



REPORT TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: JANUARY 22, 2009

Session:	Public
Subject:	Downtown Master Plan Draft Terms of Reference: Library Submission
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Purpose of Report:	For Receipt and Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Recommendation

It is recommended that this report be received.

Issue / Opportunity

On November 17, 2008, London City Council approved the circulation of the Draft Terms of Reference for the Proposed Downtown Master Plan. The Terms were issued for comment on November 28, 2008. Comments are requested were to be submitted by January 9, 2009.

The development of a Downtown Master Plan over the next few years provides an ideal opportunity for an examination of the Central Library's role in the City and in the downtown community. It can be examined in two ways:

- the unique contribution that the Central Library can make in terms of its contribution to the City's vision for the downtown and
- the Central Library's role within the Library system as a London-wide venue and resource.

The London Public Library is a key institutional player in the downtown community. The Central Library has a great deal to offer in terms of community space and interaction that enhances the life in the downtown core. Key community partners, the London Arts Council and PILLAR Voluntary Network, are housed in the downtown core in the Library. The Library's Rotary Reading Garden is used for community events as well as being a quiet sanctuary for individual use in a busy core.

Through a number of recent community capacity-building initiatives, such as the Working with Newcomers Services or the recent project to investigate services to the socially marginalized, the Central Library has become actively engaged in the life of the downtown community.

The submission from the Library is contained in **Appendix 1**.

We will keep the Library Board apprised of this Plan as it moves forward and indicate where the Library can play a key role in its development and implementation.



**Downtown Master Plan
Draft Terms of Reference
Submitted January 9, 2009**

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Through a number of recent community capacity-building initiatives, such as the Working with Newcomers Services or the recent project to investigate services to the socially marginalized, the Central Library has become actively engaged in the life of the downtown community.

The London Public Library is pleased to offer comment on this initial phase of the Downtown Master Plan development.

Comments on the Draft Terms of Reference

Community Engagement in the Development of a Vision for the Downtown

- 1) The level of detailing of issues and opportunities in the Terms does not appear to leave much margin for broad "visioning" about the downtown. This may reflect the fact that a great deal of excellent work has been done over the years. However, this is the ideal opportunity to build upon the work done to date and to build new energy and excitement. The engagement of the community through survey, focus groups, etc. needs to be undertaken in such a way that it recognizes the work done but opens up opportunities for new ideas and reflects the emerging trends in London's changing community. Successful community engagement is critical to the success of the plan. Perhaps the word "visioning" is not reflective of what is expected. The Terms state that the vision of 2006 needs to be "expanded to apply to the entire range of issues...". Surveys and focus groups of citizens might be used to present specific aspects of the plan for comment, rather than broad design or issue features that have already been identified.
- 2) Is the downtown of London envisioned to be a separate community within London or the economic, cultural and heritage hub of the entire City or a hybrid? The answer to this question will partially be determined by the level of engagement across the City for the Development of the Plan. People working downtown do so because of employment opportunities; people who live downtown choose the venue. People who use the downtown to the extent envisioned by these Terms will be drawn from across the City. Engaging these citizens is critical to success of the process and the plan.
- 3) The community engagement strategy must also include different age groups, economic and cultural backgrounds, etc. that reflect the diversity of our changing City. If we are building a downtown to last for years to come, we must understand how our

community is changing and growing and provide an opportunity for those voices to shape the City's core.

Best practices review

A current best practices review of similar cities should be undertaken as part of the background study and the results shared with the community. This process may engender questions for the public regarding new concepts that London may be interested in pursuing. Visits to other cities by specific groups of citizens may also engender excitement of the possibilities.

Demographics

The impact of changing demographics on all aspects of our society must be a component of the background study. This will impact workforce, schools, activities, transportation, etc.

Transportation

Transportation, both transit and automobile, are addressed in the Terms. The idea of a terminus in the downtown needs to be augmented by a review of routes throughout the City to determine how and when people will move from suburban to downtown core community activities. For example, the use of late night transit to have people move from the downtown to suburbs might need to be addressed if it is intended that the downtown be a primary cultural and entertainment venue.

Socially Marginalized Population

The report identifies four sub-groups of populations as part of the Characteristics of the Downtown (Section 5). The socially marginalized is not referenced here and only tangentially in Service Land Uses (Section 9.6). This is a population that cannot be ignored in any downtown plan. The concentration of municipal social services, transportation terminals, and other community social services, concentrated back alleys, etc. in the downtown support this socially marginalized population. The Downtown Plan must address the needs of this population in some way. The Central Library has begun a project to look at how to serve the needs of this population, working with social agencies in the downtown core.

Heritage Conservation District

This is an exciting component to the Downtown Plan. The Central Library's London Room is a venue to generate interest in this aspect of the Plan as well as provide historical information about areas of the City.

Timelines

The timelines seem aggressive given the amount of research, public consultation, etc. that needs to be undertaken. However, with any timelines, Council needs to ensure that constraints are in place order to mitigate the impact on the heritage sector, ie. the demolition and/or deterioration due to further delays.

Role of Public Institutions in the Downtown

In Section 9.4, the Terms address potential for new Public Facilities to attract families and seniors and generally enhance the Downtown Plan. In developing the Plan, The city must engage existing facilities, such as the Central Library, the Museum, the Grand Theatre, the Covent Garden, which have public space available for community-centred activities for all ages, to contribute to the revitalization of the downtown core. These institutions, as well as

many not-for-profits with social and cultural mandates work in partnership with each other on different projects that serve the downtown community or draw the public from all parts of the City to the downtown core. These partnerships can be used as a strong component in the success of the plan.

Mainstreet has played a vital role in the work done to date in the downtown area. Its ongoing role in the development of the Downtown Master Plan needs to be articulated so it can continue to provide valued leadership in the core.