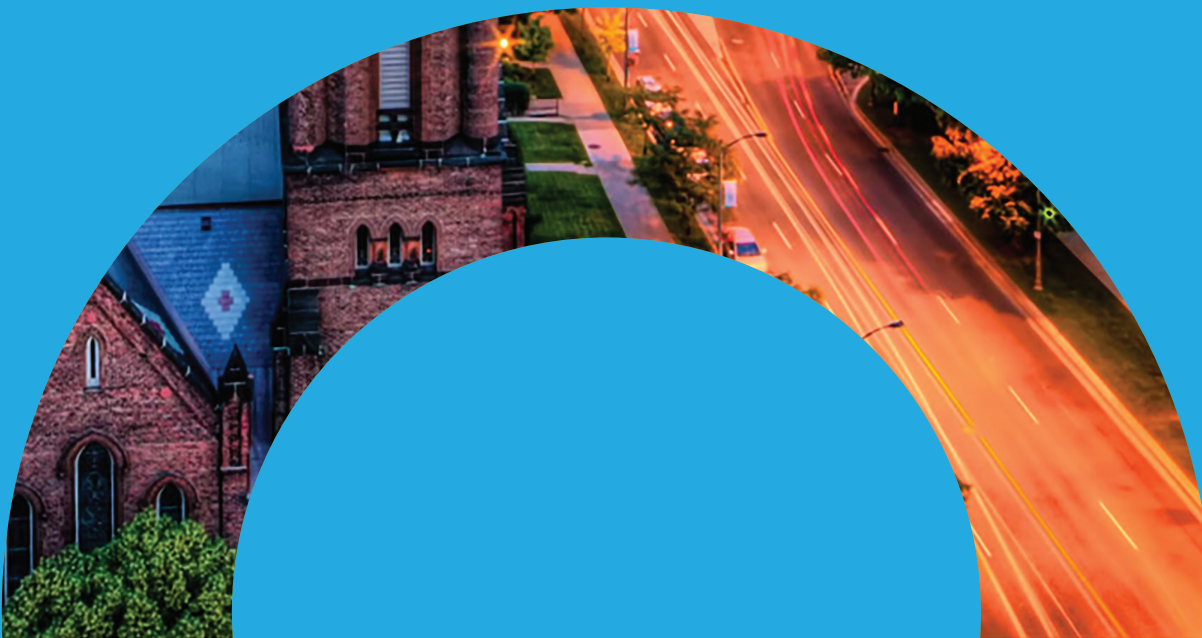


DOWNTOWN  
**LONDON**  
RE-IMAGINED

OPPORTUNITIES  
IN THE HEART  
OF LONDON

Downtown London  
Strategy 2021-2025











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# INTRODUCTION

Downtown London staff, boards, civic and community stakeholders and the authors of this strategic report came together to envision the future for Downtown London recognizing the significant impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our friends and neighbours who live, work and do business in London's downtown core. This powerful partnership is based on a common sense of purpose, love of our downtown community and a desire to build a downtown London that is beacon for those seeking a better, brighter future.

Downtown London, including the London Downtown Business Association (LDBA) and MainStreet London (MSL), looked upon their task of recovery and renewal as a unique opportunity to take a bold, comprehensive and dynamic examination of our beloved downtown in a more holistic manner.

This comprehensive and far-reaching planning process was overseen by the boards of directors of the LDBA and MSL and an advisory committee consisting of key community stakeholders including city of London staff, Council, business members, community partners and Downtown London staff. Over 2,700 people contributed to the strategy development through interviews, surveys and focus groups, offering their valuable insights, hopes and aspirations for the future of the downtown.

We believe Downtown London Re-Imagined is an exciting new approach to community and economic development which builds on past successes, identifies solutions to new and ongoing challenges and maps out an exciting and inspiring future over the next five years, and beyond.



DOWNTOWN  
LONDON IS  
COMMITTED TO  
REFLECTING AND  
CELEBRATING  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION WITH  
OUR MEMBERS  
AND THE  
COMMUNITIES  
WE SERVE.









# ABOUT DOWNTOWN LONDON

Downtown London is made up of two complementary non-profit organizations. The London Downtown Business Association (LDBA), governed by 13 volunteer board members drawn from the organization's membership, has the fiduciary and governance responsibilities for the organization. MainStreet London (MSL), with 11 volunteer board members, is a separate non-profit corporation focused on downtown revitalization and attraction initiatives and administering financial incentives to members including both grants and loans.

Downtown London is the leading voice of the downtown business community and operates as the hub of a network of partners and stakeholders that contribute to the entirety of the downtown experience. This interdependent and collegial relationship includes the City of London, event and tourism operators, local colleges and universities, community builders such as London

Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), Small Business Enterprise Centre, Tech Alliance, London Chamber of Commerce, Tourism London, developers, property owners, SME business owners, and large corporate organizations.

Downtown London Re-imagined is an evolution in both the LDBA and MainStreet London's commitment to providing consistent and focused leadership. It was developed to ensure Downtown London's priorities and actions are aligned with its vision and mission, not least of which include sustainability, social and cultural diversity as key considerations in Downtown London's operations, programs and governance.



# A KEY CITY ASSET

Downtown London is the beating heart of the Forest City. It encompasses an important economic and cultural asset, whose health and vitality are crucial to the overall success of the city of London. It is also the centre of the community's cultural, recreational and social life, featuring a breathtaking array of sensory experiences, from top-flight restaurants and cafés to evocative galleries and an expansive live music scene.

Centrepieces for the downtown London experience include significant green spaces at the Thames River and Victoria Park, major venues including Budweiser Gardens, RBC Place, the

**THERE ARE AN  
ESTIMATED 7,900  
RESIDENTS IN THE  
DOWNTOWN LONDON  
GEOGRAPHIC  
BOUNDARIES AND  
ANOTHER 76,000 PEOPLE  
WITHIN A 3KM RADIUS.**





Grand Theatre, Covent Garden Market, London Music Hall, the Central Library and Museum London. Downtown London sponsors and partners with festival organizers to attract major downtown festivals including Sunfest, Rock the Park and the Home County Music and

Art Festival. The built heritage of downtown London continues to be honoured and celebrated. The district is a draw for tens of thousands of visitors from far afield, as well as a focal point for those living in the suburbs or smaller communities within the region.



**7,900**  
RESIDENTS<sup>1</sup>



**5,300**  
HOUSEHOLDS<sup>2</sup>



**1,485**  
EMPLOYER BUSINESS  
LOCATIONS<sup>3</sup>



**2,553**  
NON EMPLOYER  
BUSINESS LOCATIONS<sup>4</sup>



**55%** PROJECTED POPULATION  
GROWTH 2016 TO 2039<sup>5</sup>

1. 2021 estimate Environics Analytics.

2. 2021 estimate Environics Analytics.

3. Business count data for the Downtown London district is based on data from three Statistics Canada Census Tract areas. The combined boundary of the three Census Tracts is slightly larger than the BIA but provides an important source of data to assess the business profile in the downtown.

4. Ibid

5. \*For an area in the downtown slightly larger than the Downtown London geographic boundaries. Source: City of London.





# A GROWING POPULATION

As the home for the headquarters of several large corporations, downtown London continues to be Southwestern Ontario's premier commercial and corporate office location, with easy access to Highway 401, and a variety of affordable and versatile property options available to own or lease. The city of London is committed to investing in the long-term future of the downtown through major investments in infrastructure and programming in the years to come. There are an estimated 7,900 residents and 5,300 households within the Downtown London boundaries (2021) with strong population growth of 15,400 expected by 2039 for the district and

surrounding area forecasted.

As defined by the three Census Tracts in the London CMA, which is slightly larger than Downtown London's boundaries, there are 1,485 employer business locations and 2,553 non employer business locations including all private sector, public sector and non-profit sector establishments in the downtown district.

**THERE ARE 3 TIMES AS MANY PEOPLE AGED 25 TO 29 LIVING IN THE DOWNTOWN COMPARED TO THE LONDON CMA.**





LONDON IS ONE OF THE FASTEST  
GROWING CITIES AND URBAN  
CENTRES IN CANADA.

Statistics Canada Tables 17-10-0135-01 and 14-10-0385-01



# THE DOWNTOWN ECONOMY

Many of the largest employers in the city of London are downtown including national and international financial and insurance firms, health care facilities and information technology businesses, all three levels of government and many of the city's top tourism assets.



**1,500** EMPLOYER  
BUSINESSES<sup>6</sup>



**57%** OF LONDON'S  
LARGEST EMPLOYERS<sup>7</sup>



**>300**  
PROFESSIONAL  
SERVICES FIRMS



**3,000**  
FINANCE AND  
INSURANCE JOBS



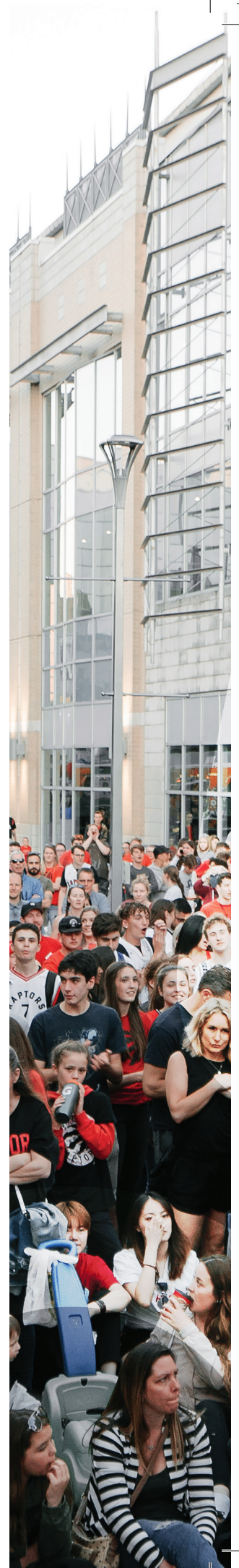
**2/3**  
OF LONDON'S  
INFO TECH JOBS



**>40%** OF ALL  
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES  
EMPLOYMENT IN LONDON

6. Pre-COVID-19 pandemic. These statistics are based on an area defined by Statistics Canada that is modestly larger and has slightly different borders compared to the geographic boundaries of the Downtown London Business Improvement Area (BIA).

7. With over 50 employees or more located downtown.





# DOWNTOWN LONDON IS DRIVING THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

## EMPLOYMENT PER SQUARE KILOMETRE, 2020

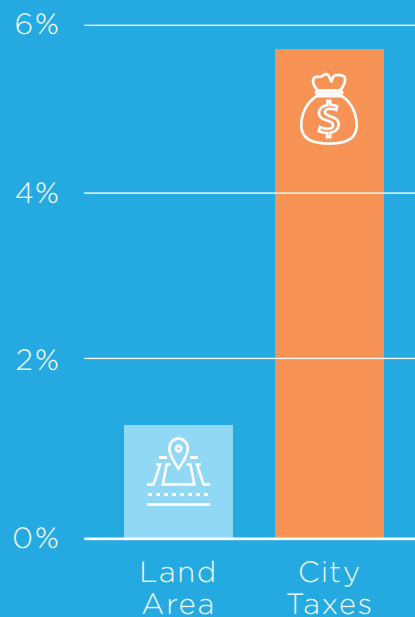
Adapted from Statistics Canada, London CMA business location counts, June 2020.

**8,625**  
/sq. km.  
Downtown London

**83**  
/sq. km.

Rest of London

## DOWNTOWN LONDON'S SHARE



**DOWNTOWN LONDON REPRESENTS 5.5% OF CITY TAXES BUT JUST 0.7% OF LAND AREA AND GENERATES NEARLY 8 TIMES AS MUCH TAX/KM<sup>2</sup>.**



# SETTING OUR SIGHTS ON SUCCESS

## **VISION STATEMENT**





Downtown London represents a thriving, progressive, and welcoming district in the heart of the city. The people that own businesses, visit, work, learn, and live in the district are the essence of its vibrancy and diversity.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Downtown London represents and supports its members, fostering a strong, thriving downtown in the economic and cultural heart of the city of London.



# DOWNTOWN LONDON'S VALUES

 <p><b>MEMBER SUPPORT</b></p>	<p>We assist our members to achieve success through promotion, programming and advocacy with a focus on the common good of the membership.</p>
 <p><b>LEADERSHIP</b></p>	<p>We are uniquely positioned to speak as a catalyst for positive change, constructive advocate, and voice of the downtown.</p>
 <p><b>COLLABORATION</b></p>	<p>We can achieve more by supporting and working cooperatively with our community partners on our shared goals.</p>
 <p><b>DIVERSITY</b></p>	<p>The variety and interplay of people, business, arts and culture in the district provides a richness of opportunity and experience unparalleled anywhere else in London.</p>
 <p><b>PROSPERITY</b></p>	<p>The economic success of our members and the district reflects and impacts the economic health of the whole city.</p>



# DOWNTOWN LONDON GOALS











# STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



## 1. Welcoming, safe and vibrant downtown

**Objective: Plan and program efforts that provide an atmosphere that attracts and welcomes visitors and encourages new and continued business investment in the downtown.**

- 1.1. Work with members, activation partners, City, and downtown commercial and residential property owners to deliver/sponsor a variety of culturally diverse events and activations to attract people and create vibrancy in the downtown.
- 1.2. Work with City, London Police Services and other community services providers, to implement the Core Area Action Plan and other strategies and initiatives aimed to create a safe, clean and vibrant core.
- 1.3. Work with other BIAs, Ontario Business Improvement Area Association, International Downtown Association and others to share information on best practices and projects that could be successfully implemented in downtown London.
- 1.4. Work with commercial landlords to find ways to better utilize vacant storefronts for short-term uses.





## 2. Diversified economic base

**Objective: Grow and diversify the businesses, residents, services, and activities that contribute to the economic vitality of the district.**

- 2.1. Support the City and residential developers' efforts to grow and diversify the downtown population and advance live, work, play opportunities for the downtown.
- 2.2. Working with community and economic development partners, help diversify business mix and investment in downtown.
- 2.3. Explore and implement joint community initiatives for business/retail incubation, acceleration and/or entrepreneurship programming in downtown targeted to post-secondary students, BIPOC communities and new business start-ups to grow and stay downtown.





## FOCUS AREAS FOR DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION



**Residential:** Grow and diversify the mix of residents in the downtown including more families with children.



**Education:** Attract more education downtown including Western University and other learning activities.



**Health care:** Ensure downtown residents have access to a full range of health services and that the downtown is attracting people to access these services.



**Personal services:** Ensure downtown residents have access to a full range of personal services and that the downtown is attracting people to access these services.



**Retail:** Attract more retail activity to the downtown to serve the local population (e.g., grocery store) and to attract people downtown to shop (niche, compelling retail).



**Arts, culture & entertainment:** Expand the downtown's role as an arts, culture and entertainment hub including attracting more film production to the downtown.



**Restaurants:** The downtown is already home to many of the top restaurants in the city. Reinforce and leverage the variety and quality of downtown restaurants through Downtown London's marketing efforts.



**Accommodations:** Continue to build the downtown's role as an accommodations hub for the CMA.







### 3. Strong member engagement and support

**Objective: Align marketing and business assistance to amplify member success.**

- 3.1. Provide promotional support to members and continue to market the downtown as a business, shopping, dining and cultural district.
- 3.2. Respond, track and deploy appropriate resources that address members' issues and opportunities.
- 3.3. Provide effective member services, networking and information sharing tools and tactics, highlighting important member topics such as merchant best practices.
- 3.4. Explore and expand LDBA member activities for staff and board members that proactively supports member needs and opportunities.



## 4. Champion, catalyst and liaison for the downtown

**Objective: Initiate and leverage collaborative efforts to advocate and achieve shared goals with the organizations contributing to Downtown London's success.**

- 4.1. Identify and leverage strong relationships with key strategic partners, community and business organizations for joint program development, economic development, advocacy, research, procurement of products/services, etc.
- 4.2. Establish Downtown London as the authority for current and up to date downtown information, and trends to reinforce the social and economic value of the downtown district.
- 4.3. Distinguish Downtown London (the organization) from downtown London (the geography) and clearly communicate the roles the organization plays or does not play to support the downtown.
- 4.4. Establish an advocacy plan for key strategic issues/opportunities that support LDBA membership as a whole and help to influence, political policy through evidence-based business cases.

**DOWNTOWN LONDON WILL BUILD AWARENESS OF THE IMPORTANT ROLE THE DISTRICT PLAYS IN THE OVERALL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE CITY.**





**This bold and inspiring strategy would not be possible without the exceptional vision and co-operation between the Downtown London boards, staff and members. They worked in close collaboration with the friends and neighbours who live, work and own business in the downtown, as well the broader community of stakeholders within the city of London, to enact an exciting new vision for the community.**

## CONSULTING TEAM



**mellor murray**  
CONSULTING

### In collaboration with:

- Jupia Consultants Inc.
- Curtis Planning Inc.
- Amplify Marketing & Communications



DOWNTOWN  
**LONDON**  
RE-IMAGINED

# OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HEART OF LONDON

Call us today.

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