



MEMORANDUM

DATE:	MARCH 18, 2008
TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS, PLANNING COMMITTEE, CITY OF LONDON
FROM:	DAVID SIMMONDS, VP UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS, USC JOSHUA HURWITZ, MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER, USC SCOTT COURTICE, POLICY ANALYST, USC
SUBJECT:	<u>RESPONSE TO CLOSING THE GAP: NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR GREAT NEIGHBOURHOODS SURROUNDING OUR UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES</u>

The following memorandum is the response from the University Students' Council to the shared vision and strategic directions articulated in "*Closing the Gap: New Partnerships for Great Neighbourhoods Surrounding Our Universities and Colleges*", as presented to the City of London's Planning Committee on February 25th, 2008. We thank Planning Committee for its invitation to submit comments; we look forward to participating in future consultations, and doing our part to implement the final plan.

CONTEXT

Our response to "*Closing the Gap: New Partnerships for Great Neighbourhoods Surrounding Our Universities and Colleges*" is guided by three planning documents at Western: "*Finding Our Place in the Creative City: Draft Strategy*", "*Engaging the Future: Final Report of Task Force on Strategic Planning*", and "*The University of Western Ontario Campus Master Plan*." The first report was approved by the University Students' Council at its meeting of October 10th, 2007; the other reports were approved by the Board of Governors at Western during November 2006 and June 2007, respectively.

Given that the aforementioned documents will form the basis of our analysis to follow, this section will review relevant information contained in each report.

FINDING OUR PLACE IN THE CREATIVE CITY: DRAFT STRATEGY. UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' COUNCIL

In response to the challenges and opportunities facing near-campus neighbourhoods, the USC produced a planning document to provide a framework for student leaders' dialogue with the City of London and our neighbours, and to weigh our options to address identified issues. After a year of listening, learning, and reflection, **the USC has dedicated additional resources in its 2008-09 Operating Budget for new municipal affairs programs to be implemented in the autumn of 2008.**

Vision:

- We envision a future where long-term residents and civic leaders value students as citizens, and where students value their rights and responsibilities as members of the broader London community, and remain active citizens upon graduation.

Principles:

- Students are citizens of the city, subject to the same rights, responsibilities, and legal obligations as all Londoners.
- All Londoners must respect their neighbours and civic institutions, and adhere to laws and community standards.
- All Londoners must have access to safe, affordable, and quality living spaces.
- The City of London has an obligation to provide a progressive public transit system that serves the diverse needs of the city's population.

- The City of London, through planning and regulation, has a responsibility to ensure development does not erode the character, vibrancy, and residential amenities of neighbourhoods.
- The University Students' Council, the University of Western Ontario, and the City of London have a responsibility to support students in becoming engaged and responsible citizens.
- The University Students' Council and the University of Western Ontario have a responsibility to contribute to the success of London.

Strategic Directions:

1. Support members to become active and responsible citizens, and influence long-term residents to value students as fellow Londoners.
2. Strengthen the USC's engagement in local affairs, and be a wise and consistent contributor to the municipal political process.
3. Increase the USC's dedication to building a creative, liveable, and vibrant London for all citizens.

ENGAGING THE FUTURE & THE CAMPUS MASTER PLAN, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

The University of Western Ontario recently approved a new strategic plan and campus master plan to guide decision-making into the future. **The university engaged in significant consultation when drafting both documents: the City of London and local neighbours were invited to engage in the consultative process.**

A. Engaging the Future: Final Report of the Task Force on Strategic Planning

Quotes from "Our campus, Neighbourhood, and Community" preamble to strategic commitments:

- "Western is the largest neighbour in North London and has a special role to play in the neighbourhoods surrounding our campus. We have a vital interest in promoting the appropriate balance of student and resident housing in areas adjoining the campus. These neighbourhoods have told us of their concerns - that they feel under threat from substandard and potentially unsafe student housing, owned by landlords who often do not live in the neighbourhood or even in London."
- "We must actively ensure that the areas surrounding the campus preserve their residential character, streetscape and amenities while continuing to provide affordable, well-maintained accommodations for our students within a balanced neighbourhood setting."
- "As we are expanding, we must understand the reciprocal needs of our neighbours and community partners and work to ensure effective two-way communication and co-operation."
- "Western will seek to be visible as a community leader. We will set an example wherever possible of responsible citizenship, including the area of environmental sensitivity and sustainability."

Strategic commitments:

- Articulate strong University positions in support of the City of London Official Plan on applications for zoning changes in adjoining neighbourhoods.
- Work with local and regional organizations and companies to promote economic development in London and South-western Ontario.
- Capitalize on Western's ability to serve as a resource in the cultural, artistic, and social life of London and the region.

B. University of Western Ontario Campus Master Plan:

Relevant planning principles:

- **Provide Direction for University Growth and Change:** Future plans should **accommodate long-term University growth on a consolidated campus.** Planning should therefore concentrate on essential academic and student-related activities within the campus core.
- **Interdisciplinary Studies and Research:** Interdisciplinary scholarship will be a growing priority in the next decade. Such ventures may require space to facilitate creative interactions among the faculty and students involved in these initiatives. This **space should create linkages between academic precincts.**

- **The Residential University and Canada’s Best Student Experience:** Preserving The University of Western Ontario as a **residential campus with core academic programs located in close proximity to each other is key to ensuring that Western continues to provide Canada’s best student experience.** A cohesive campus environment that allows for faculty and student interaction and fosters inter-disciplinarity is fundamental to our future development.
- **Enhance University/City Relationships:** The University has important relationships with the neighbourhoods that surround it, with the City, and with the Region. **University development should seek to sustain these relationships by providing for improved physical and functional connections,** and by recognizing the impacts that planning decisions made by the University and the City of London have on one another.

Commitments made in ‘Supporting the Surrounding Community’:

- Western supports the preservation of neighbourhoods that provide an appropriate balance of good quality student and permanent resident housing. To that end, Western will continue to work with our neighbours, the City of London and landlords.
- We will advocate with the City and our campus neighbours for provincial changes to By-law enforcement regulations to ensure the City has the necessary regulatory power to enforce municipal By-laws to preserve campus neighbourhoods.
- Through the work of our Housing Mediation Office and our student leaders, we will continue our current initiatives to encourage appropriate student behaviour and develop new programs and initiatives as needed.
- Western needs to continue effective communication with its neighbours, many of whom feel that they have a stake (because they are neighbours and because Western is a public institution) in Western’s development. The Master Plan has been developed in meaningful consultation with those neighbours willing to be engaged.

ANALYSIS

We believe the proposals contained within “*Closing the Gap: New Partnerships for Great Neighbourhoods Surrounding Our Neighbourhoods and Colleges*” are closely aligned with the vision, principles, and strategic directions of the University Students’ Council as articulated in “*Finding Our Place in the Creative City*”, and the commitments made by the University of Western Ontario in “*Engaging the Future*”, and the “*Campus Master Plan*.” **As such, we offer qualified support for the strategy as presented.**

We cannot offer our unqualified support as **we have concerns with several proposals within the report, and have identified opportunities to strengthen a number of the strategic initiatives.** The remainder of this memorandum will explore our concerns, emphasize areas of strong alignment, and delve into opportunities to strengthen the plan. We will also offer our opinion on moving this process forward to meet **the next challenge: ensuring we convert words on page to results in our neighbourhoods.**

FEEDBACK

A. Introduction

Asking the question ‘how do we build great neighbourhoods surrounding our universities and colleges?’ rather than ‘how do we fix the student problem?’ is a welcome and refreshing approach to Town and Gown issues, and is a stark departure from the tone and approach of other municipalities in Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Students, at times, have felt isolated as an undesired ‘other’ within the larger London community; as such, we commend the report for framing the dialogue through a positive lens of ‘opportunities and abundance’ rather than a negative lens of ‘threats and constraints.’ **Being acknowledged as ‘an opportunity’ rather than ‘a problem’ provides students with hope, and a real incentive to be engaged and responsible citizens;** it is also strongly aligned with the core principles contained within “*Finding Our Place in the Creative City*.”

Framing the issue in this light also provides all stakeholders involved – the university and college community, residents, business, and the City administration – with a common and desirable vision to work towards *together in partnership*. It is our hope that the dialogue remains positive and collaborative moving forward, and continues to focus on the shared benefits of working together in partnership to address a complex set of opportunities and challenges.

Recommendation 1: Continue to frame the vision as a question of ‘building great near-campus neighbourhoods.’

B. Shared vision for great neighbourhoods

We are in agreement with the ‘shared vision for great neighbourhoods’ as presented in the report. In our view the vision is all encompassing, and paints a very positive picture of a future that all stakeholders would be proud to have achieved, together.

We would only add one element to the vision: great neighbourhoods are pedestrian friendly, adhere to a green transportation hierarchy, that gives priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit and has a physical form that facilitates and encourages a significant modal share of non-automobile use.

Recommendation 2: Add ‘adhere to a green transportation hierarchy, giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit’ as an element of the shared vision.

C. Current state of affairs and context

We acknowledge that the ‘current state of affairs’ is rife with challenges and untapped opportunities, but we caution against painting too dire a picture lest we set unrealistic expectations based on unrealistic assumptions. To paraphrase Chief of Police Faulkner’s recent comments on Phil McLeod’s Rogers Cable 13 show ‘McLeod’ in response to the perception of crime and safety in London, “Many Londoners grew up in London, and haven’t experienced other municipalities...many don’t have the context to appreciate how great we’ve got it here...”

Without minimizing the challenges in our near campus neighbourhoods, placed in context of many other municipalities it is clear that London has Town and Gown issues to address, but were it not for the ongoing, dedicated efforts of neighbourhood associations, City Hall, students, and administrators at our post-secondary institutions, the situation could be more challenging. In our opinion, **the challenge with past approaches was the absence of collective vision, coordinated action, and mutual trust and respect, not a lack of effort by any of the aforementioned stakeholders.**

We commend the use of pictures, statistics, and maps in the report as they do a great job of illustrating context – relying on concrete evidence will ensure decisions are data-driven rather than driven by personal perceptions and anecdotes.

We would suggest adding reference to the significant efforts made to date in our near campus neighbourhoods, and providing some contextual information to benchmark ourselves versus other municipalities facing similar challenges and opportunities.

From a Western and USC perspective, we would draw your attention to the following text previously presented to Board of Control on December 10th, 2007 in a report from the Town and Gown Committee:

“Housing Mediation Service

Western and Fanshawe College share a full-time Housing Mediation Service funded jointly by these Institutions, the students’ councils, and the City. During the academic year, Western students are hired as off campus advisors to support the Housing Mediation Service in providing assistance to students with off-campus living issues, integration in the London community, and education regarding living off-campus. 18,000 packages are mailed out to homes near Western and Fanshawe with information on City by-laws, garbage schedules, a Good Neighbour Guide, and Orientation schedule. A newsletter is hand delivered six

times a year to 2,000 houses surrounding Western and electronically delivered to 30,000 Western students which includes information on City by-laws, garbage, parties, noise, renting issues, and general neighbourhood concerns.

Education

Information sessions are offered by the Housing Mediation Service to distribute off-campus living information. Presentations are conducted by off-campus advisors in all Western residences and printed material is made available to educate students about rental rights and responsibilities, City by-laws, roommate concerns, fire safety and security. 6,000 students in residence receive an information package to help them make informed decisions before moving into the London community. 2,000 welcome packages are hand delivered in September to neighbourhoods surrounding Western.

Policing

\$2.9 million has been spent on Campus Community Police Services. Off-duty police officers are also hired to patrol neighbourhoods surrounding Western during Orientation Week, Homecoming weekend, and on weekends in September, October, and April.

Institution

Orientation Week events are held on weekends now instead of mid-week, and more programs are held on campus to ensure more students remain at Western for the week. A student bus pass is included in tuition fees to reduce parking issues surrounding the campus. The University has also spent over \$100 million to build more on-campus residences. The student Code of Conduct has been applied in off-campus situations which are specifically related to campus. The University is an active member of the Town and Gown Committee.

Communication

A newsletter is sent to 3000 landlords serving Western to inform them about key issues regarding student tenants. Ads are placed in the student newspaper to inform students about issues regarding home security, noise, and garbage concerns. The University liaises with partners in the community such as police, fire, by-law enforcement, student groups, and neighbours. An online garage sale is promoted (on the Off-Campus Housing Service website) so students can sell their unwanted items to other students.

Neighbourhood

The University meets regularly with neighbourhood associations to be aware of their concerns and has an official policy of opposing neighbourhood zoning changes within 300 metres of the campus. Clean-ups surrounding Western are undertaken by hiring a Madvac, paying students and enlisting Off-Campus Advisors volunteering for the Adopt-a-Street program. The University pays for additional dumpsters at the end of the school year and pays for the City and University to send out extra garbage trucks to collect trash between scheduled garbage days during peak periods of the year. The University also provides a furniture exchange service and holds a spring clean-up contest with prizes to encourage student moving out to tidy up their property."

Recommendation 3: Add an acknowledgment of past and current efforts in near-campus neighbourhoods, and a commentary placing London's Town and Gown situation in context with challenges and opportunities facing other municipalities.

D. What's at stake & what's to be gained?

While the benefits of building strong near-campus neighbourhoods should be self evident to all stakeholders, we believe it is important to build a strong case for all Londoners as to the importance of meeting the vision. Generating buy-in from the public as a whole will be particularly important as initiatives in this strategy will be evaluated against ever-growing municipal priorities, all in the context of increasingly scarce resources.

This section effectively evaluates the benefits of meeting the vision, and we have nothing to add.

E. Strategic directions

We acknowledge that the strategic directions are not in priority sequence, but we are pleased nonetheless that 'welcoming students as a vital part of our community,' and 'providing for safe housing' are at the top of the list. **As implementation decisions are made with respect to timelines and resources, we hope that safety and enabling student citizenship remain top priorities.**

We believe the 10 strategic directions are a sound foundation upon which to build a strategy to accomplish our shared vision. **The larger challenge, in our mind, will be to sustain momentum towards action by organizing people and resources to make this vision a reality.**

1. Welcome students as a vital part of our community.

The ideas presented in this section are a good start, and we are fully supportive of them. We are particularly intrigued by the potential for housing co-ops, and unique community building initiatives such as the neighbourhood food co-op.

In addition to the ideas presented:

- **Better engagement of students in civic affairs** (bring city public consultations to Western and Fanshawe, stream council meetings and committee hearings online, record city council and committee votes electronically so students can see how their city councillors are voting, host Mayor-Councillor-Student Leader-Western Admin joint town halls to explore municipal issues of concern to students, make voting easier and more accessible, better promotion of city issues to our members.)
- **More unique community building activities** (close a street and host a farmers market, possibly facilitated by a neighbourhood food co-op, into near-campus neighbourhoods during the fall and spring.)
- **Employment.** Promote the availability, and increase the supply, of quality full-time summer and part-time school-year jobs for students to increase their exposure 'outside the Western bubble.'
- **Community facilities.** Facilities of benefit to both the student population and wider community should be encouraged, promoted and financially supported. Existing facilities of this sort both on campus and in surrounding neighbourhoods include places of worship, parks, entertainment venues and commercial services (restaurants, small pubs, shopping). Further development of such facilities would greatly strengthen student integration into the wider community
- **Events.** Opportunities for greater integration of students, staff and the wider community through cultural, sporting and educational events should be explored. Initiatives should include creating more on-campus events targetted towards the wider community and more events for students to gain a stronger appreciation of what London has to offer as part of Homecoming, Orientation Week and Frost Week celebrations. The Western Gazette and Western News should be distributed more widely in London to keep the community aware of on-campus events.

Recommendation 4: That better engagement of students in civic affairs, more unique community building activities, and promoting the availability, and increasing the supply, of employment for students, be added to the strategic direction 'Welcome students as a vital part of our community.'

2. Provide for safe housing.

The recent devastating fire in Hamilton, Ontario that killed a 22 year old female tenant, her three young children, and a 19 year old man, likely due to the lack of fire alarms, is stark evidence of the real consequences of unsafe living conditions. As was a fatal fire that killed two students in Glasgow, Scotland in 1999, which led the Scottish Parliament to enact a mandatory licensing regime in 2000, an initiative that by all accounts has improved safety and living conditions for tenants. As such, we are cautiously optimistic about the potential of Rental Licensing

(we'll discuss this further in the 'levelling the playing field for landlords' section), and fully support the other tactics as presented.

Fire suppression and safety measures are well covered by the Ontario Fire Code (2007) and would thus be covered by the licensing scheme, but we would note that the Ontario Building Code (1997) and the City of London require carbon monoxide detectors to be installed under certain conditions, but are not mandatory to be installed adjacent to sleeping areas in all residential units. We believe that CO detectors must be mandatory in rental units covered by the licensing regime.

Recommendation 5: That installation of carbon monoxide detectors adjacent to each sleeping area must be a mandatory requirement to obtain a license.

3. Offer a higher level of public service to the community.

We appreciate the concerns of our neighbours regarding the need for improved enforcement, and would add that a **vast majority of students share the desires of permanent residents for strict enforcement of property standards.**

We are not opposed to targeted, proactive enforcement in principle or practice, but feel it is necessary to observe that the GIS map contained in the 'context' section of the presentation demonstrates that **property standards complaints are a city-wide issue.** Though the map demonstrates a cluster of complaints in certain near-campus areas, we would suggest that an analysis be done to ensure proactive enforcement is justified by the data. **If the data show that other pockets of London are equally deserving of additional enforcement, additional argument must be made to all Londoners that near-campus neighbourhoods are a 'special case' deserving of special attention.**

We have significant concerns with the proposal for a 'Nuisance Gathering By-law.' Our understanding of this largely American concept is that if a gathering meets the definition of a 'nuisance gathering' police 'read the riot act' directing individuals to disperse, and charge and detain anyone ignoring the directive. Based on our understanding of the proposal, we have the following concerns:

- **The definition of 'nuisance gatherings' is applied too broadly in similar By-laws enacted in the United States, particularly Bowling Green, Colorado .** We could possibly find some merit if it were applied in extreme cases - people flowing onto the street impeding emergency vehicles, creating unsafe conditions, not responding to traditional enforcement techniques, and putting officer and public safety at risk - rather than routine nuisance infractions such as urination, open alcohol, and public indecency, that could be handled by pre-existing tools available to municipal law enforcement. Even if applied in rare cases, we're not convinced that the frequency of such 'extreme' gatherings is sufficient to warrant what amounts to a significant expansion of police powers.
- **Enacting powers traditionally reserved for 'police states' is antithetical to the shared vision we're trying to create in near-campus neighbourhoods.** We are quite confident that this is the message that students will receive if such a By-law is enacted. Reading the riot act on a routine basis isn't good for neighbourhoods, and works against the strategic priority of 'enhancing a creative, caring, and engaged community' as presented in Council's 2007-10 strategic plan. In our opinion, this proposal could be a 'poison pill' that leads to further isolation, increases tensions, and exacerbates the 'us versus them' mentality that the 'Closing the Gap' plan works so admirably works to avoid.
- **If the By-law is not applied city wide, it will be perceived as targeting students, and adequate safeguards must be in place to protect against abuse.** If enacted, it must apply equally to a staff pool party in White Oaks as it does to a homecoming party on Broughdale Avenue. Its application must also be regularly reviewed to ensue it is used only in rare, extreme circumstances, not as a routine course of enforcement.

We do not have concerns with The Public Nuisance By-law enacted on February 20, 2006 that prohibits urination and defecation in a public place, and prohibits knocking over mailboxes, blue boxes, and garbage bins. We would need to understand how the prohibitions would be expanded before making additional comment.

We believe that moving to a five-day garbage cycle (consistent pick-up day) would also be very beneficial. Though a consistent garbage day would not be a ‘magic bullet’, we believe it would make a demonstrable difference given that many students come from municipalities with a 5-day cycle. Enhanced service during move-in and move-out would also be important, as these two periods can shape the perceptions of Londoners, largely through media reporting, regarding the state of affairs in near-campus neighbourhoods. As the City moves forward with its “Roadmap to Waste Diversion” program, near-campus neighbourhoods offer an excellent opportunity as a test-area for innovative waste diversion initiatives such as green bins and more comprehensive recycling.

Recommendation 6: That an analysis be done to ensure resources spent on enhanced property standards enforcement in near-campus neighbourhoods is justified by the data. If it is not, an argument must be made to all Londoners that additional enforcement resources are justified in near-campus neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 7: That the city not enact a ‘Nuisance Gathering By-law’ unless the definition of a ‘nuisance gathering’ is limited to extreme cases that recklessly endanger public safety, the By-law is applied citywide, and safeguards are put in place to protect against abuse.

Recommendation 8: That the city institute a five-day garbage cycle (consistent pick-up day), provide enhanced service during move-in and move-out days, and leverage near campus neighbourhoods as test areas for innovative waste diversion initiatives such as green bins and more comprehensive recycling.

4. Align expectations.

We believe that long-term, sustained success for this strategic direction will be largely dependent on addressing root causes of anti-social behaviour before they escalate to the need for enforcement.

We contend that ‘getting tougher’ and giving municipal law enforcement ‘bigger sticks’ are more effective as political and public relations tools than as proven behaviour modifiers. We acknowledge that addressing root causes of tensions between neighbours – drug and alcohol abuse, lax property standards (basic broken windows theory), lack of education regarding rights and responsibilities, not feeling part of a community, etc. – will take time, but **a better balance must be struck between the easy path of ‘getting tougher on symptoms’ in the short term and the more valuable, but more difficult ‘getting smarter on root causes’ over the long term.**

While we acknowledge the need for enforcement, and recognize that initiatives targeted at root causes are present in the strategy, we would be interested in further dialogue - possibly leveraging best-practices employed elsewhere, and the engagement of behavioural experts – to strike a better balance between enforcement and addressing root causes.

Recommendation 9: That additional tactics be developed to ‘align expectations’ with the goal of striking a better balance between enforcement, education, and prevention.

5. Protect residential amenity.

We support the recommended initiatives, and would add two additional measures:

- **Traffic calming measures** should be instituted in areas around the university and college to improve resident quality of life. Traffic calming should take two major forms:
 - Volume Reduction – intended to reduce traffic on certain side-streets, especially ‘cut through’ routes, and should include speed humps and narrower curbs like those present on St. George Street and Broughdale Avenue.
 - Speed Reduction – intended for busier streets where speed results in increased noise and reduced pedestrian amenity. Measures could include additional posting of speed limits, off-peak, on-street

parking, reducing road infrastructure such as lane width, stacking lane length, and eliminating right turn-lanes and islands.

- **Parking Standards.**

- Replace minimum parking standards with parking maximums.
- Allow vastly more on-street parking, which has many benefits including:
 - ✓ Calms traffic
 - ✓ Preserves rear yard amenity
 - ✓ Uses existing resources such as paved-rights of way
 - ✓ Reduced need for costly parking structures or large amounts of surface parking, which waste precious urban land, are environmentally problematic due to high surface coverage and poor drainage, and serves to create separations between post-secondary institutions and their neighbours.

Recommendation 10: Add traffic calming measures and parking standards to the strategic direction 'Protect residential amenity.'

6. Provide alternatives to balance the mix.

We are supportive of exploring opportunities to create high and medium density private-sector built housing that would be suitable for student residents. Consideration should be given to areas both adjacent to campuses as well as other nearby sites, such as underused institutional land, along transit routes and in central London. **We would caution against encouraging additional purpose-build housing, and would instead favour housing that attracts a balanced mix of tenants.** If a mixed population is the goal for our neighbourhoods, it should also be the goal of any high or medium density housing.

As per Western's *Campus Master Plan*, we do not see opportunities available for additional on-campus housing. All of Western's lands have been master planned to meet future academic priorities such as the critical need for additional office and lab space to support graduate expansion. Also, given the planning principles of maintaining a residential campus, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration with the academy, we do not envision moving additional departments or faculties into the downtown. **We would note that Western moved an entire faculty – Continuing Studies – into an area of the downtown in need of revitalization, but cannot anticipate future relocations that fit within the university's planning principles in the future.**

Recommendation 11: In recognition of the principles and policies contained within the *University of Western Ontario's Campus Master Plan*, that references to 'seeking out additional opportunities for on-campus housing' and 'exploring opportunities for campus relocation' be removed from the document.

7. Create great places and spaces in our neighbourhoods.

We are tremendously excited about the ideas contained within this strategic direction, and believe that they should be a priority when we move to implementation.

Our only caution would be with respect to turning Old North into a 'heritage conservation district.' Without question, we are in favour of protecting heritage buildings, but are concerned that such districts have the potential to be used as tools to fuel NIMBYism rather than tools to protect heritage. As such, **we would appreciate assurances that any tool employed to protect heritage could not be used as a tool to 'push out students and other undesirables' from Old North.**

8. Invest in infrastructure.

We believe improving transit and pedestrian infrastructure is a critical priority, especially to create better connections to campus as a means of encouraging a more balanced mix of housing, and reducing reliance on personal automobiles. Some specific improvements should include:

- **Night buses**, particularly along major routes such as Dundas, Richmond, and Oxford until at least 2:30 AM. The buses would support on-campus activities such as studying and extra-curriculars, promote safety, and would

reduce the challenges of off-campus activities such as bar violence, and noise in residential neighbourhoods. The buses would also be of great benefit to many other Londoners, including low-income demographics, and those who work night-shifts.

- **Increase supply of taxi cabs, possibly through deregulation.** We often hear concerns from students that the supply of taxis does not meet demand at peak periods in the downtown during weekends, particularly in the late-evening. Given that the London Transit Commission does not yet offer late-evening service, citizens are left with no other choice but to walk home en-mass through quiet neighbourhoods, or to rely on personal vehicles. These options leave us concerned for the safety of our members and for the inconvenience to our neighbours. We believe late-night public transit is the primary solution to this challenge, but recognize that a greater overall supply of taxis would be a beneficial stop-gap until the LTC is sufficiently resourced to provide leadership in this area.
- **Enhance pedestrian connectivity.** Wider sidewalks, pedestrian bridges in strategic locations, and a campus-area Warranted Sidewalk Program would work to enhance pedestrian connectivity to campus, and commercial services.

We also support initiatives to encourage public transit use and walking/cycling among the significant non-student component of the Western community.

Recommendation 12: That late night buses, increased supply of taxi cabs, and enhanced pedestrian connectivity be added or emphasised in 'invest in infrastructure' section of the report.

9. Level the playing field for landlords.

We support the initiatives within this section, and are cautiously optimistic about the potential for licensing rental housing city-wide.

Though existing regulations exist for By-law officers to address property standards and safety issues, the tools available are primarily reactive and complaint driven. This is a concern because some tenants lack the knowledge to complain, or fear retribution. As such, **the pro-active nature afforded by licensing is particularly attractive;** displaying the license prominently in the residence, including information regarding rights, the name and contact information of the landlord, and contact information for city officials if landlords are not responsive to complaints, is also of great benefit to **help empower tenants to be self-advocates.**

Our support for licensing is predicated on meeting the following conditions:

- **We cannot support a licensing regime that exclusively targets near-campus neighbourhoods.** It is understandable that a city-wide scheme may be implemented in stages; we would simply request that the first stage of implementation not focus exclusively on areas with a high concentration of student tenants. (I.e. In consultation with the Housing Advisory Committee, include at least one non-student neighbourhood in stage one.) We would further note that Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, recently corresponded with the City of Oshawa, urging them to “look closely at what has been proposed [licensing restricted to near-campus neighbourhoods], to apply a sound city-wide planning rationale, and to consider the human rights impacts of its decisions.” As such, there is a real possibility that the province could amend the municipal act to mandate that cities wishing to introduce licensing regimes apply them city-wide; as such, it makes good policy and program design sense for London to pre-empt any such action.
- **Licensing fees must be reasonable, as they will be borne primarily by tenants.** We contend that a majority of students and their parents are willing to pay a small premium to ensure access to safe housing, but the municipality must remain sensitive to the rising cost of living and education.
- **Keep bedroom limits out of licensing.** The 5-bedroom By-law is doing its job, and no additional regulations are required in the licensing regime.
- **Do not cap licenses or mandate minimum distance separation.** The objective of licensing must be safety, not reducing supply, or driving rental housing out of certain areas.
- **If a rental property is declared unfit for human habitation, or significant renovations are required to bring it up to code, tenants must be protected.** The city must ensure that tenants are not, quite literally, left

in the cold through negligence of the landlord. Contingencies must be in place to house tenants temporarily, and provide assistance with relocation to a permanent place of residence.

- **Precautions are taken to protect against the development of a robust ‘underground’ rental market.** In such a situation more students will be living without leases, safety could be compromised, and tenant protection would be eroded.
- **Our preference would be to license all rental housing, but we are not opposed to regulating only specific forms of housing** (i.e. license single family homes and duplexes, but not high-density apartment buildings), **so long as strategies are in place both to educate tenants not residing in licensed homes of their rights, and to ensure that tenants living in larger buildings or complexes can be assured of the same housing quality.**

Recommendation 13: That the city proceed with rental housing licensing on the following conditions: the regime doesn’t target student neighbourhoods exclusively, keeps fees low to minimize the financial impact on tenants, does not institute bedroom limits, does not cap licenses or mandate minimum distance separation, protects tenants if their property is declared uninhabitable, protects against the growth of an underground market, and educates tenants in non-licensed residences of their rights and responsibilities if specific forms are exempted from the regime.

10. Provide for affordable housing for students, renters, and homeowners.

We are fully supportive of the initiatives described in this section. **The cost of education continues to rise for students, as does the cost of living.** As such, **we are very supportive of initiatives that work to increase the affordability of housing for students.** We note further that localized supply issues are central to the affordability issue. We are particularly intrigued by the idea of establishing Student Co-op Housing, and other such innovative housing projects and are excited to explore this idea further.

Opening up the ‘Old North’ housing market to single families, Western staff, and faculty through targeted investments to assist with ownership and reconversions could help to balance the mix of residents in the area. It would also encourage people most likely to be sensitive to, and energized by, the ‘student lifestyle’ – Western faculty and staff – to move into the neighbourhoods, opening up opportunities for mentorship, enhancing the ‘residential campus’, and generally working to reduce the tensions between students and long-term residents.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Continue to frame the vision as a question of ‘building great near-campus neighbourhoods.’

Recommendation 2: Add ‘adhere to a green transportation hierarchy, giving priority to pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit’ as an element of the shared vision.

Recommendation 3: Add an acknowledgment of past and current efforts in near-campus neighbourhoods, and a commentary placing London’s Town and Gown situation in context with challenges and opportunities facing other municipalities.

Recommendation 4: That better engagement of students in civic affairs, more unique community building activities, and promoting the availability, and increasing the supply, of employment for students, be added to the strategic direction ‘Welcome students as a vital part of our community.’

Recommendation 5: That installation of carbon monoxide detectors adjacent to each sleeping area must be a mandatory requirement to obtain a license.

Recommendation 6: That an analysis be done to ensure resources spent on enhanced property standards enforcement in near-campus neighbourhoods is justified by the data. If it is not, an argument must be

made to all Londoners that additional enforcement resources are justified in near-campus neighbourhoods.

Recommendation 7: That the city not enact a ‘Nuisance Gathering By-law’ unless the definition of a ‘nuisance gathering’ is limited to extreme cases that recklessly endanger public safety, the By-law is applied citywide, and safeguards are put in place to protect against abuse.

Recommendation 8: That the city institute a five-day garbage cycle (consistent pick-up day), provide enhanced service during move-in and move-out days, and leverage near campus neighbourhoods as test areas for innovative waste diversion initiatives such as green bins and more comprehensive recycling.

Recommendation 9: That additional tactics be developed to ‘align expectations’ with the goal of striking a better balance between enforcement, education, and prevention.

Recommendation 10: Add traffic calming measures and parking standards to the strategic direction ‘Protect residential amenity.’

Recommendation 11: In recognition of the principles and policies contained within the *University of Western Ontario’s Campus Master Plan*, that references to ‘seeking out additional opportunities for on-campus housing’ and ‘exploring opportunities for campus relocation’ be removed from the document.

Recommendation 12: That late night buses, increased supply of taxi cabs, and enhanced pedestrian connectivity be added or emphasised in ‘invest in infrastructure’ section of the report.

Recommendation 13: That the city proceed with rental housing licensing on the following conditions: the regime doesn’t target student neighbourhoods exclusively, keeps fees low to minimize the financial impact on tenants, does not institute bedroom limits, does not cap licenses or mandate minimum distance separation, protects tenants if their property is declared uninhabitable, protects against the growth of an underground market, and educates tenants in non-licensed residences of their rights and responsibilities if specific forms are exempted from the regime.

NEXT STEP: TRANSLATING WORDS ON PAGE TO ACTIONS IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

We suggest establishing sub-committees of the Town and Gown Committee to develop additional tactics under each strategic direction, actively engage the public to hear their feedback, and help coordinate actions among the multiplicity of stakeholders that must be engaged to make the vision a reality. In addition to devising additional tactics, the sub-committees should be tasked with prioritizing tactics based on anticipated impact versus projected cost, devise timelines for implementation, and establish success measures. The sub-committees must consist of a diverse group of Londoners – students, near-campus residents, politicians, business leaders, and citizens at large – to ensure all perspectives are considered, and to enable the development of innovative solutions.

The Town and Gown committee should be tasked with weighing the recommendations of the sub-committees, and coming to consensus around a holistic action plan to present to Council and stakeholders for endorsement. The Town and Gown Committee should also be tasked with monitoring progress, regularly reaching out to the public to identify emerging challenges and opportunities to ensure the plan remains relevant, and holding each other – the primary stakeholders – accountable for progress.

WORKS CITED

Brick by Brick: the State of Student Housing in Scotland 2007. Policy Paper. Edinburgh: National Union of Students Scotland, 2007.

City Council. Council Strategic Plan 2007-2010. Strategic Plan. London: City of London, 2007.

City of London. A Roadmap to Waste Diversion in London. Public Consultation Document. London: City of London, 2007.

—. "Building Permits: A Guide for Homeowners." City of London. 18 March 2008
<http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/Construction_and_Building/homeowners_intro.htm>.

Faulkner, Police Chief M. McLeod, Television Program on Rogers Cable 13 Phil McLeod. 3rd March 2008.

Government of Ontario. "Ontario Regulation 213/07." Fire and Prevention Act (1997). Toronto: The Ontario Gazette, 9 June 2007.

Hall, Barbara. "Re: Students fear by-law will leave them homeless (Toronto Star, January 23, 2008)." Correspondance. Toronto: Ontario Human Rights Commission, 8 February 2008.

Reddin, M. Hon., Fleming, R., and Ginsberg, M. "The Bowling Green Experience." Town & Gown Association Annual Symposium: Building Balanced Solutions. London: City of London, 2007. 13-17.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. "Amendments to the 1997 Ontario Building Code, O. Reg 283/01." Ontario.ca. 18 03 2008 <<http://www.obc.mah.gov.on.ca/Page163.aspx>>.

Panzer, R.W. Town and Gown Initiatives, December 10, 2007. Report to Board of Control, Added Item 32. London: City of London, 2007.

Peat, D. "Fatal fire takes toll on family, firefighters." London Free Press 4 March 2008: B1.

Task Force on Strategic Planning. Engaging the Future: Final Report of the Task Force on Strategic Planning. Strategic Plan. London: The University of Western Ontario, 2006.

The University of Western Ontario. Campus Master Plan. Strategic Plan. London: The University of Western Ontario, 2007.

University Students' Council of the University of Western Ontario. Finding Our Place in the Creative City: Draft Strategy. Report to Council. London: University Students' Council, 2007.