



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2014 June 19

MLHU INPUT TO “THE LONDON PLAN”

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board endorse Report No. 040-14 re MLHU Input to “The London Plan” and direct staff to provide public health input to City of London Planning Department staff.

Key Points

- Public health has an important role to play in designing healthy communities, which is reaffirmed by the Ontario Public Health Standards.
- Our health is affected by the physical design of our community.
- MLHU staff members recommend the Board direct staff to review “The London Plan” and provide public health input to City of London planning process.

Background

It is impossible to ignore that the community around us impacts our health and mental well-being. The Ontario Public Health Standards 2008 require health units to support healthy public policy and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments related to the built environment. Public health has an important role to play in designing healthy communities. To do so, public health must work in partnership with many agencies and levels of government. The physical and mental health and social well-being of residents in Middlesex and London is affected by the natural and built environment in which we live, work and play. Every time we step out our doors, our health is affected by the physical design of our community. Research shows that promoting healthy community design facilitates a productive healthy lifestyle leading to happiness and a sense of well-being and security.

[ReThink London](#) was established in 2012 as the process to review the City of London Official Plan. Health Unit staff were actively engaged in providing input into the ReThink London process providing presentations, attending events and submitting recommendations in the following two reports: [Healthy City Active London](#) and *City of London Official Plan Recommendations* (See Board [Report 084-13](#)). In addition, staff maintain collaborative relationships that support the promotion of healthy communities including the Child and Youth Network; in Motion® Middlesex-London; Healthy Communities Partnership Middlesex-London; London Middlesex Road Safety Committee; Active and Safe Routes to School Committee; Transportation Advisory Committee; and many others. And in 2012, the Healthy Communities Partnership was successful in obtaining London City Council’s endorsement of the [International Toronto Charter for Physical Activity](#).

Health Unit staff also promote healthy built environments in Middlesex County. They co-authored [Linking Health and the Built Environment in Rural Settings: Evidence and Recommendations for Planning Healthy Communities in Middlesex County](#), submitted recommendations as part of the Middlesex County, Thames Centre and Lucan Biddulph Official Plan review and supported six municipal councils of Middlesex County to endorse the [International Toronto Charter for Physical Activity](#).

The London Plan

As a result of the Rethink London process, on May 22, 2014 at the Strategic Planning and Priorities Committee, city staff announced the new draft Official Plan – [The London Plan](#). A preliminary review of The London Plan revealed that public health can provide meaningful input in several areas. For example:

- Physical Activity – active transportation and recreational opportunities; and compact pattern of growth
- Social Determinants of Health and Health Equity – affordable housing; social environments; accessibility; and cultural diversity
- Safety and Injury Prevention – road safety; safe mobility; design of parks; and complete streets
- Mental Well-being and Social Capital – urban design principals; mixed housing; sense of place; and communities and neighbourhoods
- Access to Healthy Foods – Food Charter; and community gardens
- Environment – green and natural areas; surface and ground water features; water quality; environmental management and impact studies; natural hazards; and urban forestation

The London Plan supports the planning and designing of communities that make it easier for people to live safe, healthy lives. One of the “big ideas” from the Rethink London process that has been incorporated into the Plan is ‘Planning for a healthy city’. Thus, it makes sense that public health continue to be involved in advocating for healthy community design and principles.

Next Steps

City of London Planning Department Staff is now seeking additional input from residents and agencies to further improve the content of The London Plan. This is an excellent opportunity for MLHU staff to provide further public health input into the policies that will govern how we develop our built environment. Staff in most areas of MLHU can provide important and meaningful input into the London Plan that will result in a positive impact on the public’s health for years to come. Therefore, Health Unit staff members recommend that the Board direct them to review the London Plan closely and provide their expert public health input to City of London Planning Department staff.

Options that the Board of Health could choose instead would be to take no action at this point, or to officially endorse The London Plan.

This report was prepared by Ms. Mary Lou Albanese, Manager, Healthy Communities and Injury Prevention Team, Environmental Health and Chronic Disease Prevention Services.



Christopher Mackie, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health