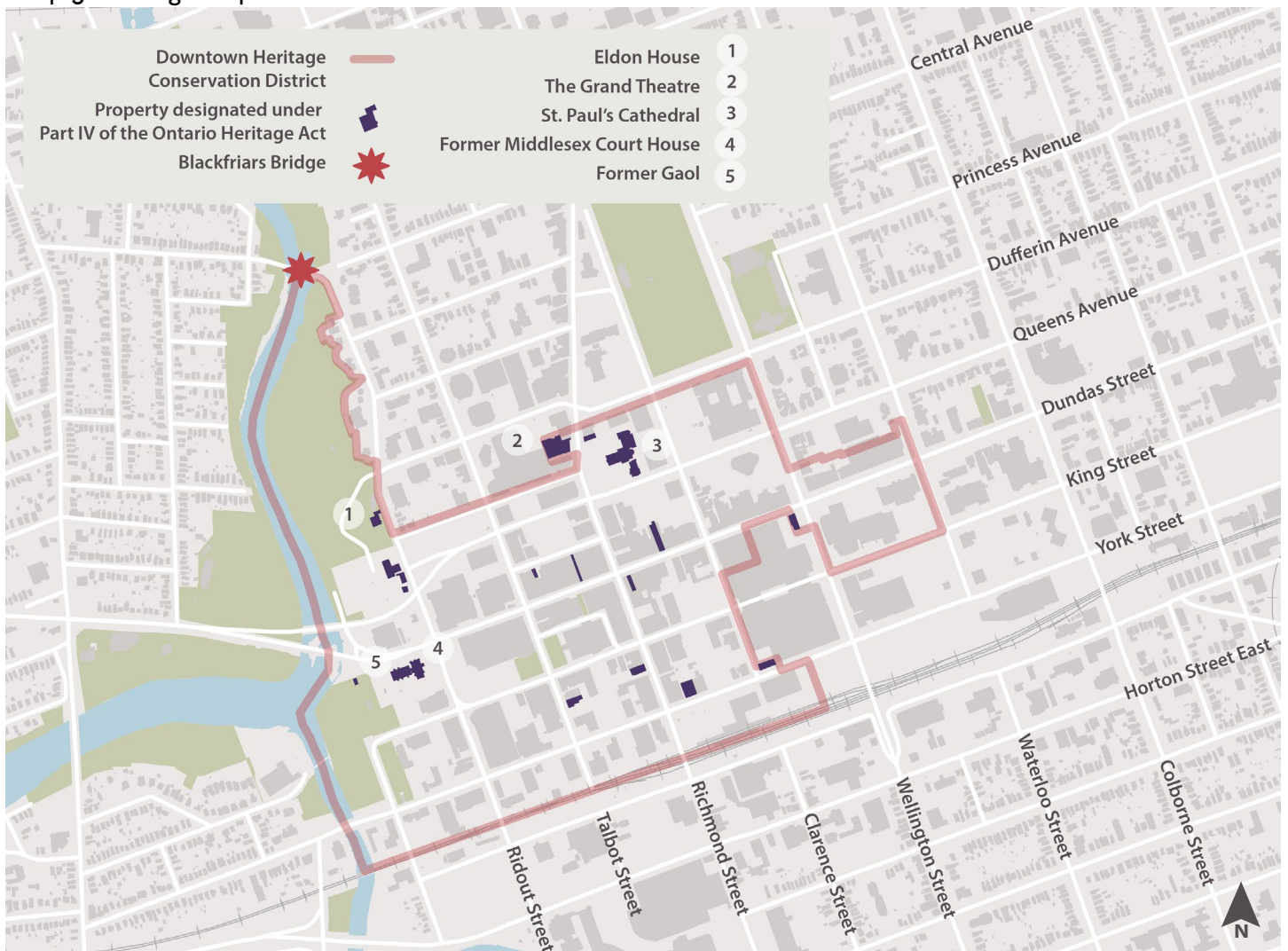


## Cultural Heritage

As the birthplace of London, the downtown has a rich history dating back over a century. As illustrated below, a large portion of the downtown is within the Downtown Heritage Conservation District (HCD), which establishes a policy framework to protect, conserve, and enhance the identified cultural heritage value, while allowing for growth and development. Within this area, 18 properties are also individually designated under Part IV of the *Ontario Heritage Act*.



Map 3: Heritage Properties



## Activity Generators

Over 80 percent of the city-wide office space is located within the downtown, which provides more than 303 jobs per hectare. This concentration of jobs brings a large number of workers daily to the downtown.

In January 2014, Fanshawe's Centre for Digital and Performance Arts opened in the downtown and is expected to contribute over \$80 million annually to the local economy and bring over 400 students and staff to the downtown. Fanshawe intends to attract 1,400 additional students to the downtown at the former Kingsmill's department store building.

In 2012 and 2013, the downtown held 72 events and welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors. These events included annual festivals in Victoria Park, events at Budweiser Gardens and shows at the Grand Theatre.



Map 4: Activity Generators

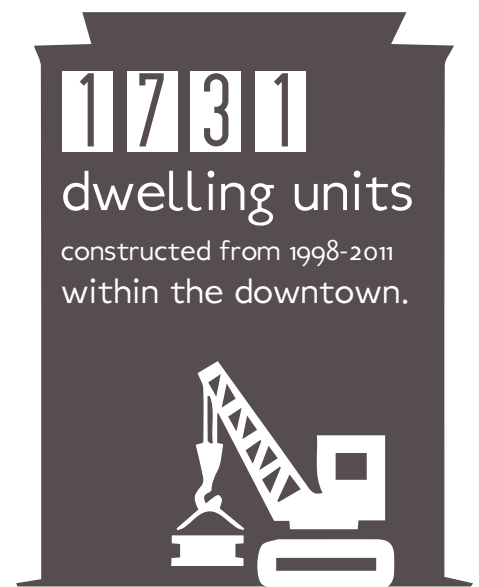




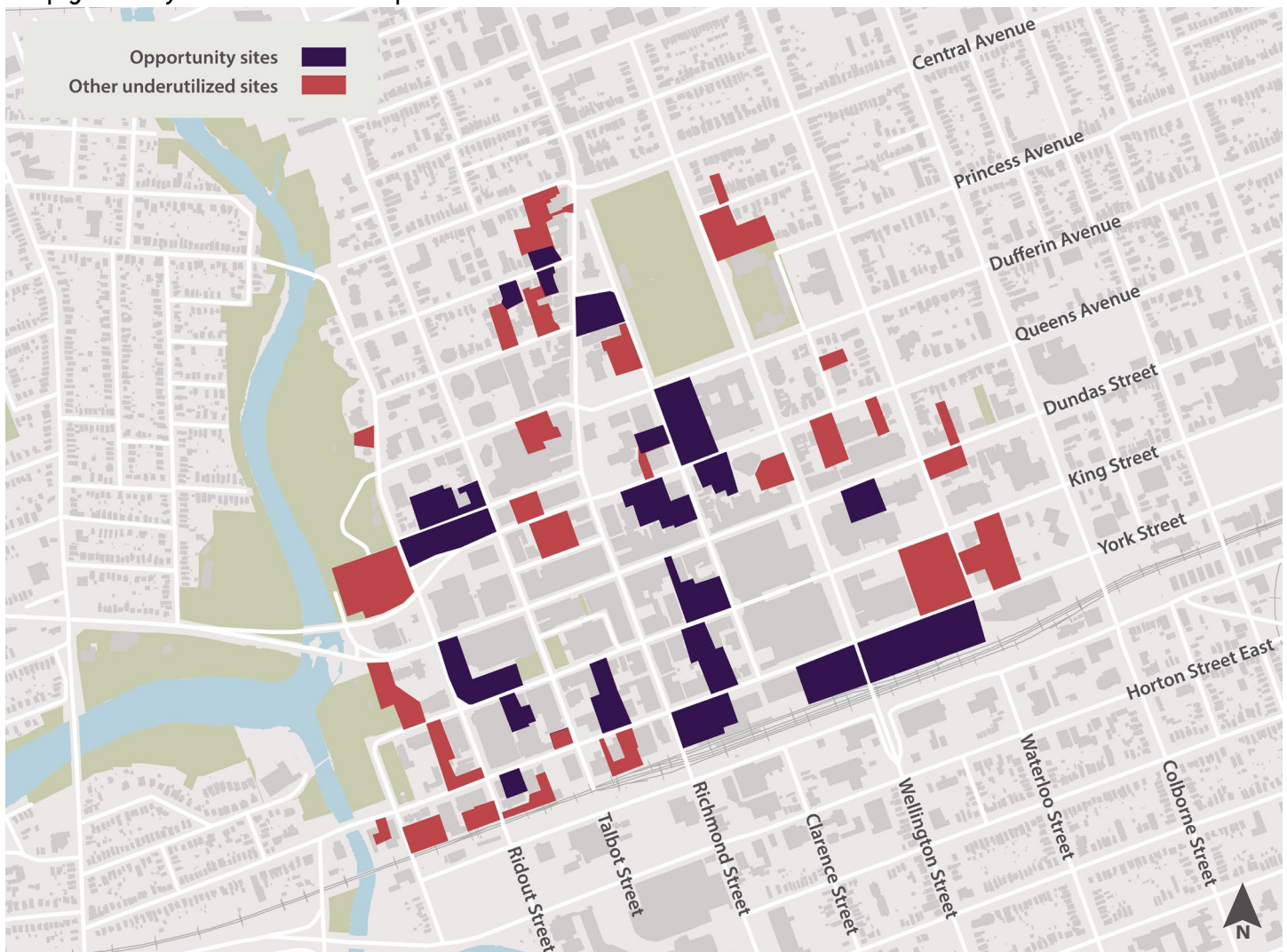
## Redevelopment Opportunities

Within the downtown there are many underutilized sites and opportunities for redevelopment. Surface parking lots, in particular, present ideal conditions for redevelopment, as there is relatively little site work needed before new construction can begin. There is no net loss of the parking anticipated in the redevelopment of these parking lots, as parking can be regained by incorporating underground and structured parking into the design of the new development.

Of these underutilized sites, there are opportunity sites where new development could bridge streetwall gaps and/or link activity generators. These strategic locations are priority sites for redevelopment.



Map 5: Priority Sites for Redevelopment



## Parkland and Public Space

The downtown has a number of public squares and parks and is well serviced by the extensive park system along the Thames River. The *Thames Valley Corridor Plan* directs future park development along this corridor. The majority of public space downtown is municipally owned. Other spaces, often publicly accessible, complement this inventory.

The City of London is continually working to increase the number of trees within the downtown. New tree pit technologies are implemented as opportunities arise, such as during large capital projects or underground utility upgrades, and particularly around areas with high pedestrian activity. This technology brings larger rooting areas which allows for larger, healthier, longer-living trees.

The average diameter of a downtown tree is



Map 6: Parkland and Public Space





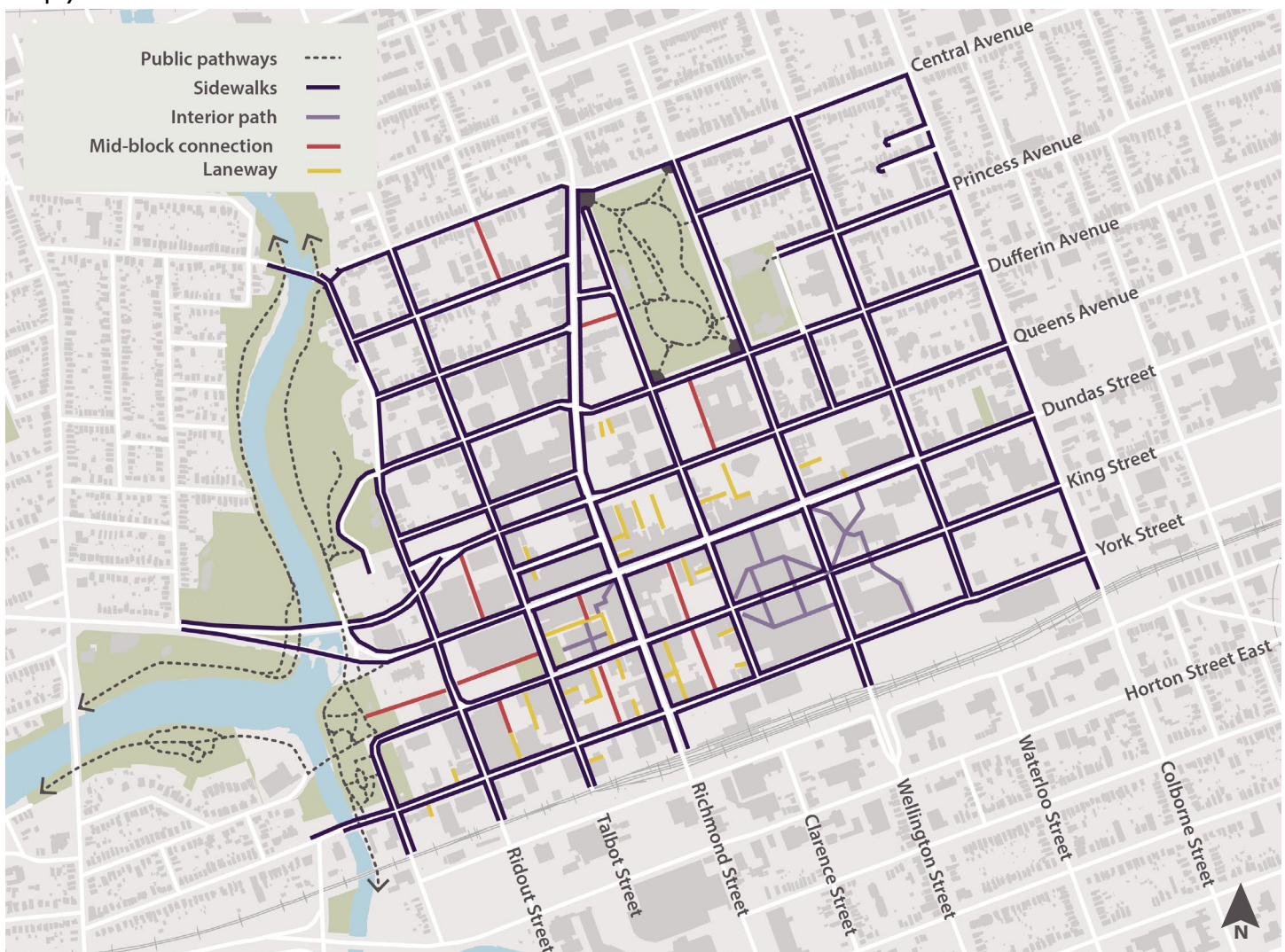
## Pedestrian Movement

The downtown has a well-connected pedestrian framework of sidewalks, pathways and laneways. This established network facilitates pedestrian movement throughout the downtown. Linking to this network from the surrounding neighbourhoods is essential for maintaining the relationship between the downtown and these surrounding neighbourhoods.

Opportunities exist to enhance the existing pedestrian network and experience, both by adding new connections and improving the condition of the existing network.



Map 7: Pedestrian Movement

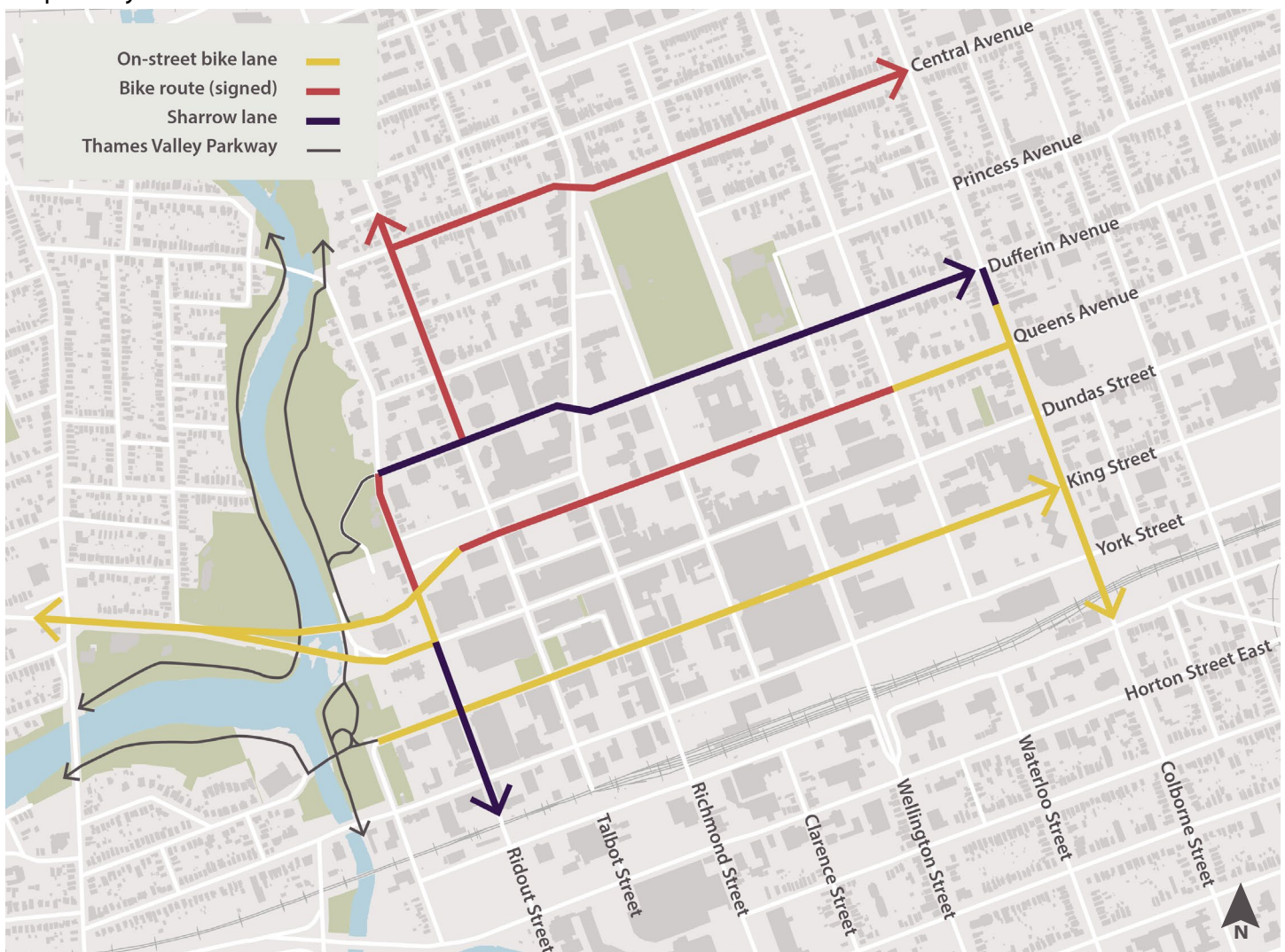


## Bicycle Network

The downtown has many opportunities for recreational and commuter cyclists, connecting to the Thames Valley Parkway and over 150 kilometres of pathways across the city. The *Bicycle Master Plan* guides route selection and bicycle parking within the city and promotes cyclist safety and wayfinding; a new plan for cycling routes in the downtown will be established through the preparation of the *Mobility Plan* in 2015.



Map 8: Bicycle Network



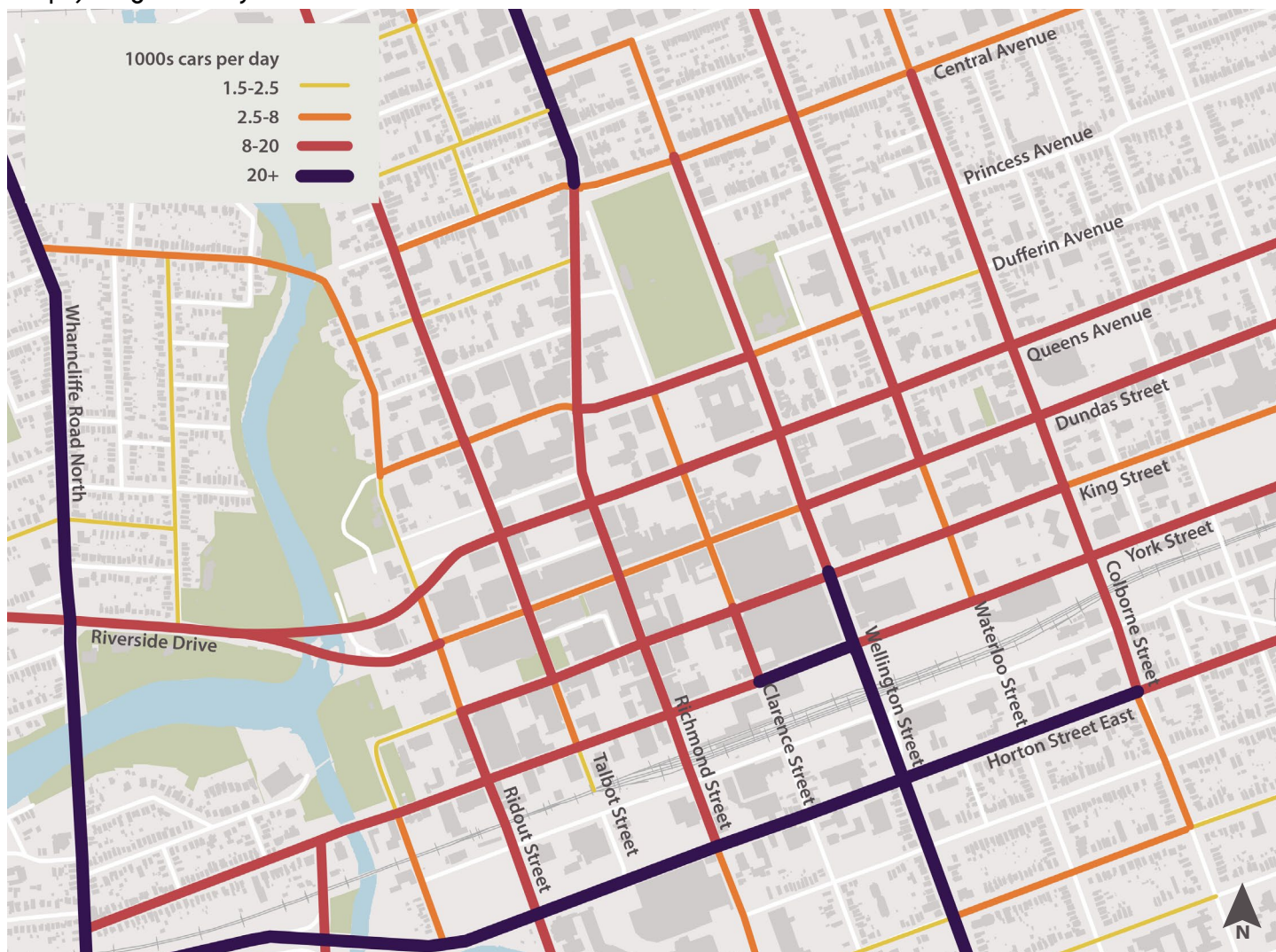


## Vehicle Volumes

The downtown's vehicle network is a grid of one-way and two-way streets. As can be seen from the map below, the major east-west vehicle connection is York Street, while the north-south connections are primarily Wellington Street and Richmond Street.



Map 9: 2013 Two-Way Vehicle Volumes



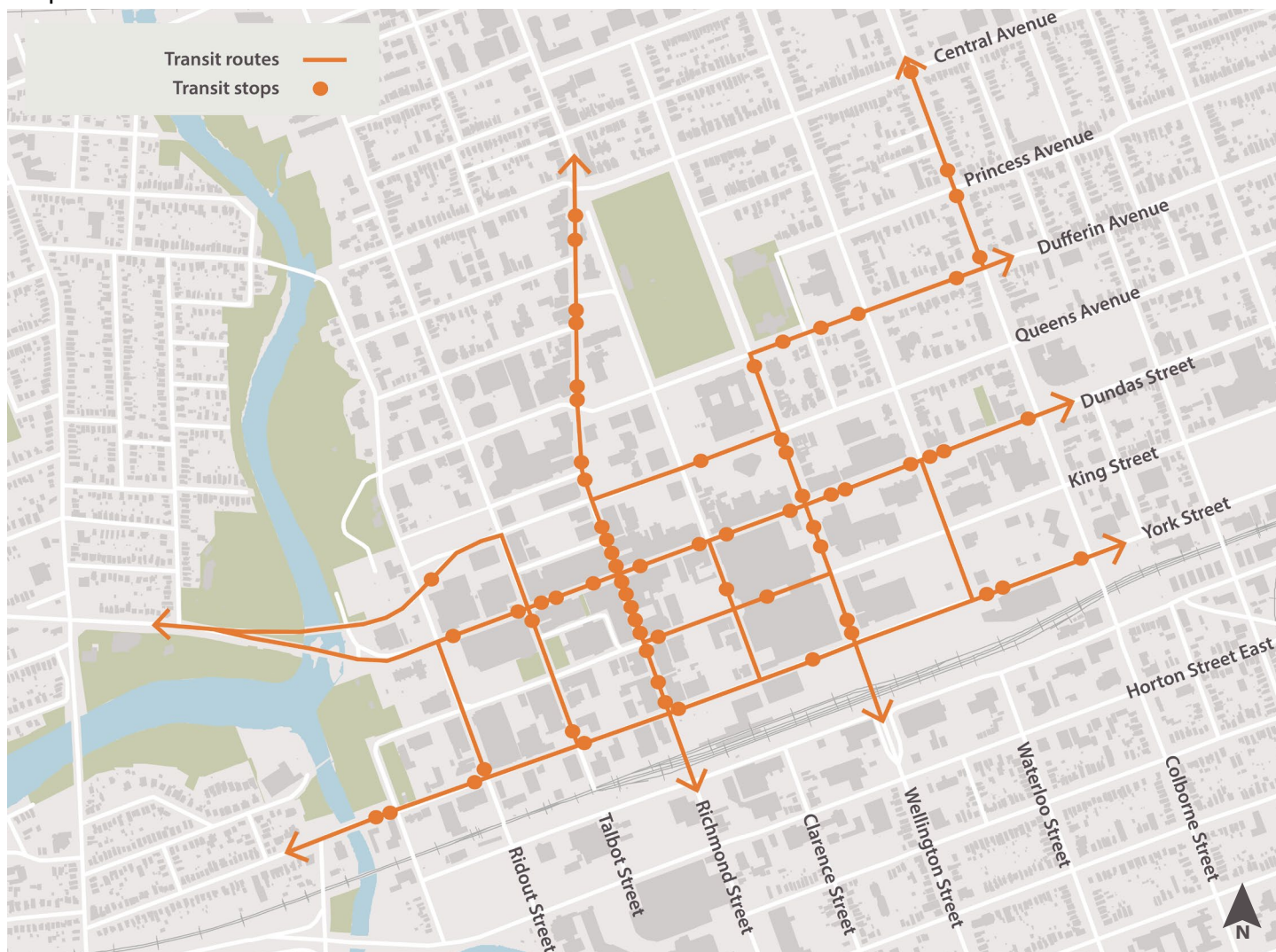
## Transit Network

The downtown is well serviced by the London Transit Commission, with 19 bus routes currently running through the downtown. Major transfer points occur along Richmond and Dundas Streets, with the most concentrated number of stops being at that intersection.



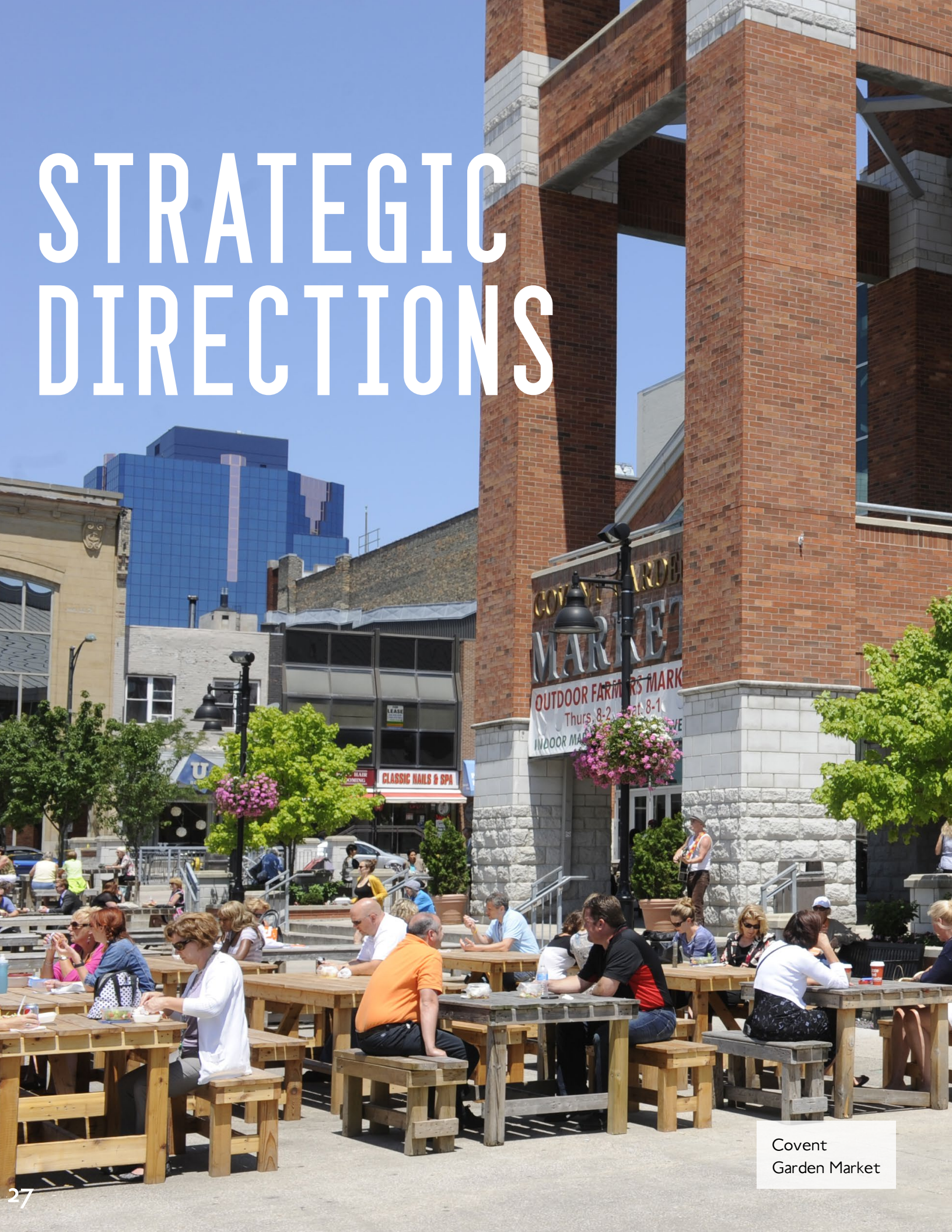
Approximately 11 percent of trips to and from the downtown area are made using transit. Public transit ridership has been increasing over recent years and is expected to continue this trend as the city's growth centralizes. To accommodate this demand, service upgrades are being reviewed through the Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment that is currently underway.

Map 10: Transit Network



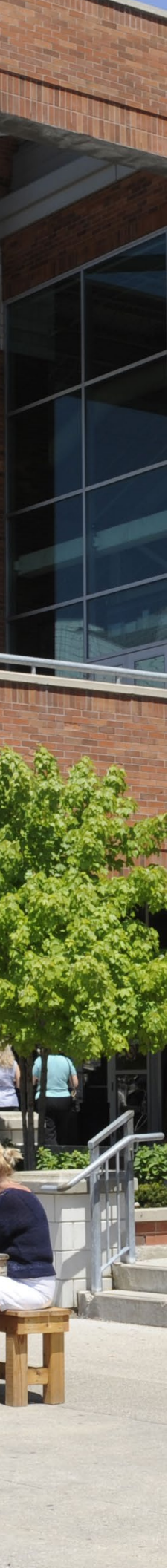


# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



Covent  
Garden Market





## The pulse of a healthy city beats a little faster at its core.

*Our Move Forward* is built around six Strategic Directions. These provide direction for the projects and policies that follow.

This section of the Plan includes a variety of actions that link to specific Transformational Projects found in the following section of this Plan. These projects are designed to act as anchors for future development and to encourage more private sector investment to provide maximum benefit for the downtown and assist with continued revitalization of this important area of the city. It is intended that these projects and initiatives could be implemented over the longer term as future municipal budgets are set over time and/or development opportunities emerge and partnerships are formed.

In 1998, the City of London completed the *Downtown*

*Millennium Plan*, that described various projects throughout the downtown that would act as “anchors” to encourage private investment. The City used this Plan to “lead by example.” These projects included Covent Garden Market, Central Library, the John Labatt Centre (now Budweiser Gardens) and improvements at the Forks of the Thames. All of these projects have been completed and have significantly contributed to transforming the downtown.

To continue this momentum, the next phase of projects that will assist in revitalizing the downtown takes a different focus in an effort to tie together the successful work that has already been completed. In this Plan, the projects identified as Transformational Projects are focussed on public realm improvement initiatives and their potential to leverage private investment value.



The public realm is the “living room” of every community. It creates the first and last impression a person has of an area, neighbourhood or city. The most successful public realm spaces are known for offering a positive memorable experience in each and every visit. There is delight for all the senses. They work well in all seasons and adapt to a variety of weather conditions. They are socially vibrant offering both active and passive opportunities. Variety, versatility, and visual stimulation all add up to premium experiences.

The public realm has a larger role to play beyond creating impressions for visitors; it also provides amenity for those individuals who live, work and play in the downtown neighbourhood. As part of any effort to support a neighbourhood, it is imperative to invest in the public realm. It is through these measures that public life is enhanced, health benefits are derived and community strength continues to build to improve the overall quality of life and economic vitality of our city.

In addition to the public realm initiatives, focus has also been directed towards the programmatic components of public space. The

creation of a high quality public space is not only contingent on the design and materials used to build the space. Once the space is constructed, to realize its value as a public amenity, it must be properly programmed to balance casual use with staged events and to foster both diverse experiences and repeat visits. Many of the initiatives identified in *Our Move Forward* look to building community partnerships in the delivery and support of high-quality programming to activate the proposed and enhanced public spaces and to properly maintain them.

The actions and initiatives in this Plan will continue the revitalization efforts, help to solidify the downtown’s established reputation for return on investment and enhance the downtown as the city’s face to the world, a vibrant destination, and a unique neighbourhood.

The following Strategic Directions are subject to refinement following conclusions from further studies, such as a Downtown Transportation Assessment and project-related Environmental Assessments, which will better define their feasibility and limitations.



Victoria Park during the holiday season.



## Strategic Direction 1

# Make Dundas Street the most exciting place in London

Dundas Street is London's original main street and a place once lively with activities of trade and commerce. Times have changed significantly since the street's origin, but Dundas Street can reestablish its place as London's preeminent street. This can be achieved through investments that provide people-oriented infrastructure that is focussed on creating neighbourhoods and a unique and diverse range of experiences, boulevard tree planting, event programming and providing the highest level of maintenance in the city.

Dundas Street presents the opportunity to create a stronger entrance into the downtown and a more pronounced linkage to the Forks of the Thames through the development of a public plaza space where Dundas Street meets the Forks.

## Strategic Direction 2

# Reconnect with the Thames River

During London's infancy, the Forks of the Thames was a major area of activity. It has played an important role in the city's history and development. Once a valued resource, the river slowly became disconnected from the daily life of Londoners. Recently, however, the Thames River is again being viewed as a community asset.

Previously a transportation corridor and strategic advantage, the Thames River now provides passive and active recreational opportunities.

Water has a calming influence on the human spirit through both visual and acoustic qualities and provides the opportunity to escape from the bustle of downtown life for residents and downtown workers. The river is also a draw for events and represents an opportunity for new active uses. In reestablishing the connection to the Thames River, we can help to create a London that is a vibrant and dynamic city that embraces both its cultural heritage and natural environment.

## Strategic Direction 3

# Forge connections with the downtown neighbourhoods

The downtown is a growing neighbourhood that is surrounded by healthy, vibrant, established neighbourhoods, including Talbot North, Woodfield, Old East, SoHo, Old South/Wortley Village, Riverforks, and Blackfriars/Petersville. There is a reciprocal relationship between these neighbourhoods and the downtown, which provides a greater range of services, uses and housing options available to their residents. Enhancing this relationship through improved physical connections benefits not only the downtown as a neighbourhood, but also the attractiveness of the surrounding neighbourhoods. A synergy is realized by the regeneration of the urban neighbourhoods which can be credited for the strength of the downtown.

## Strategic Direction 4

# Green our downtown

There is an opportunity for the downtown to lead the way in terms of sustainable development, adaptive reuse, green initiatives and tree canopy cover. Increasing the tree canopy has the benefits of reducing the heat-island effect, improving air quality and enhancing the pedestrian environment.

Large-scale development, which often occurs within a downtown setting, provides opportunities to implement green infrastructure and construction techniques and create a more sustainable future. These methods will ensure the downtown promotes London as a progressive city and reflects its identity as the “Forest City.”

## Strategic Direction 5

# Build a great neighbourhood

The downtown is London’s original neighbourhood and the location of many historic buildings and sites protected for future generations through the adoption of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District. Over the many decades of its existence, this area of the city has seen great changes both in architecture and in neighbourhood development.

The downtown is the “hub” for the city, but it is also a neighbourhood where people can live and be social. It is imperative for the downtown’s success to ensure that it is designed to be a neighbourhood first, by providing for the local needs of the residents in the area. Once the neighbourhood functions have been established, the larger city-wide elements can be better supported by the local population, ultimately ensuring a more prosperous downtown.

## Strategic Direction 6

# Create the buzz

London’s image both locally and abroad is found in its downtown. The downtown is a distinct cultural district that can help to create a unique cultural ambiance that strengthens the identity and pride in Londoners. The diversity, intensity and density that uniquely characterize the core makes it ideally suited to consider unconventional ideas and fertile ground for testing new ways of doing things. New businesses not only need this positive creative environment to thrive, they also need the physical infrastructure. Forward thinking on upgrades such as fibre optic systems can place London’s downtown a step ahead.

As cities compete in today’s economy, their image to the world is one of their most important tools for prosperity and economic development, especially in the research and development and education sectors. To continue to attract post-secondary students, graduates and new business to London, creating a positive image and delivering on a reputation that “things are happening,” will go a long way to attracting the best and brightest to move and invest in London.



# 1 Make Dundas Street the most exciting place in London.

- 1.1 Turn Dundas Street into a flexible street between Wellington Street and the Thames River.
- 1.2 Ensure all public realm works and planning applications support Dundas Street as the city's premier destination street.
- 1.3 Create an exceptional pedestrian experience along Kensington Bridge that signifies its role both as a primary pedestrian entrance to the downtown and a link between parkland.
- 1.4 Relocate bus routes from Dundas Street to create a more flexible public space and promote pedestrian activity.
- 1.5 Animate Dundas Street with a variety of programmed events and activities.
- 1.6 Develop a downtown maintenance program that sets Dundas Street as the highest standard in the city.

## Goal

To recreate Dundas Street as the preeminent public place in London -- beyond just a space to move through and instead to become a destination to arrive at for shopping, leisure, civic activities and celebrations.

## Why Is This Important?

As Dundas Street is a long-time commercial artery and a spine of civic activity in London, the condition and uses along Dundas Street have a direct reflection on the health of the downtown as a whole. Dundas Street has experienced an evolution of uses and activities over time, and the street continues to evolve as economic conditions and demographic trends change. It is important to strengthen the ability of Dundas Street to serve multiple purposes. Right-of-way improvements which optimize versatility of use, subject to refinement following conclusions from a project-related Environmental Assessment, will better define the feasibility and limitations of this project. These improvements will create a positive and compelling experience that will attract businesses and visitors.



A conceptual rendering of Dundas Street showing widened sidewalks with patios.



A conceptual rendering of Dundas Street with on-street parking.



An example of a flexible street in downtown Kitchener, Ontario.



## 2 Reconnect with the Thames River.

- 2.1 Close Dundas Street to vehicular traffic between Ridout Street and the Thames River to create a public plaza space between Museum London and the former Middlesex Court House integrating with Dundas Place and the top of the banks of the Forks of the Thames.
- 2.2 Enhance portions of the Forks of the Thames to introduce an urban riverscape edged with restaurants, retail, recreational and residential opportunities designed to acknowledge the natural and cultural heritage significance of the river.
- 2.3 Transform Riverside Drive, between Wharncliffe Road and Kensington Bridge, to serve as a primary pedestrian linkage to the downtown; this linkage provides the opportunity to celebrate noteworthy moments of various sporting events and athletes in the city in the Labatt Park area.
- 2.4 Enhance views of the Thames River from Ridout Street to establish a visual connection to the river.
- 2.5 Provide better pedestrian access to the river at Fullarton Street and Dufferin Avenue to strengthen the connections between the downtown and the river.

## Goal

To strengthen the connections of Londoners with one of the city's most noteworthy natural assets; to create a strong public realm connection between the Dundas flexible street and the Forks of the Thames.

To ensure convenient, comfortable and safe pedestrian connections are provided between the downtown and the river's edge; and to attract people closer to the river's edge

with a wider array of year-round activities, including consideration of seasonally-appropriate venues such as an urban beach in the summer and a toboggan hill and ice sculpture park in the winter.

## Why Is This Important?

One of the most important assets of the city is its river system. The Forks of the Thames was the city's point of origin. The river's meandering path has shaped the layout of London and provided

many recreational opportunities. Over the years this great asset had become disconnected from the daily life of Londoners in the downtown. However, in recent years Council has begun the process of reconnecting the downtown with the Forks. In the 1980's, a major investment was made at Ivey Park and through this and other projects such as the splash pad, fountains and civic spaces, positive steps have been made toward reestablishing the connection.



Current view of the Thames River.



An example of an urban beach in Brisbane, Australia. Source: Tourism Queensland



A conceptual of rendering of Riverside Drive with Labatt Park in the background.



Ivey Park splash pad in the summer.



# 3 Forge connections with the downtown neighbourhoods.

- 3.1 Create an intermodal hub that can connect high-speed intercity rail with local transit at the train station, centred on a new public square and pedestrian connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and business districts. These areas include Old East Village, Old South/Wortley Village, Woodfield, Richmond Row and SoHo.
- 3.2 Create a Clarence Street Connector forming a tree-lined connection linking Richard B. Harrison Park in SoHo and Victoria Park in the downtown.
- 3.3 Implement a rapid transit loop that circulates through the downtown to Queens Station.
- 3.4 Upgrade the Richmond Street and Wellington Street underpasses to create more inviting pedestrian connections.
- 3.5 Balance pedestrian and vehicular movement along Richmond Street between Queens Avenue and York Street by more equitably distributing the right-of-way to enhance the pedestrian experience and commercial environment.
- 3.6 Implement a downtown wayfinding program that makes it easy to get to downtown and effortless to navigate through it.

## Goal

To provide safe, convenient and comfortable access between the downtown and the surrounding neighbourhoods and the city; to enhance existing connections and provide new opportunities to move people between these areas; to optimize London's vitality as a rail travel point of origin/destination linking London to surrounding cities.

## Why Is This Important?

As the hub of the city it is important to ensure safe, convenient and comfortable access between the downtown and the city's neighbourhoods and business districts. In particular, these connections are important for neighbourhoods directly adjacent to the downtown to ensure a vibrant commercial environment and

energize the core with activity day and night and minimize the use of automobiles.

A Downtown Transportation Assessment and project-related Environmental Assessments will be undertaken for these projects to define their scope, feasibility, and limitations.



An example of a wayfinding system.



A conceptual rendering of Richmond Street with rapid transit service.



An example of a transit hub within a downtown.



A conceptual rendering of a pedestrian overpass to Clarence Street from SoHo.



# 4 Green our downtown.

- 4.1 Reduce Richmond Street from four vehicular lanes to three vehicular lanes between Queens Avenue and York Street to provide an opportunity to allow for larger tree planting.
- 4.2 Expand the boulevard along King Street to enhance tree growth opportunities.
- 4.3 Increase the number of street trees planted along the Clarence Street Connector and Dundas Place.
- 4.4 Use new tree planting technology to ensure a healthy and adequate growing environment.
- 4.5 Improve tree planting opportunities by removing right hand channelized turns at intersections.
- 4.6 Promote green infrastructure and construction techniques and materials during the construction and renovation of buildings.
- 4.7 Increase the level of tree maintenance to protect the investment in the downtown's tree canopy.
- 4.8 Collaborate with MainStreet London to develop and promote programs for downtown property owners related to container plantings, waste reduction and management, and efficient energy.



## Goal

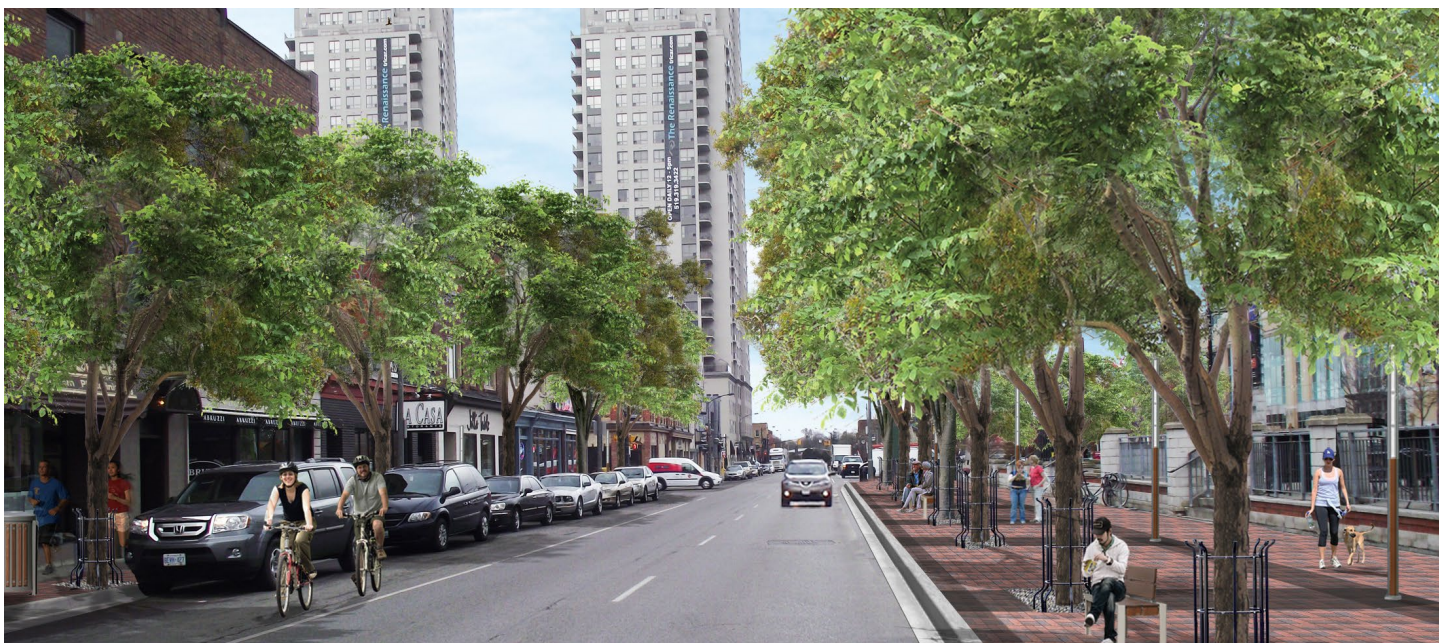
To improve the pedestrian environment and the downtown's image with enhanced landscaping and tree planting; to emphasize energy and environmental sustainability in refuse collection, building rehabilitation, and new construction; to foster local market opportunities for green jobs.

## Why Is This Important?

Livability and pedestrian comfort in a street environment is enhanced by the green elements of that space. Trees and plantings promote a positive image of the downtown. These elements also help to provide shade on hot days and provide some shelter on rainy days. Green infrastructure delivers a positive pedestrian experience, which supports a vibrant and successful downtown.



Examples of alternative stormwater management systems that slow the rainwater intake into the system, relieving pressure from the system during large storm events.



A conceptual rendering illustrating King Street with increased boulevard widths and tree planting.



# 5 Build a great neighbourhood.

- 5.1 Continue to support the development of a larger residential community in the downtown to foster a local trade market to offer a diverse array of neighbourhood 'daily needs' commercial enterprises.
- 5.2 Create a shared public space on Talbot Street between Covent Garden Market and Budweiser Gardens to provide a more functional single public space.
- 5.3 Create intimate urban spaces by reinstating and incorporating existing laneways, and introducing new mid-block pedestrian connections into new development.
- 5.4 Create a distinct and consistent public realm treatment that identifies the downtown as a unique neighbourhood.
- 5.5 Create a distinct urban neighbourhood that builds upon and conserves downtown's cultural heritage values.
- 5.6 Create civic spaces and park spaces, such as children's play areas and urban dog parks, that provide neighbourhood amenities and appeal to a variety of age groups, lifestyles and household compositions.
- 5.7 Study the feasibility of a grocery store investment in the downtown.

## Goal

To support and enhance public amenities within the downtown neighbourhood to improve the overall quality of life for its residents.

## Why Is This Important?

Providing investments in great public spaces supports a positive neighbourhood image, enhances livability and ensures a vibrant and safe place to be. Positive public space will help to attract a variety of household types and commercial uses, which in turn increases the vitality of the downtown.



Providing residents with convenient access to their daily needs and amenity spaces is important to creating a successful neighbourhood.



An example of a lively laneway.



A conceptual rendering of the Market District looking west towards the Thames River.



# 6 Create the buzz.

- 6.1 Support the downtown's distinct identity by encouraging artistic expression and cultural activity that promotes the central city as a hub for culture in London.
- 6.2 Solidify the downtown as the cultural hub of the city by locating a new performance centre in close proximity to other existing cultural facilities and our entertainment venues.
- 6.3 Use innovative lighting and audio technology to enliven downtown buildings and spaces.
- 6.4 Initiate community events and visitor experiences that are completely original or uniquely adapted to express London's individual identity.
- 6.5 Strike partnerships that link commercial enterprises with educational institutions to incubate and nurture new business and job opportunities downtown.
- 6.6 Pursue opportunities for a single entity to lead the coordination of programming and support maintenance of public spaces in the downtown.

## Goal

To foster the downtown's reputation for presenting diverse experiences and sustained vitality by programming and maintaining public spaces throughout the downtown area and to build a unique brand for the downtown area.

To create an engaging downtown that is frequented by locals who are proud to share their experiences with visitors who arrive.

## Why Is This Important?

The downtown's economic success is tied to its ability to attract people to live and visit repeatedly. Each year London attracts an increasing number of post-secondary students, both nationally and globally. Creating a city that is attractive to graduates is essential to retaining talent in London and attracting this segment of the population.

Some of the most successful public spaces are rigorously programmed. To create a "vibe" for the downtown, these spaces need to have activities that will attract people consistently, to the point where impromptu visits occur based on the downtown being known for delivering on "something always happening." This "buzz" is important to establish early on to ensure the success of new projects and programs.



Community events and festivals at Rotary Square (left) and Victoria Park (right) support the downtown's image as the cultural centre of the city and an exciting place to be.



Innovative building lighting downtown.



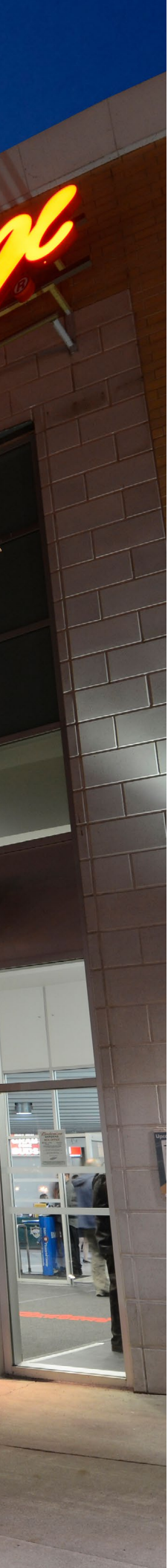
An example of a performance venue.



# TRANSFORMATIONAL PROJECTS



Budweiser Gardens  
(formerly the John  
Labatt Centre).



This Plan identifies strategic public investment opportunities intended to stimulate private investment. Implementing these projects will reinforce the community's vision for the downtown and maintain and reinforce its place as the preeminent destination for the city and region.

Some of the projects and their associated actions may occur immediately, while others will occur over the long term. It is important, however, to ensure they are executed in alignment with the planning framework cited earlier in this Plan. Implementation of these projects will be more precisely scoped through required studies and detailed design, as future municipal budgets are set over time, and/or as development opportunities emerge and partnerships are formed.

These projects are important as they are primarily public investments in the downtown that set the stage for more private sector investment. As has happened in the past, both in London and throughout the province, strategic public investment encourages private investment which ultimately leads to a stronger downtown.

The main focus of these projects is to improve the public realm and the pedestrian experience and create improved amenities for downtown living, business development and connections to the downtown. Through these measures the city's image can be enhanced and the city can attract and retain the future workforce in a livable and vibrant city.

The measure of any great civilization is in its cities, and the measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces, its parks and squares.

John Ruskin



The following Transformational Projects provide a high-level conceptual overview of how the Vision, Values, and Strategic Directions of this Plan can be implemented. Detailed studies are necessary prior to the implementation of these projects. Many of the projects are contingent on a Downtown Transportation Assessment as well as project-related Environmental Assessments. The Downtown Transportation Assessment is intended to serve as the technical case for the Transformational Projects having transportation/transit implications. These detailed studies and background reports will outline the feasibility and limitations of these projects.

The proposed projects and improvements as outlined will need to have regard for both existing and future servicing infrastructure, both publicly and privately owned. Utility congestion in the downtown area is already very significant and some of the planned initiatives may affect their timing and/or design options.


Development should also account for the existing context of the natural environment and incorporate natural features into the design where practicable to minimize the need for replanting.

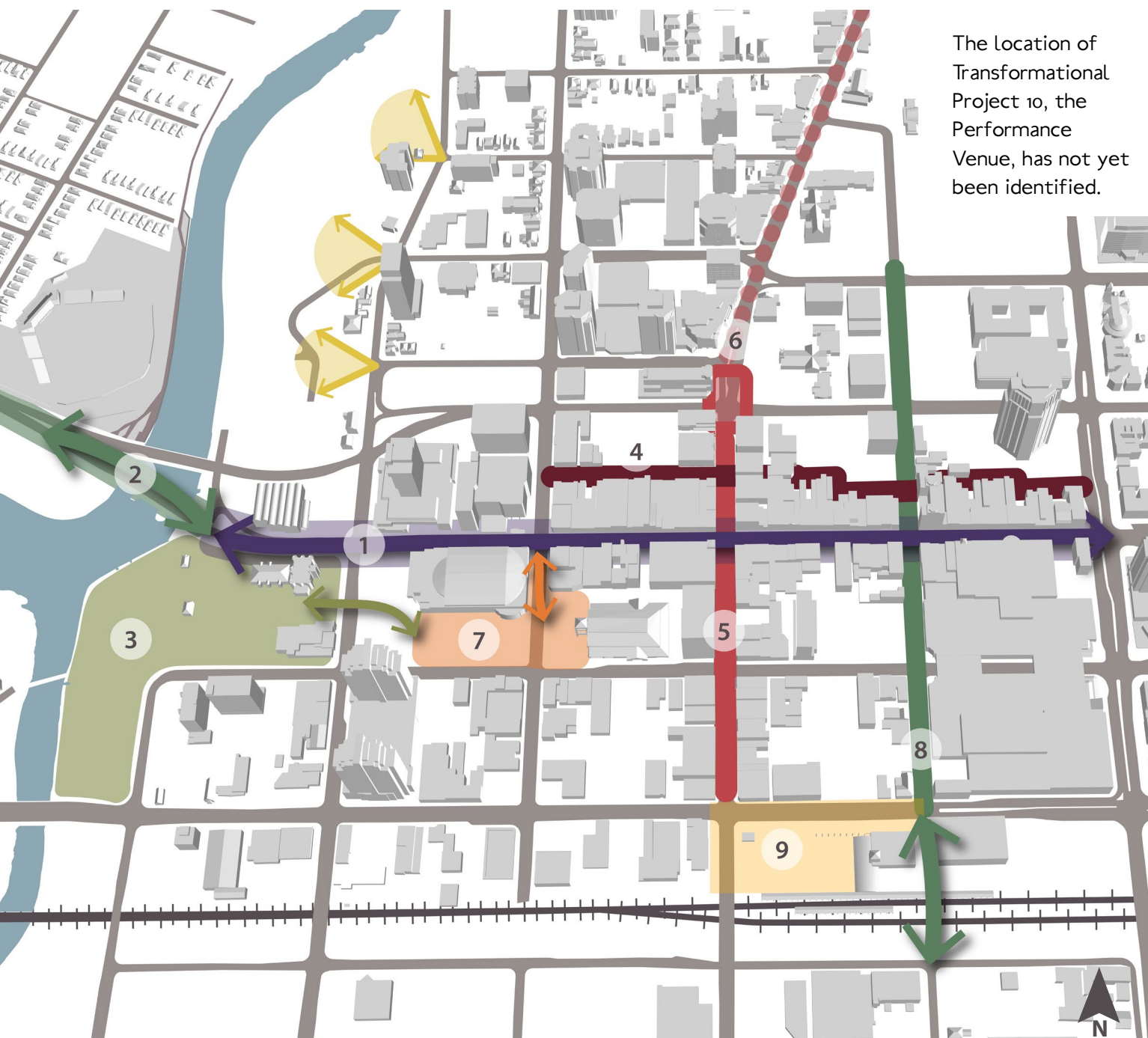
While it is expected that the Transformational Projects will each undergo an evolution, it is important that the intent of these projects is maintained.

Many of the Transformational Projects build on the existing pedestrian, bicycle and transportation networks, enhancing the experience of moving along these corridors as well as providing destinations within the downtown. As can be seen from Map 11, many of these projects are linear and act as linkages within, to and from the downtown and the surrounding neighbourhoods.

There is direction throughout this Plan to reclaim views, most importantly to the Thames River. These views are illustrated on Map 11 alongside the locations of the Transformational Projects.

Map 11:  
Transformational  
Project Locations  
& Views to be  
Reclaimed

Dundas Place	1
Cross-river Connection	2
Forks of the Thames	3
Laneway Connections	4
Richmond Walk	5
Queens Station	6
Market District	7
Clarence Street Connector	8
City Gateway	9
Views to be reclaimed	



The location of Transformational Project 10, the Performance Venue, has not yet been identified.



# Dundas Place

## What is the project?

Dundas Place runs from Wellington Street to the Thames River transforming Dundas Street into a seamless flexible street and linear public space. A unifying surface treatment will extend from building face to building face along this section of Dundas Street, enabling the space in between to easily transition functions at different times of the year.

On-street parking or sidewalk patios can be accommodated by relocating removable bollards. These bollards can also be removed entirely to create a continuous surface during events that close the street to vehicular traffic. Ensuring the highest standard of day-to-day and life cycle maintenance also is an essential aspect of this project.

## Why is this project important?

This project identifies and reinforces Dundas Street as the most exciting street in the city. It builds on the legacy of the downtown. It supports the street's development as a premiere destination for cultural and entertainment events that can easily and frequently merge with adjacent commercial enterprises to create diverse multi-sensory experiences.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

Two values of this Plan, livability and innovation, influence this project. The flexible street provides an exceptional public amenity for those living in the downtown neighbourhood and provides space well-equipped to routinely provide programmed

events compelling for visitors to the downtown. Similar projects on a scale of this nature in North America are rare and certainly this provides London with an opportunity to showcase how public space, land use and transportation can be innovatively combined to create a great place to visit, live and do business.



A conceptual rendering of Dundas Street illustrating how the street can be easily closed for a festival.



Dundas Place study area.

# Cross-river Connection

## What is the project?

This project consists of a significantly enhanced connection between the east and west sides of the Thames River by improving the pedestrian crossing experience and creating a distinctive sense of place when entering the downtown. It would convert Kensington Bridge into a non-vehicular connection across the Thames River to connect the downtown with the westerly neighbourhoods and Labatt Park. It would create a continuous plaza space between Museum London and the former Middlesex Court House and seamlessly link Dundas Place with the Forks of the Thames (identified on page 49).

## Why is this project important?

This project connects the well-established park system along both sides of the Thames River, builds upon the Dundas Place project, and links important public spaces and activities around the Forks of the Thames including Museum London, the former Middlesex Court House, and Labatt Park. It allows pedestrians and cyclists to seamlessly and safely access the many downtown amenities from the Blackfriars/Petersville neighbourhood.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

This project will establish a strong east-west connection across the Thames River greatly improving the fluidity of the established park system. It will draw spectators and visitors to Labatt Park, Museum London and the former Middlesex Court House and draw them into the downtown restaurants and shops.

It will build upon the Forks of the Thames Transformational Project and link it to Dundas Place.



Looking west from the downtown at Kensington Bridge.



An example of an urban public plaza.



# Forks of the Thames

## What is the project?

The Forks of the Thames project envisions an urban promenade along the bank of the Thames River and a captivating urban park space at the foot of Dundas Street, linking activity on Dundas Place with riverfront activities. River views will be reestablished to reconnect the downtown and the riverfront.

A 2015 design ideas competition for London's central riverfront, hosted by the London Community Foundation, will inform the development opportunities associated with this project.

## Why is this project important?

Riverfronts in cities all over North America are entering a period of rejuvenation. These natural assets, which for the past many decades have not been a focus, are now becoming prominent economic development tools. Creating great riverfront public space has been a successful tool in revitalizing many downtowns, large and small, across the continent. For London, the Forks of the Thames is not only the historical founding site of our city, but it has long been the centre point of social life in London.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

A redeveloped and reconnected Forks of the Thames can be the iconic city image for London. A vibrant active riverfront has the ability to draw visitors and Londoners; providing a positive experience and a wide variety of activities has the potential to draw them back again and again to support the continued vitality of the downtown.

The Forks of the Thames will be an asset and a significant community amenity, showcasing the city's profile and reputation for the desirability of living and locating businesses within the downtown.



A conceptual rendering of the Forks of the Thames.



Forks of the Thames project area.

# Laneway Connections

## What is the project?

The existing, mostly service-focussed laneways in the downtown, primarily north of Dundas Street, are to be preserved. Opportunities to add to the laneway network will be actively sought out and integrated into future developments to create small-scale restaurant and retail “spill out” spaces.

## Why is this project important?

The project helps to preserve the historical laneways of the downtown. Additionally, it creates conditions appealing to unconventional entrepreneurs seeking “off-beat” and unique spaces for art projects, retail uses, and restaurants.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

This project, to whatever extent feasible, will create more options for dynamic places that offer alternative experiences to the main streets. The laneway network will serve a broader function than it typically does now.



Laneway enhancement opportunities.



An example of an active laneway.



# Richmond Walk

## What is the project?

Richmond Walk will redistribute the right-of-way more equitably between vehicles and pedestrians along Richmond Street from York Street to Queens Avenue. This will improve the pedestrian experience and commercial environment, drawing on the success of Richmond Street north of this project. The conclusions of the Downtown Transportation Assessment and project-related environmental assessment will guide this project.

This project may stimulate future upgrades north of Queens Avenue on Richmond Street, which will

provide a similar intent and construction quality.

## Why is this project important?

Richmond Street is the main north-south spine of the downtown, intersecting with Dundas Street -- the downtown's primary east-west link. The condition of the intersection of these two streets is vital to the health of the downtown. However, the intensity and frequency of vehicular movement has gradually diminished the pedestrian qualities that can support commercial occupancies

along this portion of Richmond Street.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

This project aims to build on the successes of Richmond Street, north of Queens Avenue, and create a stronger link between commercial activities along Dundas Street and those on Richmond Street.

This project will also improve rapid transit by providing a direct connection between Queens Station and the VIA Train Station located on York Street.



A conceptual rendering of Richmond Street looking south showing a dedicated transit lane and widened sidewalks.

# Queens Station

## What is the project?

This project creates a new transit hub focussed at the intersection of Queens Avenue and Richmond Street, as determined through the Downtown Transportation Assessment and a project-related environmental assessment. Within the existing right-of-way, this transit hub would be developed to be easily distinguishable as a primary city transit transfer point.

It would be visually defined with a distinctive and continuous surface paving treatment and include features appropriate for a public

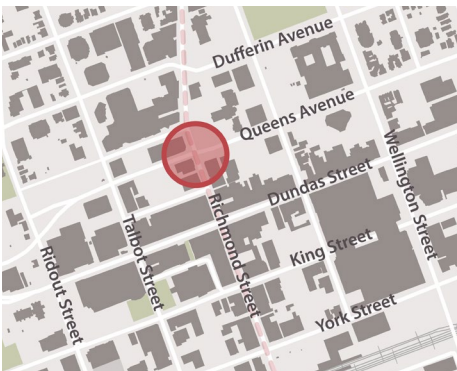
square, such as weather-protected seating, ample lighting, and other amenities that would provide transit users with comfortable conditions while waiting to transfer between busy routes.

## Why is this project important?

This transit hub's proximity to Richmond Row, Victoria Park, Budweiser Gardens and other downtown attractions will help to connect the downtown with the surrounding neighbourhoods and the city at large.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

The project will provide a central location that connects transit to the downtown, developed to a standard that reflects the advanced role transit is expected to serve in the accessibility of the downtown. It will spur commercial opportunities along the station's edges and the paths that connect downtown attractions to the transit hub. Additionally, this project will create a central meeting point and focus for the downtown.



Queens Station location.



An example of a transit platform.



An example of a transit platform.



# Market District

## What is the project?

This project connects Golden Jubilee Square (Budweiser Gardens) to Rotary Square (Covent Garden Market) with an enhanced design of both public spaces as well as integrating Talbot and King Streets to create a seamless transition among them. Talbot Street can be easily closed to traffic for special events to create a large continuous area.

## Why is this project important?

This area within London has significantly changed with the

scale and frequency of activities generated at both Budweiser Gardens and Covent Garden Market. The outdoor public spaces act as the “front yards” of these destination buildings and play a vital role in the daily public life of the city. As observed during the 2005 Memorial Cup celebration, 2013 World Figure Skating Championships, 2014 Memorial Cup hockey festival, and various other events, larger scale national and international events require ample space and flexibility that exceed the physical limitations of each. It is important to be able to readily connect these places together to create a larger, more versatile and

visually unified space that functions as the city’s primary public square.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

Downtowns that are consistently able to attract people to visit in large numbers need memorable public spaces that also are designed for comfort, security, and easy maintenance and event staging. Both of these spaces create a strong foundation to meet this need. By connecting these spaces a more flexible public space can be created to accommodate a larger variety of festivals, public events and larger city gatherings.



A conceptual rendering of the Market District looking west towards the Thames River.

# Clarence Street Connector

## What is the project?

This project enhances the pedestrian environment by enlarging sidewalks and prioritizing opportunities for tree planting. These enhancements are envisioned to go from Richard B. Harrison Park, located at Wellington Street and the Thames River, to Central Avenue/Victoria Park. Additionally, the project also proposes connecting the segments of Clarence Street with a pedestrian bridge over the CN rail line.

## Why is this project important?

The enhancement proposed will provide a pedestrian environment that better connects the SoHo neighbourhood south of the CN rail line with the downtown and the Woodfield neighbourhood north of the downtown. The surrounding neighbourhoods are an important support to the downtown, providing business activity and neighbourhood stewardship. Reciprocally, the downtown offers amenities and businesses easily accessed from the surrounding neighbourhoods.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

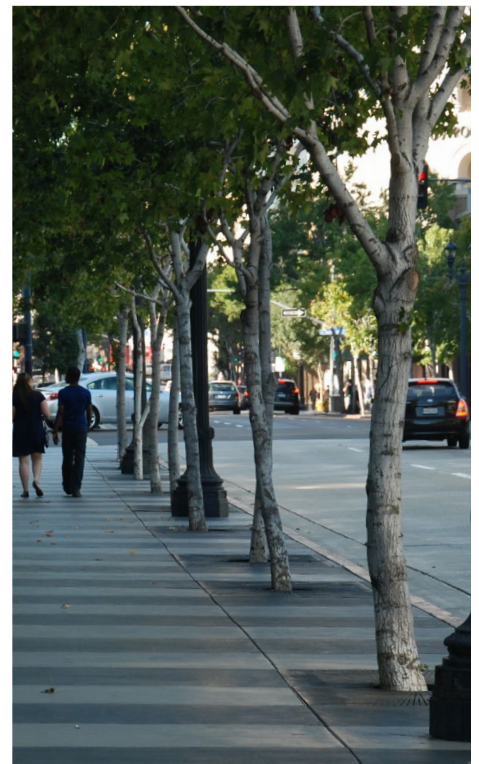
This project enhances the train station as a key entry point to London for conventional rail and future high-speed rail travellers. This intermodal transit hub will help to promote redevelopment in the SoHo neighbourhood as a transit-adjacent place to live with a safe and comfortable pedestrian connection to the downtown. The project also enhances Clarence Street within the downtown to connect the VIA Train Station to Dundas Place and beyond to Victoria Park.



An example of a pedestrian bridge.



A conceptual rendering of a pedestrian overpass to Clarence Street.



An example of a green right-of-way.



# City Gateway

## What is the project?

The VIA Train Station is one of London's most important entry points to London and is planned to be the landing place for future high-speed rail. The intention of the City Gateway project is to enhance the experience of entering the city by rail. It is also intended to improve access to and from the train station by foot, bicycle and transit.

This project calls for the development of a high-quality public square in front of the train station that would allow Londoners and visitors a pedestrian-oriented place to wait for departures or arrivals. The square would provide a positive civic image and would be well connected to the other important places within the

downtown through strong linkages. A linkage of key importance is from the train station to Dundas Place. Such linkages can be accommodated in a number of different ways.

Development of this public square will also provide the opportunity to enhance the current pedestrian experience of the Richmond Street underpass, by exploiting existing grade changes and providing a better street interface.

## Why is this project important?

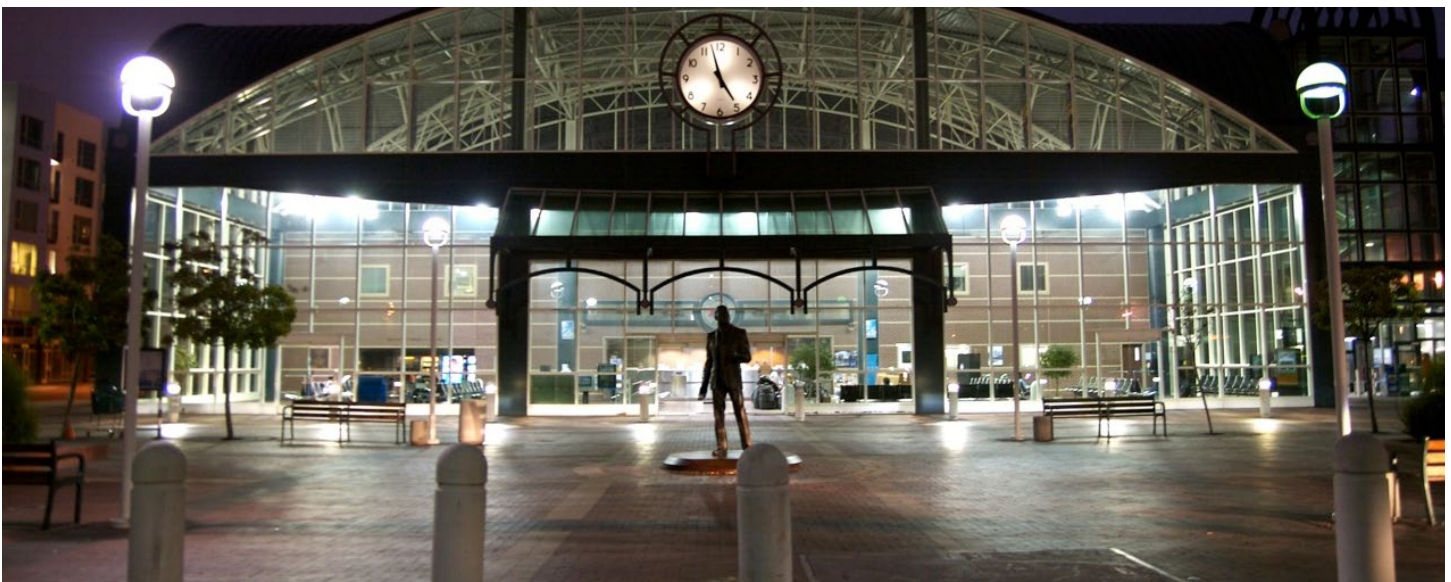
Much of the City Gateway project area is readily adaptable for redevelopment when high-speed rail investments are made. High-speed rail will undoubtedly increase the number of people arriving in London by train, and many visitors'

first impressions of the city will be made here.

Building a reputation of a vibrant and attractive city requires investment in public space, especially at points of entry and departure. This project will build on London's reputation as a great place to live, visit and do business.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

The City Gateway project will create a welcoming landmark and memorable experience for passengers arriving in London and a positive image of the city. It will improve the accessibility to the train station from other locations in the downtown by pursuing strong connections.



An example of a train station with a public plaza. Source: flickr.com, Ralphman

# Performance Venue

## What is the project?

This project is a venue dedicated to serving as a 'home' to performing arts productions and serving as a gathering place for the London community. It remains a project unrealized from the 1998 *Downtown Millennium Plan*. It was cited then, and continues to be pursued, as a significant partnership project.

## Why is this project important?

Much like Budweiser Gardens (formerly the John Labatt Centre), this community facility would play a significant role in "creating the buzz" in the downtown and bringing people to the core that would not otherwise be attracted there.

## What will this project do for the downtown?

A well-sited, architecturally striking venue with high-functioning performance characteristics would help London boost its reputation as an important cultural centre, thereby creating a stronger attraction for living and working in London and downtown.



An example of a performance venue in Minneapolis. Source: [theroadjunkies.com](http://theroadjunkies.com)



Public art near the Denver Center for the Performing Arts.



# TOOLS



St. Paul's Cathedral  
Looking west.





This section of *Our Move Forward* identifies various tools that can be used to implement the Strategic Directions, Transformational Projects, and initiatives identified in the previous sections. This section is organized into three parts:

1. Planning Policies
2. Financial Investment and Revenue Generation
3. Organizational and Operational Excellence

Part 1 includes planning policies, consistent with the Official Plan, that are used for the consideration of changes requested through the planning application review, project design and public realm maintenance processes.

Part 2 identifies potential tools for assisting in generating interest for new development in the downtown.

Part 3 examines opportunities for Downtown London through its Business Improvement Area and/or MainStreet London functions to provide support to local businesses in central London. Additionally, this organization and/or others may assist with the maintenance of and programming in various public spaces in the downtown to increase activity, support visitor attraction, foster business investment, and provide local amenities for the downtown neighbourhood.



# PLANNING POLICIES

The following planning policies provide direction for future public and private development within the downtown. Additionally, these policies will ensure public projects and the public realm are used to promote a positive city image.

## 1.0 Make Dundas Street the most exciting place in London

- 1.1 Ensure downtown planning and development decisions support and grow Dundas Street's role as a destination public space.
- 1.2 Foster the use of Dundas Street for a wide variety of activity and events appealing to a broad cross-section of demographic groups.
- 1.3 Maintain the essence of Dundas Street's unique character and streetscape while being responsive to change and accommodating a wide variety of uses in its right-of-way.
- 1.4 Ensure Dundas Street maintains its appeal as a public space during all hours and in all seasons.
- 1.5 Create and manage a Dundas Street streetscape that is attractive, interesting, well-maintained and comfortable for pedestrians.
- 1.6 Target funding programs which support property owners on Dundas Street to improve the street appearance, heritage character, and usability of their buildings.
- 1.7 Consider the function, placement, and planting methods of street trees simultaneously with the management, repair, and improvement of other Dundas Street municipal infrastructure, in order to optimize the healthy growth of street trees.
- 1.8 Finalize the *Dundas Street Scoping Study* to further define the scope of future improvement initiatives related to Dundas Street.
- 1.9 Work with the Downtown BIA and other potential partners to create excitement about Dundas Street through place-based investments such as pedestrian-oriented infrastructure and event programming.



High-quality streetscaping materials along a pedestrian-oriented retail environment.

## 2.0 Reconnect with the Thames

- 2.1 Plant trees in strategic locations within open spaces along the river's edge in order to maintain views.
- 2.2 Where possible, encourage and/or maintain public rights-of-way that promote access and views to the river corridor.
- 2.3 Ensure view corridors are maintained or opened to the Thames River and Harris Park.
- 2.4 Use public art as strategic land marks that attract people in the downtown to the Forks of the Thames.
- 2.5 Establish civic spaces at strategic locations that offer gathering and passive recreational opportunities along the Thames River.

## 3.0 Forge connections with the downtown neighbourhoods

- 3.1 Undertake a Downtown Transportation Assessment to evaluate the impacts of the Strategic Directions and Transformational Projects on the overall transportation network within the downtown.
- 3.2 Ensure that the selected rapid transit corridor provides a high-quality pedestrian environment.
- 3.3 Ensure future transit routing supports connections from surrounding neighbourhoods, such as Talbot North, Woodfield, Old East, SoHo, Old South/Wortley Village, Riverforks, and Blackfriars/Petersville to the downtown.
- 3.4 Ensure future rapid transit routing provides high-quality pedestrian access to education and office employment areas.
- 3.5 Ensure pedestrian priority is provided along the Clarence Street corridor to connect SoHo to the downtown and Victoria Park.
- 3.6 Encourage end-of-trip facilities for cyclists in new and existing office buildings including secure bicycle parking, showers, and change rooms.



Old South/Wortley Village.

## 4.0 Green our downtown

- 4.1 Protect and incorporate natural elements, especially those along the Thames Valley Corridor, into the design of new development.
- 4.2 Improve the standards of planting methods and materials to provide better planting zones and longer tree survival.
- 4.3 Coordinate utilities and tree-planting zones through proposed streetscaping plans and/or capital investments to enhance tree growth.
- 4.4 Encourage the use of stormwater management technologies to assist with landscape irrigation and tree survival and to reduce overall water usage.

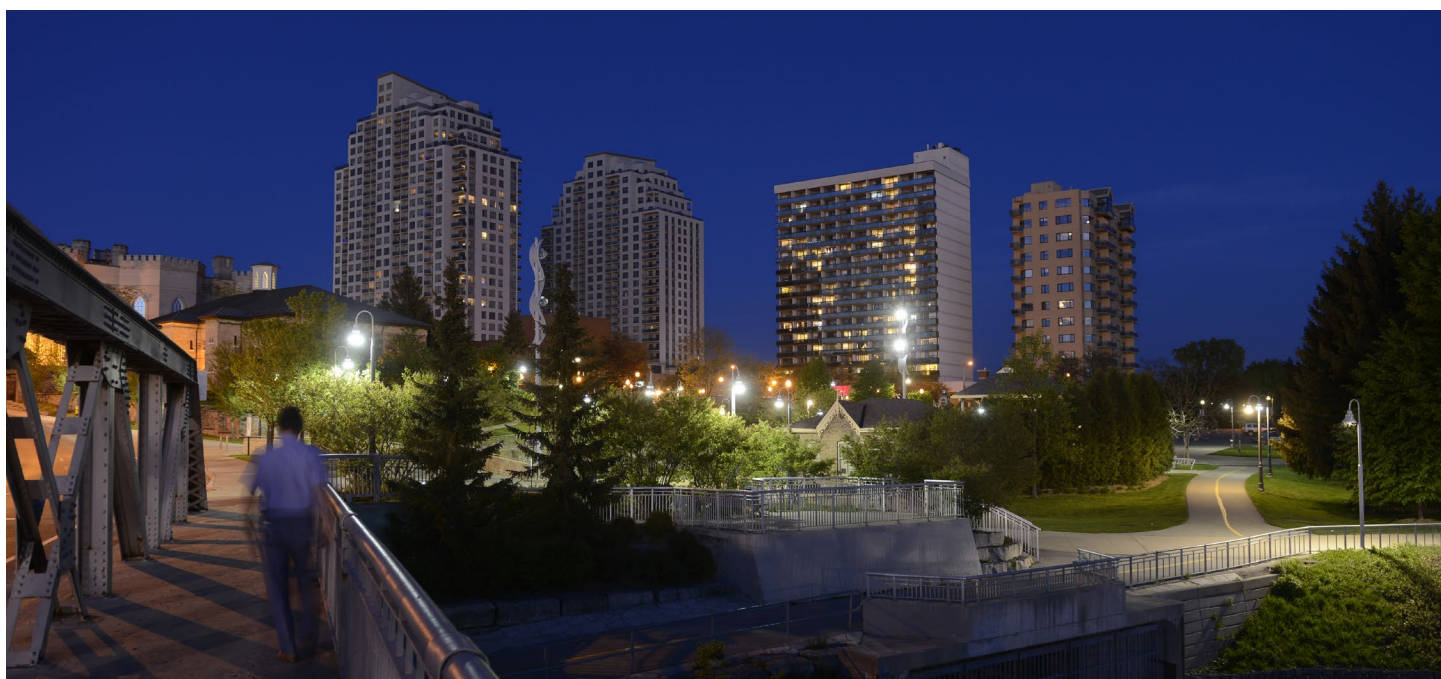




Planted median on York Street at Clarence Street.

- 4.5 Promote Low Impact Design (LID) to provide drainage improvements.
  - 4.6 Whenever practicable, plan new developments to be “future ready” to accommodate the future use of solar energy, electric vehicles, and district energy systems.
  - 4.7 Encourage the use of district energy facilities and infrastructure for large-scale redevelopment within the downtown to mitigate power outage disruptions.
  - 4.8 Promote opportunities to use green roof technologies and incorporate green spaces into developments to assist with greening the downtown and reducing the heat island effect.
  - 4.9 Encourage the reuse of historic buildings and their materials to reduce the requirement for new materials.
  - 4.10 Encourage new and retrofit buildings to aim to achieve a sustainability threshold equal to LEED gold rating.
  - 4.11 Encourage enhanced pedestrian crossings in preparing streetscape plans or through capital investments. This can be achieved through bump outs at intersections, using alternative materials for crossing areas, removal of channelized right hand turns or raised intersections.
  - 4.12 Encourage wide sidewalks in all locations throughout the downtown to promote a safe and active pedestrian environment.
  - 4.13 Ensure the public realm provides adequate shelter and resting areas for pedestrians and transit users.
- ## 5.0 Build a great neighbourhood
- 5.1 Encourage the construction of a variety of dwellings within the downtown that can accommodate residents at various life stages.
  - 5.2 Encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites to increase the resident and worker population downtown by discontinuing temporary-use zoning on these sites.
  - 5.3 Ensure that new development contributes positively to the image of the downtown, taking into consideration landmarks, the skyline, natural features and gateways.
  - 5.4 Undertake a study to define and protect important downtown views consistent with the Downtown Heritage Conservation District.
  - 5.5 Create developments that add to the quality of the area and provide a high standard of amenity for all users.
  - 5.6 Address the needs of all users, including those with disabilities.

- 5.7 Direct public transit, walking and cycling as close as possible to meeting areas, family attractions, public spaces and activity centres.
- 5.8 Ensure the tower portion of tall buildings are appropriately slender to allow sunlight access to the public realm.
- 5.9 Establish a high-quality pedestrian-oriented street environment that is visually interesting, comprehensive, varied and well-connected.
- 5.10 Design appropriately for location, function, local climate and terrain.
- 5.11 Design and construct buildings that are flexible enough to accommodate a range of uses over time.
- 5.12 Foster natural surveillance, or 'eyes on the street,' by providing buildings with active frontages oriented to streets, squares and parks.
- 5.13 Ensure the design of the public realm provides open lines of sight, clearly identified entry and exit points, and alternative means of exit.
- 5.14 Provide good lighting and visibility to create an environment that helps people to find their way easily.
- 5.15 Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into the *Downtown Design Manual*.
- 5.16 Ensure that vehicular driveways and laneway access points along streets are minimized to enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- 5.17 Ensure an adequate balance of public parking on- and off-street.
- 5.18 Encourage development of smaller 'pocket parks' that function primarily as places downtown for residents to socialize, such as venues for pet exercise and quality places for young children to play.
- 5.19 Integrate features, such as play areas, splash pads and other family-oriented elements into public spaces.
- 5.20 Retain and reuse heritage buildings to strengthen the distinct identity of the Downtown Heritage Conservation District.



Residential towers as viewed from Kensington Bridge.





A light show projected onto Budweiser Gardens during the 2013 World Figure Skating Championships.

5.21 For recognized heritage buildings, encourage their conservation, restoration and rehabilitation in accordance with the *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Guidelines* and encourage the use of interpretive signage.

5.22 Ensure that all future public works implement the Values identified in this Plan.

5.23 Ensure that the replacement and/or maintenance of public realm features are consistent with the *Downtown Design Manual* and *Heritage Conservation District Guidelines*.

5.24 Wherever practicable, coordinate development projects with infrastructure upgrade projects to minimize costs and disruption.

5.25 Coordinate underground and above-ground infrastructure during the design and construction of capital projects.

## 6.0 Create the buzz

6.1 Maintain and enhance the downtown as the major focus for employment and economic activity within the city and the region.

6.2 Maintain the downtown as the primary and preferred location for office buildings exceeding 5,000 square metres.

6.3 Encourage federal, provincial and municipal governments to maintain and expand their downtown office facilities.

6.4 Incorporate public art as a component of all major downtown construction projects.

6.5 Continue to develop the downtown as an international, national and regional education centre.

6.6 Incorporate the initiatives and recommendations of the *Cultural Prosperity Plan* as they relate to the downtown.

6.7 Design new buildings within the downtown to take advantage of their unique environment through distinctive and innovative architecture.

6.8 Ensure new buildings are consistent with the *Downtown Design Manual* and the *Downtown Heritage Conservation District Guidelines* and reviewed by the Urban Design Peer Review Panel.

6.9 Design tall buildings to function as landmarks to create a distinctive downtown skyline.

# FINANCIAL INVESTMENT & REVENUE GENERATION

## A Solid Foundation

Downtown has proven its resiliency over time when faced with the threats posed by rapidly changing economic forces and societal trends. Its decline in assessed property value at the end of the last century has since seen a dramatic rebound. Its reputation as a desirable destination has been significantly enhanced by the cluster of day-to-day and special events venues that were constructed after adoption of the *Downtown Millennium Plan*. A large measure of this success so far achieved is due to the creative and strategic approaches to financial investment that have been made. This legacy provides a solid foundation for evaluating revenue generation options and financial models and programs that both can sustain gains already made and leverage further investment.

Having good information available is important when evaluating the costs and benefits of investment opportunities. It can help the City spot trends and shifts in market conditions, and be ready to adapt to emerging challenges or to respond to investment funding partnership opportunities that may arise through orders of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors. The biennial

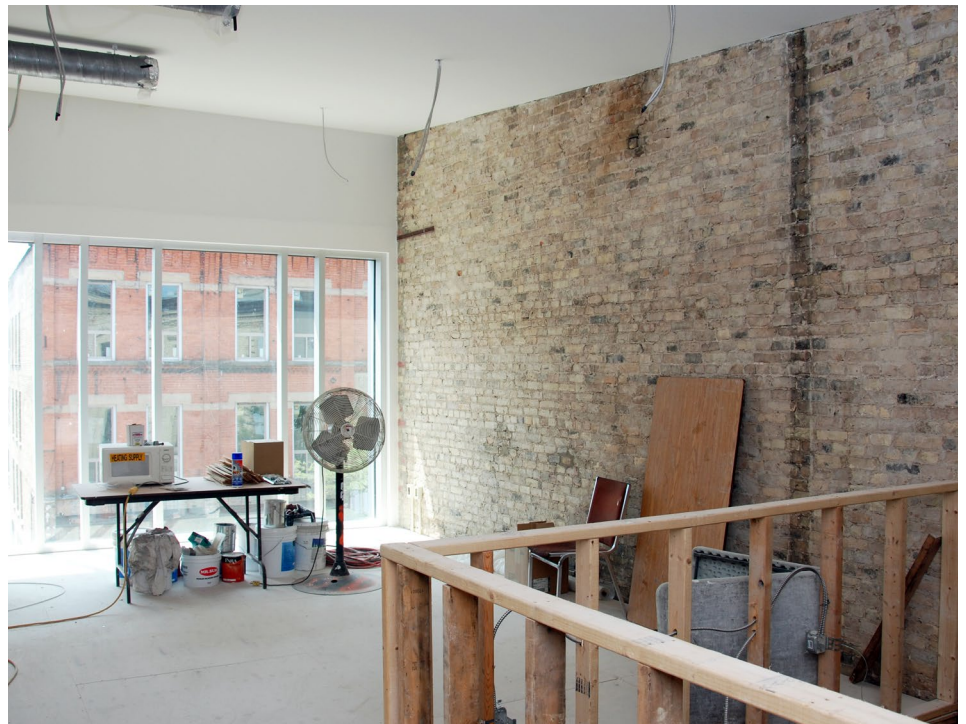
*State of the Downtown* report has been undertaken six times. It tracks the downtown's progress in many dimensions, using a variety of indicators. The report is an implementation tool of this Plan that should to be refined and used to further the Plan's recommendations.

## Return on Investment

The City of London's financial investment in a suite of development incentive programs, authorized via the adoption of the *Downtown Community Improvement Plan*, has leveraged

the initiation of and/or otherwise enhanced the quality of private development undertaken during the years since they were first introduced. These development incentive programs addressed conditions prevalent before the *Downtown Millennium Plan* was prepared. The programs should be reviewed to determine if/how they relate to current conditions.

Assessed property values have stabilized downtown and are increasing overall. This situation offers an opportunity to explore how revenue generated in the downtown might be captured



Downtown building renovations in progress and supported through City loans and grants.



to help pay for new downtown public capital investments and/or programs. Tax increment financing is one method, whereby bonds are issued to generate funds for public projects which are then financed using the increased property tax revenues generated by adjacent development on private property that is most directly benefitting from the improved public realm. A similar funding outcome may be possible through City-budget setting, by deliberately “sequestering” a portion of the revenues generated downtown for those projects and activities Council deems to be of the highest strategic value in delivering on this Plan’s aims.

The provision, management, and siting of downtown parking is an area of special relevance to the successful implementation of *Our Move Forward*. The more vibrant downtown streets become, the more competition there is to use the space available in their rights-of-way. Acknowledging that this Plan anticipates more ample sidewalk space for pedestrian movement and occupancy, and for choice transit amenities, there may at times be less street space available for parking vehicles. However, motorists also need to be accommodated when enticed to a downtown with multiple attractive destination venues, or that is itself a destination. The construction of a City-owned and operated parking garage could serve both as a response to this situation and act as a catalyst for

other projects. Revenues gained can be put back into the downtown and the added parking available in weather-protected, secure, lit parking structures can encourage temporary surface parking lots to be developed.

Municipal parking decisions and funding allocations also can support the success of public transit operating as the preferred mode of commuter transport to the downtown. They can establish minimum or maximum amounts of parking required for particular uses, leading to the shared use of parking facilities where daytime

and nighttime parking demands complement each other. A large inventory of parking spaces can be operated to influence parking rates that favour multiple occupants [car-pooling] and can provide linkages to bicycle infrastructure.

The *Downtown London Parking Study* is in the process of being updated to reflect the current conditions of the downtown and new policy directions. The updated study will provide further direction on what roles related to parking that the City of London and others could play within the downtown.

## ACTIONS

1. Continue to prepare the biennial *State of the Downtown* report, ensuring it continues to measure outcomes based on achieving the Values of this Plan, using a variety of indicators, and where necessary refining, adding to, or discontinuing measures.
2. Review the *Downtown Community Improvement Plan*, and particularly the programs offered through it, to determine their appropriateness and applicability in furthering the Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.
3. Undertake research to determine what level of revenue generated in the downtown can be captured for further investment in the downtown, and the costs and benefits, and risks and rewards associated with the various methods available.
4. Following the conclusion of the *Downtown London Parking Study*, undertake a downtown parking strategy that is consistent with and furthers the Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.

# ORGANIZATIONAL & OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Great places benefit from constantly paying attention to what needs be done and striving to organize those tasks in ways that maximize the effective use of available resources. With a multitude of property owners and investment interests, serving numerous clients and meeting diverse social expectations, downtowns are typically more complex than other destinations where these factors are not present to the same extent, or not present at all.

Where government funds alone cannot achieve the performance expectations necessary to sustain and grow downtown development, operations and programming, coalitions can come together or new entities can be formed and charged with the task of overcoming obstacles to success. Beyond what may be allocated from tax-based funding, it also can be useful to link the accountability of delivering projects and programs with their ability to generate funds in other ways. Considering such options for downtown London is consistent with this Plan's stated Value in Partnership.



A downtown development corporation office.

## Purpose-Based Organizations

Lessons learned from other jurisdictions may be adaptable to help finance the projects and initiatives in *Our Move Forward*. There are successful organizations in other communities with responsibilities in managing assets, generating revenues, and making investments that should be studied to determine whether and how

they might be applicable in London to advance the implementation of this Plan.

Downtown Development Corporations (DDCs) and Downtown Development Authorities (DDAs), for example, can be set up with strategic and focussed mandates to partner municipal equity or property contributions in public-private partnerships that can link to,



and leverage, the construction of public improvements with private development ventures. Their mandates can also include a focus on offering assistance to maintain and grow start-up and small businesses, to recruit new businesses to fill gaps in essential products and services, and to cluster or relocate businesses that are complementary and stronger when in close proximity. These development-focussed organizations were explored in the background research prepared twenty years ago as possible ways of implementing aspects of the *Downtown Millennium Plan*.

Given the progress made since then in recovering the vitality of downtown, a fresh look at their potential to advance *Our Move Forward* is worth consideration.

Place-specific organizations can be established to design, build, finance and maintain new and/or unique public assets. These tend to fill a role that may not be as effectively or feasibly delivered by departments, agencies, boards and commissions who already have multiple tasks associated with maintaining many facilities.

## Operating at Peak Performance

Top-tier downtowns are managed well. This requires organizational models, purviews of activity, and execution of tasks that aspire to a reputation for excellence and then routinely deliver on it. Downtowns that can best protect and increase the value of original capital investment often have

organizations serving focused purposes, and/or see coalitions cooperate to achieve common interests and avoid duplicating tasks or working at cross-purposes.

London's downtown may be at a stage in its evolution where a Downtown Management Organization (DMO) could expand the traditional Business Improvement Area (BIA) model to take the lead on program delivery and potentially some aspects of operations management for the downtown. There are models elsewhere in which private financing and management of public places can supplement what the public sector can deliver in the features and experiences found downtown.



The Downtown Business Improvement Area recently expanded its boundary northward to include Richmond Row.

Examples of responsibilities that may be appropriate for a DMO could include festival production and “clean and safe” programing. The latter would focus on maintaining personal and property security through increased police presence, either through private security or separately funded downtown police patrols, and maintain premium order landscaping, sidewalk washing, and litter, trash and graffiti removal.

A DMO would work much like a private shopping centre management organization. The City, in partnership with Downtown London, has already tested aspects of this type of model in ad-hoc partnerships struck to present London at its best for major national and international events.

Operational excellence downtown can be a chief consequence of organizational excellence. Since downtown profiles the whole city in a small “snapshot” area of it, downtown must establish and sustain the highest levels of service in all operational matters that define its attractiveness. This direction is as important as the orientation to high quality design and compelling development. Building operational expectations into the early stages of project design, including methods for financing those expectations, ensures that what is well built stays that way over the life-cycle of the project. *Our Move Forward* must adopt a “whole-cost” approach to secure the value of investing in downtown.

## ACTIONS

1. Review the potential of a purpose-based downtown development organization to advance Values, Projects, and Strategic Directions in *Our Move Forward*.
2. Establish a standing downtown coordinating committee of City/ agency/BIA staff to regularly set targets and measure progress on them in a variety of operational areas where mandates overlap.
3. Undertake a study of the costs and benefits associated with initiating a DMO that could operate in this manner on a day-to day basis.



The “Clean Team” in 2014 keeps sidewalks in the downtown litter-free during the summer.



# IMPLEMENTATION & TARGETS



View of the  
downtown from  
the top floor of  
City Hall looking  
south east.





## Budgeting

This Plan includes projects and initiatives throughout the downtown that are intended to be undertaken over several years. Therefore the successful implementation of this Plan will recognize that transformative work this wide in scope means that everything cannot be done all at once. Having one long menu of implementation costs sometimes may help in understanding the general order of magnitude costs one versus another. However such lists are often inexact, containing dollar-figures with wide margins of error and without benefit of detailed cost and consequence investigations. This can be a

significant factor in contributing to project cost overruns.

Instead of attempting to set discrete budgets for every initiative set out in *Our Move Forward* over its multi-year lifespan, the recommended approach to budgeting is to set downtown priorities and budget for them to coincide within successive City Council terms of office. This approach is strategic, in that it can ensure Council's downtown priorities are regularly weighed in budget deliberations among all priorities. This approach is pragmatic, in that it offers a way to choose what are considered to be the right things to do and the best time/circumstances in which to do them.

Because the foundation for all projects and initiatives in *Our Move Forward* is to transform the downtown, the target recommended in this Plan is a return-on-investment evaluation centred on how much each one contributes to making downtown an unrivalled experience.



Executing the initiatives and Transformational Projects set out in *Our Move Forward* depends on how each is evaluated against all of the following factors:

1. **Scale:** A project/initiative's order of magnitude is small, medium, or large.
2. **Sequence:** A project/initiative's order of priority occurs logically, or through regulatory requirement, before another.
3. **Speed:** Circumstances applicable to a project/initiative allow it to be completed relatively quickly or slowly.

Whether the project/initiative is a physical construction, operational program, or hybrid involving both aspects, it can be incrementally defined by the following parts/stages or captured as the sum of all them:

1. **Project definition:** What a project/initiative includes or is limited to.
2. **Concept design:** Including the estimated time frame, required personnel, and budget.
3. **Detailed design:** Including required regulatory approvals and defined time frame, required personnel, and budget.
4. **Execution/Construction:** Including procurement, supervision, and delivery.

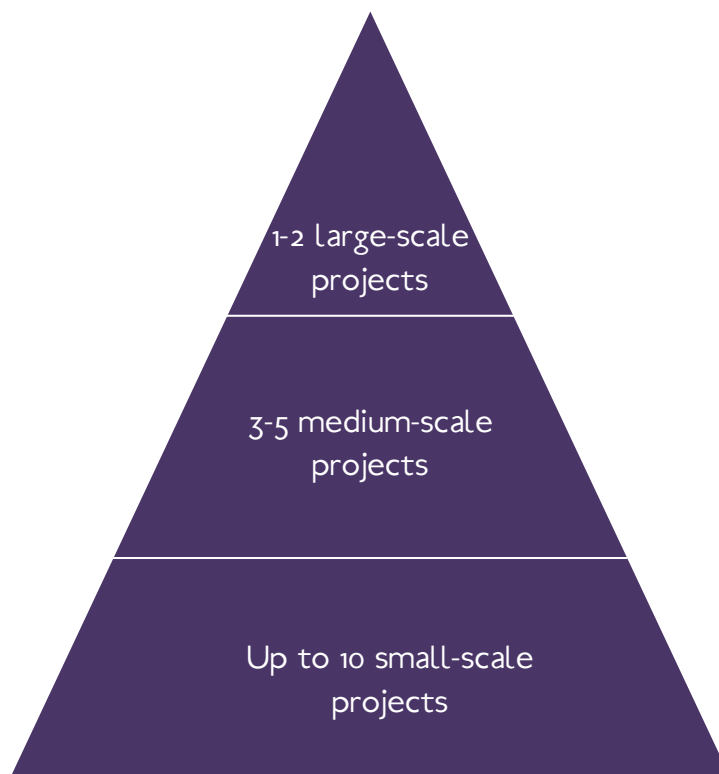
5. **Post-Project Review:** Including monitoring results against objectives that trigger decisions to continue, change, or conclude the work.

## Aligning Strategy with Available Resources

The recommended budgeting strategy means that defining and prioritizing projects/initiatives needs to be an ongoing aspect of implementing this Plan. The baseline for this work may be found first in assessing what existing municipal capital and operating budgets, by service area or in some combination, already contribute to implementing this Plan, or could do so with little negative effect. The second step would be identifying what additional funding sources can contribute to covering gaps in

existing resources. This may include new municipal budget allocations, pursuing organizational and revenue-generating options described earlier in this chapter, or a combination of them.

In order to ensure a manageable number of large-, medium- and small-scale projects are planned for within each municipal budgetary cycle, the actual projects and initiatives proposed for execution in each budget term could adopt and follow a model where one to two large-scale downtown projects occur simultaneously with three to five medium-scale, and as many as ten small-scale. This model depends less on the actual number of projects chosen, than the effort to proportionally pursue more smaller-scale projects that deliver high value when resources are limited.



## The First Steps

Using the priorities set out earlier in this Plan, and the budgeting strategy proposed previously, the first four years of implementing this Plan would include pursuing Dundas Place and Forks of The Thames for the large-scale projects, and/or phases of each as medium-scale projects. Council direction has potentially advanced the implementation of Dundas Place through its approval to undertake the *Dundas Flexible Street Scoping Study*. Though the Study remains in draft stage, the preliminary cost estimate for the project is \$16 million. To initiate the flexible street transit re-routing and pilot programming/ consultation, a \$1.7 million budget over four years is also needed.

To advance implementation of the Forks of The Thames project, early cost estimates have been prepared in response to the June 2014 London Community Foundation announcement of the Back to the River Strategy. Assuming a municipal one-third contribution, \$5.3 million municipal budget allocation is anticipated.

Finally, a municipal budget allocation of \$500,000 annually over four years would be sufficient to complete up to 10 small-scale projects in this Plan.



A conceptual rendering illustrating Dundas Place - a flexible street concept.



A conceptual rendering illustrating a redeveloped Forks of the Thames.



Laneway improvements are potential “small-scale” projects.