It’s a typical morning. You get up, shower, get dressed and head off to the corner to catch the bus Downtown. On the way, you stop at the café and get a coffee, and then into the corner store to get your paper, getting to the corner just before the Downtown bus arrives.

Sound great? Right now, this story could play out in some London neighbourhoods, but for most Londoners, this is an image that they may see on TV or associate with larger cities. The concept of having the conveniences of a corner store, a café or a barber or hair salon within a convenient walk of your home is a reality in many metro areas.

This is the idea behind Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods. For new neighbourhoods, how do we plan now to make sure that they develop this way; where there are convenient places to shop and work, where there is easy access to transit, and where there is a full range of housing options available to us, and where the ways that we move about in the neighbourhood are safe, clean, and well connected. For existing established neighbourhoods where these options might not exist, how do we plan to help them happen? How do we make sure that those activities and functions like shopping, work, school and housing choice are incorporated into neighbourhoods that are already developed?

While you told us that London’s neighbourhoods are among the City’s greatest strengths, you also told us that we could do better. Access to transit, different housing options, and close-by services were all things that you told us that you would like to see in all our neighbourhoods.

Let’s Talk the Same Language...

Before we go any further let’s get on the same page when we refer to “Neighbourhoods” and “Communities.”

“A neighbourhood is a geographic area that people share, while a community is a group of people who identify with and support one another.”

– Jim Diers
In simple terms, neighbourhoods can be thought of as places, or where you live. Communities are most often defined by people. In other words, neighbourhoods are about places and geography; communities are about people. This idea was the basis for the definition that was used as part of London’s Strengthening Neighbourhood Strategy, and we will use it here. According to Jim Diers, a Seattle-based community developer, “A neighbourhood is a geographic area that people share, while a community is a group of people who identify with and support one another.”

Even with these simple definitions, what these mean to individuals often varies. For example, we might say that we live in Oakridge, but the boundaries of Oakridge might be something different to your neighbour. In the same way, people might think of themselves of being members of many different communities. For example your church, your ethnic background, or your social activities might be how you would define what community that you were a part of. This means that lines on a map will not really define a community, which is often based on common interests and relationships.

In London, we also have divided the City into 42 Planning Districts. These are what the Planners have used to loosely describe neighbourhoods, and they are used mainly as a basis to collect consistent demographic data about the District over a number of years. These Planning Districts may contain many smaller neighbourhoods, and some neighbourhoods may cross Planning District lines. We would view...
these Planning Districts as a simple way for us to divide the entire City geographically in an inclusive way.

For the purposes of this Discussion Paper, we are going to use the geographic definition of neighbourhood, that is, a geographic area that people share. In using this definition, we also acknowledge that this may often mean a slightly different geographic area to different people, but we are talking about “place” rather than “people” when we talk about neighbourhoods. Another thing that is important in this discussion is that because this will mean different things to different people, not all neighbourhoods would be the same, and this would mean that not all neighbourhoods would have all of the same uses, facilities, activities or functions. This doesn't mean that one neighbourhood would be “better” than another neighbourhood, but that each neighbourhood is unique because of what it both has, and doesn’t have, when compared to another neighbourhood.

Londoners have already said it best when we talk about neighbourhoods. The Vision Statement developed by the Resident Task Force in 2009 when they developed London’s Strengthening Neighbourhood Strategy captures the essence of how Londoners feel about their neighbourhoods.

So, with those defined, let’s get to it.

"Our London is a City of Neighbourhoods. Our London Neighbourhoods will be empowered, sustainable, safe and active communities. We will care for and celebrate each other while encouraging diversity and inclusiveness. Our Neighbourhoods will be environmentally sustainable and will have available green space, vibrant local economies and accessible amenities of daily life."

– Resident Task Force
Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods

Think back to the paper on “Fostering a Prosperous City”, where part of the discussion was about how important it is to our economic future that we build a city that people want to live in. It’s about making sure that London offers itself to the world as an outstanding place to live in. It shouldn’t be just that we need to live in London, but that we couldn’t imagine ourselves living anywhere but London.

“Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods” relies on many of the things that we’ve talked about in the previous Discussion Papers, and all of these other areas have a role in creating strong neighbourhoods. To show this link, we’ve taken some of your comments and responses from the other papers and listed them under the five ReThink London themes.

Here are some of the things that you told us about what London’s neighbourhoods should be in 2035:

How We Grow:
• Developing using existing opportunities through intensification.
• Encourage small business and limit big box development.
• City plan needs protection against amendments.
• Improving arts, entertainment, culture.
• Gateways to City to attract people to London.
• Increasing connections between communities through urban planning and transportation to create more diverse neighbourhoods.
• Welcoming cultural differences.
• Providing a variety of housing options, including affordable housing throughout the city.
• Engaging and retaining youth.
• Removing socio-economic barriers in communities and integration of all social and economic cultural backgrounds.
• Encourage owners of vacant lands to lease/maintain, develop rather than leave to deteriorate.

How We Prosper:
• Encouraging innovation.
• Buying local
• Considering social, environment and fiscal impacts in our decision-making
• Create a proactive culture of wellness that focuses on quality of life and celebrates creativity which is accessible to all.
• Developing arts and culture.
• Building the overall quality of life.
• Create opportunities to retain young people.

How We Green:
• Create more community gardens.
• Increased recycling.
• Protect and preserve existing natural heritage
• Less car-focused transportation.
• Multi-use buildings within existing neighbourhoods.
• Create aesthetically beautiful streetscapes.
This is what we heard from you. These are some of the things that you told us are important in making sure that London is a place where people want to live.

Where We Are Now...

As we've talked about in previous discussion papers, there are lots of good things happening relating to growth and development in London. While our pattern of growth has generally been at lower densities than were imagined in 1971, in the past 10 years development densities have jumped by 20% for single family homes, and almost 40% of all our residential units have been developed within the built up area of the City – that's what we would call “infill development”. That means 40% of our residential development didn’t occur on new Greenfield lands.

As well, more attention is being paid to urban design, placemaking, and sustainability. London's developers are integrating affordable housing and sustainable green technologies into their development projects. For example, Sifton Properties, in association with the London Home Builders Association, recently constructed a Green Home that demonstrates how new green technologies can be incorporated into new houses constructed in London. Sifton Properties is also developing a new model for mixing retail, office and residential uses in the Riverbend Heights area. This development also incorporates the potential for district energy and a new form of integrated “main street” mixed-uses.

For London to become the City that you told us that you want it to become, our development community will be an important partner as we explore things like new approaches to development and sustainable technologies. The City’s role is to ensure that we create a Plan that encourages more of these good things to happen, and balances the needs of current and future London residents.

The face of London is also changing. The most recent census paints a picture of a different London than existed even 10 years ago. This means that there will be changes in what types of housing we will need in the years to come. It is estimated that we will add more than 42,000 new dwelling units over the next 20 years to accommodate our population.

How We Live:
- More community spaces or places to gather.
- Providing greater inclusivity, welcoming and diversity.
- Integration between neighbourhoods and nature.
- Promoting healthy active lifestyles.
- Building public awareness of local events.
- Feeling safe in our community.

How We Move:
- Development needs to focus on people movement.
- Planning neighbourhoods to be full service, multi-use compact hubs.
- Build a higher priority and increased attractiveness of alternative forms of transportation.
- Expand bike and multi-use paths.
- More parking for bikes
- Create quieter, slower streets which encourage retail activity.
growth. Over the next 20 years, low density, single family housing will account for 53% of our total demand, down from approximately 60% in previous years. Medium density housing, traditionally row and townhouse dwellings, will account for 16% of the future demand, and high density housing will account for 31% of the new dwelling units.

Some more numbers...

While our population is increasing, it is not the same across all age groups. Since 2001, the population of people less than 19 years old decreased by 3%, while the number of Londoners older than 65 increased by more than 22%. In 2001, the proportion of Londoners who were older than 55 was 20%, or 1 in 5 people. In 2011, the proportion of Londoners 55 or older was 27%, or more than 1 in 4 people. In the same period, our median age increased from 36.6 years old to 39.3.

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ReThinking Neighbourhoods...

In the Compact City Discussion Paper, you told us you want more complete communities. Well, what does that mean? In this paper, we’ll define complete communities as a collection of several neighbourhoods that together provide opportunities to live, work, shop and play, and that has the amenities that add to our quality of life. A complete community is about both people and places. Complete communities provide a mix of land uses, as well as a choice of housing, including affordable housing. Complete communities provide opportunities to age in place, meaning that there would be housing options available, including staying in your own home, so that people are able to remain in their neighbourhoods as their housing needs change over time during different phases of their life.
We know that there are limits to the mixing of uses and this will have to be handled with care to avoid real land use conflicts. We also know that every neighbourhood is unique, and so that a “complete community” will also be unique, because it will include many neighbourhoods, which means both different places and different people. There’s also a difference between existing neighbourhoods, and neighbourhoods that we are now planning for the future. A criticism that is often heard is that if we develop neighbourhood based exclusively on a single type of housing, then we won’t have the opportunity to create a complete community. In the same way, even existing neighbourhoods will change over time, so we will need a way to plan for that change so that we can create complete communities.

Many of the things that you’ve told us about Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods, and many of the things that we need to do to create these neighbourhoods are underway. Here are some of the things that the City and its partners are working on now to Build Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

Placemaking Guidelines
Placemaking is a design process that to create livable communities by providing an identifiable character, a sense of place, and a high quality of life. Placemaking describes an integrated design process that recognizes that both public and private lands are important when we create places.

Placemaking guidelines draw on an understanding how each of the things listed below are inter-related, and guidelines are developed for each of these elements.

- Physical context: design with the physical environment in mind, such as integrating natural features, retaining vegetation and slopes and incorporating natural features into the design.
- Natural environment: preserve important natural features like wetland and woodlands.
- Land Uses: provide opportunities for integrating different land uses, densities and building types into the neighbourhood.
- Transportation: provide opportunities for pedestrians, cars and transit. Create linked open spaces, safe and accessible connections, and support a fine-grained grid street pattern.
- Architecture: use consistent, high quality building materials and designs that are appropriate for the location. Incorporate principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) into development to make safe spaces.
- Engineering: use alternative design standards for infrastructure such as roads, utility placement and stormwater.
- Landscape Design: integrate natural areas with the development, encourage tree planting, and maximize opportunities for street trees.
Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods

The City has adopted draft Placemaking Guidelines, and is working with developers and landowners through the subdivision design process to incorporate these ideas. Through Placemaking initiatives, the City and developers are working to “raise the bar” in neighbourhood design so that London’s new neighbourhoods will provide a range of housing choices, amenities, access to transit and services, and integration of natural areas—all of the things that you told us are important in Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods.

A big part of Placemaking for both existing and new neighbourhoods is preserving and protecting what we cherish. Both the built environment and the natural environment are important features of Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods. The City recognizes important buildings in the Inventory of Heritage Resources. This list contains buildings that are both designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, as well as properties that have been identified as priority structures that should be preserved.

In addition to these individual structures, the City has created five Heritage Conservation Districts: Old East Village, Woodfield, West Woodfield, Bishop Hellmuth, and Downtown. A sixth, Wortley Village-Old South is expected to be approved soon. These Districts include more than 3,000 homes and businesses, and the District Plans contain guidelines for new development to help make sure that the unique features of each District are maintained.

The natural environment is also an important part of London’s neighbourhoods. The City’s Official Plan recognizes this is in a number of ways. The jewels of the City’s natural heritage system are identified as our Environmentally Significant Areas. These special places include natural environments and features that are unique, from a relic of the boreal (northern) region that we find at Sifton Bog to the Carolinian Forests of the Medway Valley and Meadowlily Woods. These features of the natural environment are associated with many of London’s neighbourhoods. You’ve told us that we need to protect and preserve these places. Other pieces of our natural environment, including wetlands, woodlands and unique landscape and physical features are all part of our neighbourhoods.
Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods

Outdoor spaces and buildings—the outside environment and public buildings have a major impact on the mobility, independence and quality of life of older adults, and affect their ability to age in place.

Transportation: transportation is a key factor influencing active aging. It is an area that impacts other focus areas such as civic participation and access to community and health services.

Housing: housing is essential to safety and well-being. Where we live is more than just a roof—it's home. A place that is familiar and loved, and where older adults want to stay as long as possible. Housing and community supports are a key part of quality of life and independence.

Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan
The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan provides overall direction and guidance for making decisions about parks and recreation programming, public-use facilities and infrastructure (parks and recreation facilities), and investment in the community. It identifies what the City provides and sets out how we can make London the best place to live, work and play.

The City’s community and recreation facilities play a large role in delivering the City’s many programs and activities. These facilities provide accessible quality, welcoming spaces for community recreation programs, activities, sports competitions and gatherings that support strong neighbourhoods. This type of public investment in infrastructure provides opportunities for organized meetings, event space and community building. These are large facilities that create destinations and cores to neighbourhoods and communities.

Age Friendly London
In 2010, London became the first city in Canada to join the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age Friendly Cities. The means that London is committed to improving its age friendliness, and to engaging older adults in the process. In 2011, Council established the Age Friendly London Task Force, a group that included more than 100 older adults, baby boomers, service providers, caregivers, and other community members. The Task Force developed a vision, strategy and action steps that were focused on improving the quality of life of older adults in London, and this resulted in the Age Friendly London Action Plan, a road map for improving London’s age friendliness over the next three years.

The WHO defines these eight areas as being key elements of an age-friendly City.

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Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods

In addition to these initiatives, the City’s Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services Division is working with partners in the community on a number of programs that are all intended to make London the best place to live, work and play. All of these programs are focused at the neighbourhood level.

Child and Youth Network
This is a Plan that focuses on ending poverty, making literacy a way of life, increasing healthy eating and healthy physical activity, and creating a family-centred service system. More than 170 organizations and 500 people are working together to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. The Vision for this initiative is happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative and responsible adults tomorrow.

Youth Community Economic Development Framework
Action at the local/neighbourhood level focused on creative, small-scale measures related to education, leadership, employment, skills development, and

Respect & social inclusion: older people report experiencing conflicting types of behaviour and attitudes towards them. Sometimes they feel respected and included; other times they experience lack of consideration from others. The amount of respect and inclusion people experience is tied to their quality of life and social participation.

Civic participation & employment: older adults do not stop contributing to their communities when they retire. Many continue to provide paid, unpaid or voluntary work. An age friendly community offers opportunities for older adults to contribute to their communities through paid employment, volunteerism and civic participation.

Community Supports and Health Services-health and support services are essential to maintaining vitality and independence for older adults. This includes a wide network of services, including hospital, healthcare providers, caregivers, family supports, home care and community organizations.

Communication and information-staying connected to people, activities and events, and the ability to access information, is vital for active aging. The rapid evolution of information and communication technologies means that there are more and more ways to stay connected, but requires access for older adults to new technologies.
business incentives to create conditions for economic opportunity for youth. Motivating students and giving them the help that they need to finish high school and attend post-secondary education and/or training is the most important goal of this program.

All of this will mean that in our neighbourhoods, our youth will be having fun, building skills, completing school, and seizing on the opportunities to carry them into the future.

London Community Housing Strategy
This strategy addresses affordable housing needs at the neighbourhood level to provide access to housing “from the streets to home ownership”, to achieve the Vision of A City of London where all members of the community have access to housing that is safe, secure, and suitable to their needs and ability to pay.

Healthy City/Active London
As input to the ReThink London process, the Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) prepared the Healthy City/Active London position paper to identify the benefits of active transportation. Active transportation is defined as any form of human-powered transportation, such as walking, cycling or skateboarding. We talked about this in the Providing Transportation Choices discussion paper, but it’s important to talk about it again as part of Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods. Some of the recommendations from the report include:

- Encourage and support active transportation though aesthetically pleasing and barrier-free, accessible, and safe trails, sidewalks and bike lanes that connect where people live to shopping, work, schools and open spaces.

- Create complete streets that provide opportunities for all users of the street

- Create compact, connected neighbourhoods that have street trees, sidewalks, pathways and access to transit.

What We have Learned... Best Practices

Provincial Growth Plan – Ministry of Infrastructure
While London is not included within any of the areas where the Province has established Growth Plans, Places to Grow, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe does provide us with an idea of what the Province views as a complete community.

The policies of the Growth Plan support the development of complete and livable communities with a better mix of housing, jobs, parks, shops and services in close proximity to one another. The Growth Plan contemplates complete communities as offering housing and service options to meet the needs of people in all stages of their life, and sets a framework to build complete communities through housing options and density. The Growth plan sets minimum densities for both housing and jobs, and includes policies regarding transportation,
environmental protection and infrastructure. These are the same things that we have talked about in building strong and attractive neighbourhoods.

Vancouver, British Columbia

The City of Vancouver has been an international model for success for city development. This success has relied on strong planning principals, consistent decision-making and community involvement. There are four elements that complete communities must provide for: they are Density, Mobility, Design, and Mix. Complete communities provide a land use mix to offer a variety of opportunities to work, live, shop, play and learn. In doing so, they must:

- consider the context and character of different neighbourhoods
- plan in three dimensions (horizontal and vertical, and how they change over time)
- maximize the synergy between different forms of development
- where mixed use is not possible, substitute other complete community tools (walking/biking/transit supportive facilities)
- prioritize retail and commercial uses at grade designed for those walking
- monitor and consider increasing residential and employment opportunities where appropriate
- support the engagement of all residents within the community in day to day life.

Adding density, while not easy, can be done in several different ways. Many of which are often unseen. The different types of easily integrated density that have been tried in Vancouver and could be used in London include:

- Mid-rise housing along arterial road-this can be thought of as standard density
- Ground-oriented housing, where higher density type housing has a “front door” on the street-this can be thought of as gentle density
- Backyard laneway infill housing, or hidden density
- Secondary suites within homes, or invisible density

London, Ontario – Woodfield

We often look elsewhere for examples of excellence outside our communities. It is important to know...
Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods

what the rest of the world is doing, so that we can do it better. However, we should never lose sight of our homegrown success stories as models for excellence.

The Woodfield neighbourhood won the People’s Choice of Great Neighbourhoods in Canada awarded by the Canadian Institute of Planners. The community snapshot looks like this:

- 1,400 households
- 2 Heritage Districts (East & West Woodfield) where most homes have been built between the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- One of the largest and finest examples of Victorian streetscapes in Canada.
- Gentrification of homes of all sizes.
- Variety of resident demographics.
- Access to major community parks.
- Community led event programming (Harvest festival, street parties, caroling)
- Tall trees
- Planned preservation of assets
- Heritage districts.

Woodfield is important to London and indeed to Canada. Woodfield shows what Canada once looked like, across many architectural styles and social classes. Importantly Woodfield also shows us what Canada can look like today, a community with close neighbourhood bonds, a “front yard” focus and an active, artistic, musical and cultural life. Woodfield is a wonderful place.

– Canadian Institute of Planners

Where we’re headed...

Building Strong and Attractive Neighbourhoods is going to be a partnership of all Londoners, and can only happen if we are clear in our directions so that we can deliver on our goals and vision. City Council and municipal staff will set out the policy framework based on what we’ve heard from you for how to build the London of the 2035 in the Official Plan. It is up to all of us to buy into these ideas and embrace the policies about how London grows and what it will look like.

The list below are some of the things that we will need to do. They are about raising the bar to a new standard for London. These are examples of what we will need to do for this plan to have the impact that you have told us that you want.
Design: Beauty is a thing that we often don’t talk about when we think of planning for our future, but beauty is what you have told us that we have and what we want. From our street trees to our parks, to the rivers and creeks in our natural areas, and our heritage areas and historic streetscapes, the beauty of our neighbourhoods says a lot about London and Londoners. By providing high design standards for residential buildings, commercial uses, streetscapes, public art and various other elements, we can help maintain the value of our neighbourhoods and create new and vibrant neighbourhoods.

Environmental Design: The costs of adapting to climate change and the advances in green technology mean new ways of looking at the long term affordability of growth. We will need to re-set the bar on what we will expect in terms of environmental sustainability through standards such as: LEED-ND neighbourhoods, Platinum and net-zero architecture, passive solar design, shore habitat restoration, and rain-water collection systems.

Defining Expectations and Roles: Building strong neighbourhoods and complete communities will require partnerships between residents, developers and the City. The focus is on collaboration and expectations of each other’s role in getting to the common vision of building an exciting, exceptional and connected London.

Residents and the City: The strength of our neighbourhoods is the primarily the responsibility of its residents. This means building a sense of place, creating events, building relationships and communication. The City’s responsibility should be to support resident endeavours that provide a benefit to the neighbourhood, the community, and the City. Streamlining processes, and being open and accountable should be our common goal. In addition, the City should work with neighbours about their vision for their neighbourhood, and encourage neighbourhoods and their residents to be empowered and engaged in developing visions for their neighbourhoods. This would include creating opportunities for new development so that neighbours are part of the process of change.

Residents and Developers: The City should continue to build trust between these two groups by giving residents the confidence that all projects will be of high quality, and providing developers a clear message about the approval process. This is a balancing act however, and with each success momentum will build that will lead to the success of the plan.

Developers and the City: Developers are those who take financed risk in building our City. As such, they are critical to the success of our communities. Providing a clear path to completing great projects will not only help them succeed but will also help us to create strong and attractive neighbourhoods and complete communities that will support our high quality of life.
Investment and Ownership: As with any plan, the real changes happen by those in the community willing to make it happen. The community will only grow and improve through the engagement and involvement of neighbourhood residents.

We know London is up to the challenge as a community just as other cities have been successful creating strong and attractive neighbourhoods. In summary, we can do the following to make a real difference.

More of this...

- Implement “Placemaking” by promoting exceptional neighbourhood design that creates diverse, walkable, healthy and connected communities; create a sense of place; and promote “beauty” as value in neighbourhoods.

- Create social gathering places where neighbours come together by the continued use of community gardens, urban parks and small parkettes, café’s, restaurants and small service commercial uses fronting park spaces, active neighbourhood trails, recreational facilities and playing fields.

- Integrate outstanding parks and recreational facilities into all our neighbourhoods.

Less of this...

- Build communities that lack identity, character, quality, working environments, and are only focussed on functionality.

- Consider social gathering places as “nice to have” rather than a key part of our plan to build strong and attractive neighbourhoods.

- Place emphasis on the important of parks and recreation as drivers of qualities.
More of this...

Protect what we cherish by recognizing and protecting cultural identity, built heritage, neighbourhood character, and the environment; establishing ecological connections between woodlands, environmentally significant areas, and corridors; and incorporating views and vistas to and from the Thames River valley; and parks trail systems.

Promote healthy neighbourhoods by designing walkable, safe and connected areas; making non-auto transportation alternatives desirable and preferable; integrating recreational opportunities into neighbourhoods; addressing crime prevention through environmental design (CEPTED); giving neighbourhoods the ability to improve their neighbourhoods in creative and positive ways.

Design “complete” neighbourhoods by meeting the needs of people of all ages and abilities; promoting aging in place; having mixed uses that provides convenient access to goods and services for daily life; having affordable housing choice; and providing for a more equitable distribution of social infrastructure.

Less of this...

Disregard the fact that our natural and built heritage is part of our City-building legacy, and part of what London has to offer to attract and retain people and investment to London.

Disregard the need to continually invest in our existing neighbourhoods to promote healthy choices.

Do not provide a range of housing choice-by type and by cost. Do not design neighbourhoods to include mixed-use opportunities or convenient access to transit.