

# Consultant's Report



## *Commercial Corridor Transition and Revitalization Study*

### *Community Focus Groups What you told us*

*May, 2002*



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### ***Narrative Interpretation of the Vision for Old East London Village***

*The year is 2007, the place, in front of the LIHC, on Dundas Street. I smile as I look out at a busy street lined with flowering planters, trees, park benches and beautiful buildings, with colorful murals painted on the sides (Beal students at work!) and banners hanging from the decorative lamp-standards.. There is a hum of happy activity as people pop in and out of the village shops: the European bakery that makes the best bread in town and cinnamon buns and croissants to die for, the butcher shop where, if you're nice, the butcher will give you a free bone for your dog or your soup, the produce shop where year round you can buy beautiful organic produce, The Village Drugstore which looks like a combination drugstore/craft shop and the trendy little clothing store for young women beside Anthony's Men's Wear. Further down the street is a proliferation of upscale cafés and ethnic restaurants where people come from all over London to enjoy a bite to eat before going to a concert at the Aeolian Hall, a play at the Palace, or an evening at the Curling Club. I can hear the Youth String Orchestra performing in the new park beside the TD Canada Trust Bank. Dundas seems unusually busy today and I notice a lot of American cars in the parking lots. I'm guessing they are visitors to the Stratford Festival who saw our brochures in the Bed and Breakfasts there! And why wouldn't they come to see us? The History Tour is fascinating and the evening Ghost Walk is a hoot. Then of course, Western Fair offers quite a menu of activities for the children and youth during the summer. And the multi-cultural festival?---well, you just have to experience that to believe it.*

*I look back to 2002, when we started our redevelopment process and I am so proud to be a part of this community. We DID it, with very little help in the beginning from City Hall, but they were so impressed with our energy and determination, that they came on board and now use pictures of our village on the City's website. We still have that diversity of people we had then, but we don't tolerate drug pushing or prostitution any more. Those folks have pretty well moved out. The property owners who care about the community worked together to improve their buildings and encourage more businesses to the area. The absentee landlords were so embarrassed by our campaign to hold them accountable that a lot of them decided it was easier to sell out than to fix up their properties and take some responsibility for them. And we have a few new housing projects modeled after Tolpuddle. A lot more people live here than before and love the services the community offers, especially Lorne Ave. School and the new Seniors' Retirement Home and Activity Centre. Housing prices in the neighborhood have gone up because suddenly, everyone wants to live in the community where people know one another's names and take time to talk together.*

*I'm so proud to be part of this caring, sharing community. It's a place where our city's most vulnerable citizens feel at home and participate in welcoming visitors and Londoners alike to our village. (And you can still buy a great breakfast for only \$3.50 at the Melody!)*

## Preface

It has been a real privilege to work with Sarah Merritt and her able team in doing the focus groups and this report. Sarah is a committed and able community developer with a rare ability to use both her head and her heart to great advantage. I am confident that the staff of the BIA and the many people of the community who came out to these focus groups have what it takes to create positive change in this community. It is truly an exceptional community with a great deal going for it.

I need to say something about the voice in which this report is written. While I started out writing in the voice of one on the outside looking in, an acceptable voice for one who “reports” on anything, I repeatedly found myself speaking as one who is within the community. While that is not geographically defensible, I have chosen to leave that voice intact, believing that it is a testament to the energy of this community to get others on board when people speak with passion about the community and what is possible. In this brief but intense experience of working with the community, I have come to feel like a part of it and have a great deal of enthusiasm for what is possible.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge those who were of so much support in the process of the focus groups:

Sarah, in organizing them and in taking over the night I had an emergency dental appointment

Todd Hutchinson in quietly and faithfully setting up and taking down each session  
Mike Driscoll, for filling in when I had to leave prior to finishing the last two sessions

Keith Gamble, for his support during the sessions

the women of Cooking for Kids for the beautiful and nourishing food with which they greeted all participants to these sessions<sup>1</sup>

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia L. Sauv , Ph.D.  
Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> Food is a very important “ingredient” in working with people who are hungry. My compliments to those who recognized that it was important to offer this support to the sessions.

## **Consultant's Report: Focus Groups**

### ***The Old East London Village Commercial Corridor Transition and Revitalization Study***

**May, 2002**

#### **Background**

Twelve focus groups were held at various premises near the Dundas Street strip between Adelaide and Egerton, that is the subject of the Old East London Village Commercial Corridor Transition and Revitalisation Study. The purpose of the focus groups was to get representative ideas as to what people value in the community as it is, and how the community would like development to proceed in the area. To that end, Ms. Sarah Merritt, the manager of the BIA, invited a wide spectrum of people to come including: small business owners, residents, church staff and members, service providers, landlords, students, police, funders and politicians. Invitees were encouraged to bring others along and signs were posted on the venues. A total of 171 participants attended the focus groups.

The sessions were held at the Palace Theatre, Centennial United Church, and the London Intercommunity Health Centre (LIHC). The notes from these focus groups are found in Appendix 1. In addition to the 12 scheduled sessions, there was one abbreviated session held for a group of homeless people at the Drop-In Centre in the LIHC. Lastly, there was one written submission made by a small group. The extra focus group and the written submission may be found as *Appendices 2 and 3*.

9 of the twelve groups were facilitated by this consultant, Dr. Virginia Sauvé of Portals: Educational Consulting Services, in Edmonton. 1 was facilitated by Sarah Merritt and 2 by Mike Driscoll, a consultant from Guelph. Support during the sessions was given by staff from the BIA, specifically, Todd Hutchinson, Keith Gamble, and Jackie Cramer, as well as Mike Driscoll. The ladies of Cooking for Kids, at Lorne Ave. School catered the focus groups.

The groups were designed to be 3 to 3 1/2 hours each in length. Those done with the junior and senior high youth were shorter, as was the one done following the church service on Sunday afternoon. The shorter ones did not do all the questions.

In addition to the questions that form the headings of the balance of this report, there was a mapping exercise which was included for purposes of an art project which will be done by Tom Jonsson of Forest City Gallery prior to the presentation in October. Large wall maps of the neighborhood were posted and focus group participants were invited to mark with the appropriate symbols provided: where they lived, worked, shopped, worshipped, and played. If they were a landlord or business owner, they were asked to indicate that on the map also.

The focus groups are a beginning step in a much larger process of animating this community to take charge of its own destiny. If the people who came to the focus groups are any indication, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future of the Dundas Street community. There was remarkable consistency across groups both on what people loved about the area and on what they wanted to see in the future. That consistency makes it possible to write with confidence both the summaries and the recommendations arising from them.

What follows are summaries of the primary themes heard under each question. For details and non-primary ideas, the reader is referred to the appendices that record each comment offered.

## **PART ONE: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP WORK**

### **I. What People Love about This Community**

#### ***A. The Strong Sense of Community People Experience***

This struck me as the most significant thing I heard in every single group. People who live here do so because of the people, as well as the fact housing is relatively inexpensive in the area. Again and again, I heard people talk about a community where people know and care about one another, a community where people know your name. I listened to people say how they liked it that people in this community were honest and outspoken in their opinions. A couple even said they had moved away to wealthier areas and come back, because they had missed that sense of community.

Some thought it was perhaps because the community was face to face with a lot of social problems that people here cared about others. They said they could not ignore problems because they were confronted with them every day. The negative imaging of the community by the rest of London has contributed towards creating a sense of solidarity among those who live and work here.

Equally striking was the oft-repeated desire to protect the area's most vulnerable citizens, not push them out. While there were concerns about the drug trade and prostitution, almost all participants were eager to ensure that the homeless and those suffering from mental illness found here the support they needed in their lives.

One woman said, "The openness of this community helps me to respond emotionally and gives me a sense of belonging."

In more than one group, people used the term "real people" to describe people who lived in the area. This was said with fondness and respect and a sense of being distinguished from the rest of London by the fact that the people in this community are said to live their lives with openness and authenticity.

#### ***B. The Community's History and Architecture***

People spoke with pride about the history of this area: strong working class neighborhood, beautiful architecture in both the businesses and the homes, the presence of two large industries: Kellogg's and McCormicks, the role of the railway (the shunting yards are still located here), the firsts of this community including the location where Drs. Banting and Best developed insulin and the presence of the London Cross-Cultural Learners' Centre which was the very first such center in Canada and was instrumental in assisting several others across the country to be born.

People have a lot of happy memories of this area: street fairs, Chapman's bakery, the Old Brass Rail (a restaurant/pub) and Hudson's, a popular department store.

### ***C. Diversity***

People appreciate the diversity of the community: racially, economically, ethnically, and in other ways. Lorne Avenue School is a center for people meeting and working together to better their community. Programs like Cooking for Kids done in the school by the LIHC are greatly appreciated by everyone in the community, not just those whose children are directly served by them. They feel that their children are learning the spirit of tolerance and volunteerism by their exposure to diversity and to parents who set the example to care about others.

Many people were happy to note the number of young professionals choosing to move into the area. Many are renovating their heritage homes and doing exciting things with their yards, such as perennial gardens which not only look great but which avoid lawns which need artificial fertilizers and herbicides that are bad for the environment.

Organizations like the Cross-Cultural Learners' Centre, which is now a settlement center as well as a cross-cultural learners center, host newly arrived government sponsored refugees upon arrival. This brings people into the community from all over the world.

Diversity is seen and appreciated in the area's ethnic restaurants which include: Vietnamese, Bosnian, Chinese, East Indian and Italian.

Non-conformity was also raised as something people appreciated. People do what they want without too much worrying about what others think, something that is not common in the suburban neighborhoods.

### ***D. The Community's Resilience***

People saw this as a strong community where people survived a lot of change and some difficult times but did not easily give up.

### ***E. The Community's Schools***

Both Lorne Avenue and H. B. Beal Secondary School are very much valued by the community. Lorne Avenue is a center, not only for the children who attend there but for the community as a whole. The community supports Lorne Avenue and in turn, the school is seen as supporting them.

There was a determination that these schools must be protected at all costs.

#### ***F. A Strong Arts Presence in the Area***

People are proud of the Aeolian Hall and delighted that the Aeolian Hall Board of Directors leased it with the intent to work on its survival as a center for music and the arts. Forest City Gallery is a thoroughly professional alternative gallery for artists and the upstairs hosts an old tracker organ which people tell us with pride was used as the model for the Massey organ in Toronto. Originally the Towne Hall, citizens hope that it may be kept for the community and used to further the artistic presence in London. And of course, there is live theatre at the Palace! Others like the local bands that are brought in to the Embassy Hotel.

H. B. Beal Secondary School is a respected school whose students and others were proud of her graduates. They wanted to see the school involved in doing more colourful murals for the buildings.

#### ***G. Good Public Transportation and Convenience to the Downtown Core***

People may be unhappy with City Hall in general, but they are very happy with the bus system which they feel gets them where they need to go. Some wished the rail yard could be moved elsewhere as they resented the long delays waiting for trains to shuffle back and forth but others actually found the sounds of the trains a comforting part of their sense of the neighborhood.

#### ***H. The Palace Theatre***

This is a beautiful old theatre located on Dundas in the heart of the study area. In addition to the main performance area, there are two adjoining meeting rooms on the street front and these were used for several of the focus groups. The Palace is owned and operated by The London Community Players. They put on six different shows per year, each of which draws in about 2,000 people. I found the London Community Players to be a creative, dedicated, loyal group of people who see themselves as an integral part of the neighborhood and who want to be involved in its restoration and development. Others appreciate the solid work they do as volunteers and the presence of this lovely old building in their community.

#### ***I. Housing Co-ops***

The Tolpuddle Housing Co-operative is mentioned with pride by people in the community as a facility that looks good and is well taken care of. In addition to housing residents in a moderately sized four-storey building, it also plays home to sixteen different organizations, most of whom are labour-related. Tolpuddle is dedicated to providing good, healthy accommodation at working-class prices.

In addition, there is a First Nations Housing Co-op, which is comprised of a number of homes used for that purpose. This was also mentioned as a valuable concept in housing.

#### ***J. That it is a Mixed Use Community***

Residences, small businesses and industry happily co-exist, for the most part, in this area, which is not the case in the rest of London where industry, business and residential areas are mostly kept separate. This mixed composition of the neighborhood contributes to the distinctness that this area has and the pride people have in it.

#### ***K. Small, Locally Owned Businesses***

Many people appreciated the presence of an alternative to “the Malls” and their chain store presences. They saw the community as a village and liked it that way. A few lamented the lack of a good department store in the area but most hoped it would stay that way.

#### ***L. Ample Parking***

The area is well-served by both a number of pay lots as well as nearby side streets where people can park and shop if they so desire. A few felt there were too many parking lots and wished some could be turned into green space but most felt that the parking was a good resource in favour of development in the area.

#### ***M. Good Support Services for the Vulnerable***

There is an exceptional set of support services for the vulnerable citizens of the neighborhood and this is seen as both a blessing and a curse but the community, but for the most part, is glad they are there: the Homeless Drop-In Centre, Mission Services, the LIHC, Streetscape, Margaret’s Haven, St. Joseph’s Hospitality Centre--all these are seen as great services. The only concern is that because these services exist in this small area, they draw needy people to the community. Some suggested capping the services. It is ironic to note that while they celebrate the presence of the clinic, which provides health services to anyone, a need for more family doctors in the area was frequently cited.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***N. Western Fair***

Western Fair was raised in a variety of lights. Some saw it as an asset to the community; others rued the priorities of an organization that would raze two blocks of heritage homes for a parking lot and turn out a group of seniors that had used the space rent-free for many years. Many wished that the organization would see itself as part of the community.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of the focus groups, the clinic was not taking any new patients because they were so oversubscribed.

Three of the staff of Western Fair came to the Focus groups and gave us every reason to be optimistic that both the organization and these particular individuals are committed to the improvement of the community and see themselves as a part of it.

### **O. *Other***

Other things people liked about the community included: the presence of a library, affordable housing, children playing in the streets, the excitement, beautiful old trees, and the absence of high-rise buildings,

## **II. The Vision People have for their Community**

### **A. *Beautification***

This came up in every group. People want to see the neighborhood cleaned up, for starters, and better maintained by the City and by property owners. They want to see more green spaces, parks, for the children to play in and for seniors to gather in.

They'd love to see the return of the flower pots but this time, someone needs to coordinate the watering of them so that they do not die.

In every group, people spoke of wanting to see color in the neighborhood. While they appreciated the addition of murals, they wished they had not all been in neutral shades. They want to see brightly coloured murals, banners, storefronts and flowers for sale, as well as displayed, on the streets.

Part of the clean-up for some would be an end to the strip clubs, adult entertainment shops and other businesses which they see as being unhealthy in a family-based community.

It was suggested that there be some system for honouring those homeowners and business owners who made the effort to restore heritage buildings and do nice landscaping.

### **B. *Village-Type Shops***

They like the village atmosphere but rue the absence of shops like Chapman's Bakery. They'd like to build on the village theme with the addition of a good bakery, a butcher shop, a green grocer and some nice-boutiques, European-style coffee shops and restaurants. They like the antique shop on Ontario Street because it puts a few goods out onto the sidewalk to entice people to come in.

While they see that others in London would be drawn to a village-type atmosphere, the first priority with that in mind, other services they would like to see added would be a drycleaners, a hardware store.

They'd love to see some trendy little restaurants open up to serve those who regularly come into the area for the Curling Club, the plays at the Palace, and Western Fair. As it is now, those customers don't stay in the area. They go elsewhere to socialize after events. These would be nice restaurants with patios in the summertime. And hopefully, they would provide some part-time employment for the youth in the neighborhood.

Outdoor markets and/or a Farmers's Market would be seen as welcome additions to the neighborhood.

It was suggested that there be some sort of incentives to encourage entrepreneurs to invest in the area.

People would like to see Old East London Village become a destination, a place where people come for theatre, strudel and a good cup of coffee.

Someone also suggested that priority in hiring staff for these shops go to people who live in the area.

### ***C. Safe Neighborhoods***

There were several suggestions made around safety and the perception of safety in the area. The drug trade and prostitution, which some said were better now, are still a big problem. The johns need to be stopped from coming into the area and the prostitutes need to be discouraged from practicing their trade in the area. People want the police to be more vigilant in dealing with the drug trade. Many people seemed to be aware of certain small businesses that were fronts for drugs. Most of all, people said we all need to be less tolerant of the drug culture and prostitution in the neighborhood.

They would also like the police to improve their response times to the neighborhood. There is a perception that the police are not as eager to respond to calls to this neighborhood as they are to others.

Older people are worried about the high numbers of mentally ill people out on the streets and wished there were more services for them.

Queen Street, as a one-way street, was seen to encourage high speed driving and they would like to see it turned back into a two-way neighborhood street.

Most felt the neighborhood was not as dangerous as many people outside of it seem to think it is. They suggested that an increase in the number of foot patrols by the Police Core Unit would be seen as making things appear more secure.

Some suggested a Neighborhood Watch Program and a Business Watch Program be implemented. Others suggested security behind the Palace when it is in use.

#### ***D. Restoration of Historic Buildings and Homes***

This was a very popular suggestion. People are very proud of these old buildings and were irate when one organization bought up two blocks worth and tore them down for a parking lot. They are delighted when new families come in and restore the homes and would like to see more of this happening. They suggested awards for people who do this.

#### ***E. Communication of Community Resources and Activities***

It became very apparent in the focus groups that there was available grant money that went unapplied for because no one knew about it and that there were a great many pieces of information of relevance to the community that large numbers of people were unaware of.

Suggestions for rectifying this included a website that would be kept up to date and a community newsletter made available to the community.

Part of the communication is about getting to know the people who live in the area and getting to know their talents and networking so that those who need these skills and gifts know where to look for them.

#### ***F. A New Image in the Rest of London***

There is a strong desire not to hear the term “east of Adelaide”. Most blamed the media and realtors for encouraging the myth that east of Adelaide is bad and wished that they would get on board and support the good things in the community.

#### ***G. Fairs and Festivals***

There were various suggestions of a street fair or a festival of some sort, to draw people into the neighborhood. One very concrete suggestion was a Halloween ghost tour. Others suggested a multi-cultural festival such as is held in many other cities across Canada.

#### ***H. Guided History Tours***

In that there is a lot of history in the area, it was suggested that there be plaques made and mounted at significant sites, and during the summer, when all the Stratford visitors are in the area, there could be guided tours to these sites.

#### ***I. A Community Council with a Paid Coordinator***

The importance of leadership and coordination was widely recognized throughout the groups and several people suggested that there be a community council and a paid coordinator to organize change and keep it moving. Such a council would need to be representative of residents, business people, schools, the arts community, and recreational interests as well as levels of government. It would coordinate the groups who are currently working to improve the area as well as take new initiatives and seek the funding to pay for them.

***J. More Multi-Unit Affordable Housing, like Tolpuddle***

While no one wants to see high-rise development in the area, many recognize that the key to having more services for residents is to draw in more residents. A few more apartments, or condominiums would be welcome by many.

A couple of groups suggested that affordable retirement housing would also be a good option for the area.

**K. More self-confidence, participation and involvement in decision-making**

Several people would like to see the community pull together to help itself. They believe this is possible, that we do not need to wait for City Hall to help us. “We can do it ourselves!” they said.

**L. A Community Where Everyone has Enough----beyond survival<sup>3</sup>**

Some of the community’s more vulnerable citizens looked for a future that was brighter than the one they are in. They spoke of hunger and the difficulty of getting healthy food on very low incomes.

***M. A Stronger Arts Presence***

People suggested free jazz concerts and recitals in some of the areas big old churches. They want to see more public art and they all supported keeping the Aeolian Hall as a center for music.

***N. Improved Lighting***

There is a perception that burned out bulbs, when they are replaced, which is not apparently as often as they should be, are being replaced with bulbs of a lower

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<sup>3</sup> These comments you will seldom find in the appendices because people tended to say them one on one at break times and after sessions. They seemed to be embarrassed by their poverty.

wattage and a brownish tinge<sup>4</sup>. They would like to see the restoration of brighter, whiter light.

***O. A Classy Supermarket***

While many wanted to see the village-type stores come into the area, others would like to see a really good supermarket so that they do not need to leave the area to shop for groceries

***P. Maintenance of Properties by Absentee Landlords***

Absentee landlords are seen as a big problem in the area. Some buildings appear to be abandoned altogether and others are in a state of disrepair and/or being used as drug houses. People would love to see such landlords held accountable for their property and their selection of tenants.

***Q. More Employment for those who want/need to Work***

Unemployment is high in this area. There are no employment services and no job training programs. People want the opportunity to work, whatever it takes.

***R. Recreational Opportunities***

There were a number of suggestions on this topic. Some asked for bicycle paths and bike racks on the street. Others asked for a seniors' drop-in center where seniors could teach youth skills they had as well as enjoy their own activities.

***S. Allies at City Hall and in other Levels of Government***

It is widely believed that no one at City Hall cares what happens in this neighborhood and people dream of a day when they feel truly represented.

***T. Responsible Bar Owners***

It was suggested that the bar owners be encouraged to cut people off when they've had enough.

***U. Improved Recreational Facilities for Youth***

The young people had a lot of ideas for what would improve the neighborhood: better playgrounds and more of them, more basketball courts, an outdoor swimming pool, some type of drop-in center where they could hang out without being supervised (like in the malls but close to home). Some suggested a skateboard park.

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<sup>4</sup> One woman reported calling in a burned out bulb in a street lamp three times over the period of a year and said it was still burned out.

### ***U. Improved Health Services***

While people are happy to have the LIHC in their area, they bemoan the lack of doctors who are willing to take new patients and wish more doctors would set up practice in the area. Others suggested that a drop-in clinic would be a welcome addition to the community.

### ***Other***

- a reverse tollgate on entering the neighborhood---people would be given coupons for the shops
- a Farmers' Market
- a free shuttle from downtown to the neighborhood
- a classy coffee shop
- a flower shop or gardening center
- recruit home-based businesses into area and expand BIA to include them
- mixed-use buildings (e.g. shops on the main floor with residences above)
- better utilization of Western Fair other services throughout the year, and
- using the Fair to let people know what other services are nearby
- a living museum to working people's history
- a daycare center
- a Teen Challenge Program where youth sell what they produce
- a place for kids to talk to someone when they can't talk to their parents
- a pet store
- an agency to train babysitters and then screen sitters and clients and match them up
- a public water fountain---we get thirsty in the summer!
- open up Centretown Mall but redesign with a mix of housing and shops
- repertory movie theatre

### **III. Obstacles that Need to be Overcome in Order to Realize this Vision**

#### ***A. Negative Image of East of Adelaide***

The majority of Londoners have a very negative association with anything located “East of Adelaide” or EOA, as some call it. While loyal followers will come into the Curling Club, the Palace Theatre, or Anthony’s Men’s Wear Store, for example, they tend to do their business and leave. Real estate prices remain much lower in this area than in the rest of London because there is fear associated with living there. People believe that this fear is greatly exaggerated to what is justified by the social problems in the area.

A lot of the blame for this state of affairs is attributed to the media, who habitually reinforce the association in a way they do not do when something negative happens in another area, and to the realtors, whom people believe could be doing a better job of pointing out the positive points of the area.

Another problem with the negative image outside the community is that it is continually eating away at the self-image of organizations within the community who are repeatedly tempted to consider whether they would like to relocate to another part of the city where these social problems do not continue to stand in the way of their mission. The London Community Players, for example, are considering extensive renovations to the building but are asking themselves whether such a sum of money would be better spent building a new building elsewhere. The Aeolian Hall has been trying to get musical groups to book the space for performances but as soon as they hear the address, they decline to book. The Curling Club has similar doubts about staying where they are. These are community assets that need to be acknowledged and supported in their loyalty to the community.

#### ***B. Ineffective Communication within the Community***

People do not know what services are available to them, such as loans for renovations. Monies have gone to other communities where people are aware of them and demanding of them.

No one in the community is seen to be monitoring City Hall and communicating decisions which impact the community back to the people who live here. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the local newspaper and did not feel it was doing the job it should be.

#### ***C. Lack of a Clear Theme/Vision to Integrate our Initiatives***

To date, people are in search of a clear theme for change, a theme that would energize and mobilize community action as well as be an incentive for those outside the community to want to invest in it.

#### ***D. Division Within the Community***

There are many diverse groups and values at work in this larger community. People recognized that they had a lot of work to do in moving away from many voices towards a diverse community with one voice.

Some also expressed a sense of exclusion, that not everyone was considered or involved in decision-making.

#### ***E. Abandoned Buildings, Empty Storefronts, and Slum Landlords***

People said we need to track down the owners of abandoned storefronts and buildings and get them on board with transforming the area. There is also a strong desire to hold the landlords accountable for the condition of their properties and for some sort of vigilance over the tenants who occupy them. There is a perception that low-cost housing attracts these slum lords who buy the properties and just milk them for whatever they can get with no responsibility to the community whatsoever.

#### ***F. Lack of Coordination***

We need coordinated leadership to ensure that we are all pulling in the same direction and developing a step-by-step plan for getting where we want to go.

#### ***G. Over-Tolerance of Prostitution, Addictions, and the Drug Trade***

Repeatedly, participants wondered aloud why we tolerate the johns, prostitutes and drug pushers as well as other social problems, including strip clubs, adult entertainment shops, and rowdy bars which allow customers to drink beyond a reasonable amount.

One person expressed the feeling that there was a “hard energy” here at times, due to the hard lives of so many who lived here.

Some pointed out a lack of neighborhood support services for people with problems of substance abuse.

The condoms and needles discarded in abundance in public areas such as large parking lots are a disgusting burden for those who have to clean them up prior to any event using those parking lots, for example, Centennial United Church every Sunday morning and the London Community Players prior to every performance at the Palace Theatre.

#### ***H. Insufficient Police Presence***

People felt the police were not as interested in the area as they should be. They cited lengthy response times to calls and a lack of foot patrols as examples of

problems, which addressed, could lead to a much greater sense of security on the part of the citizens in the community and around it.

This is an issue in need of strong response from the police if the issues of insecurity and the perception of insecurity are to be addressed.

### ***I. Despair, Hopelessness, Fear***

These emotions came up often in response to this question. People recognize that these emotions lead to the belief that transformation is not going to happen, and they know that this belief can easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Another group said, “We need to be the squeaky wheel if we are going to get the grease.”

The Three churches represented in the focus groups were in search of ways to “embrace” the more vulnerable citizens of the community and enable them to feel and be more supported.

### ***J. City Hall***

The lack of a voice at City Hall, the alleged corruptness in City Hall, and the sense that no one really cares about the people of this community are all seen as obstacles to getting the funding necessary to support change in the community. It is the only area in the city, for example, that does not have a Community Centre, and it is recognized in Parks and Recreation that this is inequitable.

Part of this disregard for the community is the failure to maintain the streets and sidewalks at the same standard as the rest of London, the failure to change light bulbs in lamp standards, even when phoned and asked to do so, and the perception that less power is coming into the community, thus causing an apparent browning of the lights, which adds to the feelings of danger people feel at night. Alleys are particularly dark and scary at night.

In at least one group, people were convinced that the by-laws of the City are not being enforced or are being half-heartedly enforced in the area e.g. garbage disposal, dumping.

More than one group said we need more accountability from City Hall as well as more openness in decision-making. As one person said, “Why are they so secretive?”

Together with these perspectives is the awareness that, in general, the population of the area is not politically aware or involved.

The Ward system itself may work against this area in that the wards are pie-shaped with the neighborhood being represented by three different councillors., each of which also has suburban representation. It is believed that the suburban homeowners have the ear of the politicians to a greater degree than we do here.

### ***K. The Social and Economic Move Away from Small Business to Mega-Malls and Chain Stores***

Throughout North America, the trend has been to move away from the more time-consuming commerce of small shops towards big stores like Walmart, Staples, Home Depot, etc. People are looking for one-stop shopping, which is part of the move towards more efficient use of time. (Workers are expected to produce more in less time for less money.)

This is seen as potentially going against entrepreneurs being willing to invest in a village-style community.

### ***L. Unemployment***

The higher rate of unemployment in the area is seen to lead to drinking and vandalism and would certainly also contribute to the drug and prostitution trades. A couple of groups also noted the lack of job training or adult education programs and the lack of employment preparation and job placement resources in the area.

### ***J. Challenges for Those on Welfare***

Some of the participants in the focus groups are recipients of social assistance in some form or another. They pointed out problems for those who want to get off the system. Some, who are able to work part-time, for example, say it is dangerous to do so for it is often perceived that they do not need support any longer and they fear being unable to get back on when and if they need to do so. They are looking for modifications to the system which would encourage those who are trying to become independent.

### ***K. The Visible Presence of Mental Illness in the Area***

There are large numbers of people who suffer mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, living in the area. The London Intercommunity Health Centre reported as many as half of their clients reporting mental illness. In the focus groups, people who expressed fear and insecurity attributed that more to those who suffer from mental illness than to those who are using drugs. People reported harassment from the mentally ill and expressed a fear of looking people in the eye on the street because “we don’t know what they are going to do next”.

Some participants expressed a desire to see some facilities where these people can enjoy activity and support during the day, as many are using hostel facilities at night but have nowhere to go during the day.

The closing of the London Psychiatric Hospital was seen as a large contributor to this problem.

#### ***L. Queen's Avenue "Raceway"***

The high speeds of drivers on this one-way street creates both a feeling of danger, and a sense that it forms an unnatural boundary inside the community. People said they would like to see it returned to a two-way residential street with normal posted speeds and police assistance in holding drivers to those speeds.

#### ***M. The Threat to Our Schools***

At least one school in London has been slated for closure. People are terrified that Lorne Avenue may be next, and this school is seen as very important not only to the children and families of the area but to the community as a whole, since it is a center for positive community activity.

#### ***N. Social Inequality***

The diversity of opportunity for people in this area is much more striking than in other areas of the City. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is "in your face", regardless of which side of the balance people are on. Those who are hungry ask for support in having "enough". Those who have enough recognized the importance of seeing this community as one and of advocating for those who are in no position to advocate for themselves. They want to speak truly with one voice, in the interests of the whole community.

#### ***O. A Lack of Opportunities for People to Contribute to the Community***

One man asked if he could come to more than one focus group. When told, yes, he could, he said, "No one ever asks us what we think about anything. It is nice to be included." Others also said they want to help but don't know how. When we took the lists of names of people's strengths, some said they hoped this would not be just set on a shelf but that someone would actually call them and put them to work improving the community.

### **IV. Strengths People Bring to the Task**

There is a tremendous volunteer bank available when the time comes to implement the vision decided upon. Appendix 1 includes individual first names and talents that people said they would be willing to share for the common good. (These names need to be cross-matched with the participant sign-up sheets and a volunteer bank established for easy reference.)

Summarizing what people said, the volunteer bank could be organized with the following headings:

**A. Coordination and Communications**

- 1) leadership
- 2) organization
- 3) administration
- 4) communication, verbal
- 5) communication, written
- 6) networking
- 7) promotion
- 8) funding and funding proposals
- 9) computers and website development
- 10) special events

**B. Project Support**

- 1) monitoring political systems
- 2) research
- 3) activism
- 4) media relations
- 5) urban redevelopment
- 6) prayer
- 7) multicultural endeavours
- 8) sound systems
- 9) graphic design
- 10) helping hands (e.g. mail-outs, meeting support, flier delivery, clean-up, etc.)
- 11) transportation (including trucks for clean-up)
- 12) nutrition
- 13) space for events
- 14) conflict resolution
- 15) planning
- 16) facilitation

**C. Creative Arts**

- 1) art work
- 2) music
- 3) theatre
- 4) photography
- 5) busking

**D. Trades**

- 1) small repairs
- 2) electrical systems
- 3) architectural technology
- 4) sandblasting
- 5) restoration

- 6) stonework
- 7) interior design
- 8) landscaping
- 9) video production

**E. Economic**

- 1) new business support
- 2) labour relations

**F. Other**

- 1) parenting skills
- 2) gardening
- 3) real estate

**V. What We Need to Use Our Skills**

Different groups interpreted this question differently, and several groups ran out of time before they got to this question. What follows is a summary of the kinds of responses we got to this question:

A. Most groups that answered the question responded with principles such as:

- ✓ hope
- ✓ commitment
- ✓ determination
- ✓ cooperation
- ✓ patience
- ✓ integrity
- ✓ honesty
- ✓ respect
- ✓ focus
- ✓ communication
- ✓ inclusion
- ✓ acknowledgment
- ✓ accountability
- ✓ responsibility
- ✓ reconciliation
- ✓ celebration (it has to be fun, sometimes)
- ✓ faith
- ✓ common will
- ✓ community
- ✓ trust and trustworthiness
- ✓ service
- ✓ listening
- ✓ compassion
- ✓ understanding
- ✓ risk

B. Unemployed people tended to say that what they needed was the opportunity to participate.

C. Other key ideas that came out were:

- ✓ leadership
- ✓ a clear vision
- ✓ political savvy
- ✓ belief in the power of community and the power of one
- ✓ a healthy indignation
- ✓ a way of making absentee landlords accountable
- ✓ allies in places of power
- ✓ a sense of achievement and self-worth as a result of our work
- ✓ money
- ✓ planning
- ✓ pride

## **VI. Who are our allies in this process?**

Whereas this question was initially asked to find out what connections were already there for participants in the groups, it quickly became apparent that this question only made sense in the context of knowing where we need allies so it was suggested that we omit the question for the time being and ask it again at a more relevant time. This we did for most of the groups. Some groups chose to identify potentially useful allies. These included the following:

- the London Free Press
- the people who support London
- members of the churches
- trades and industrial unions
- teachers and teacher unions
- parishes
- parent-teacher associations
- service clubs

## **PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS**

The advantage of having an outsider come into a process like this lies in the fact that such a person has no personal stake in making particular choices and cannot be perceived as having such an agenda. The following recommendations are to be taken only as suggestions and are to be considered together with the suggestions coming from all the other sources: staff, Board, funders, and the professional planners.

### **I. Process**

#### **A. The Vision**

It seems to me that the first step to be taken is that of deciding on a clear and detailed vision of what we want to happen. This needs to take shape before the presentations in October so that people can respond to this vision. Either we have identified correctly what this community wants and needs and sees as possible, or we have not, in which case, modifications would be in order. If we have identified correctly what people want, then this vision, with all its clarity and appeal, will serve to mobilize people into action. (My suggestions around the vision are to be found in the second section of this report, which is entitled Theme.)

#### **B. Leadership Team/Implementation Team**

We are looking at a long-term plan (perhaps five years) and this needs a solid group of leaders who will be accepted by the community as a whole: by business people, residents, service-providers, and other community stakeholders. These should be people who are already seen as leaders in the community and who can access their own networks to support the process. This would be the implementation team.

#### **C. Setting of Priorities**

A number of areas have surfaced which need to be addressed. Each of these needs to be fleshed out in detail and some realistic priorities set. In considering the priorities and the order in which each may be tackled, the following should be considered:

1. the do-ability of the task. How much money would it take? Can we find that money? Is this task important in the eyes of the people who live here? To what degree? How much time and energy can we count on from the community to achieve our goals here? How many people already indicated in the focus groups that they have the skills and interest to work on this particular task?

2. its relative impact on the overall picture. If we do this first, will it make the other goals easier? When we achieve this goal, will that inspire confidence and support in the achieving of all our other goals?
3. the chances of solid success. It is important to start with something that is most likely to be successful. If, for example, the team decided to start with making life tough for the johns in the community, and they succeeded in greatly reducing or eliminating the solicitation of prostitutes in this area, the community would cheer at the victory and rally round the next task. The first task needs to be chosen carefully with success in mind.
4. the marketability of success. Will the rest of the community care if we achieve this goal? How can we be sure they know about it? Will the success of this goal contribute to a shift in the East-of-Adelaide mentality that isolates us at this time?
5. the size of the feathers we will ruffle by tackling this task. Change, while desired by one group, is normally resisted by another. There are some enemies we do not want to make, especially at the beginning of our process because they could create a lot of obstacles for us later on if they feel their interests are being compromised by our changes. Each of the areas needs to be assessed for potential damage control and prevention.

Below are some of the areas which surface clearly in the vision part of the summary. These are the areas that must be fleshed out and prioritized. In evaluating each of these in relation to the others, timing is critical. Timing will be one of the largest challenges in this project as each priority will seem to need others to precede it. I would suggest that research of successful community transformation initiatives be an early priority because this will be needed to convince entrepreneurs to risk their capital, their energy and their reputations on this community. In addition, beautification and restoration, if not completed before seeking the new shop owners should at least have a solid plan with funding behind it.

### **1. Beautification**

The first thing said in most of the groups when asked what they wanted to see in the future was the greening of the area. They want the community to be beautiful, from Dundas Street itself, to the residential areas. They had all kinds of ideas about how this could be done, from getting the City to follow its own by-laws and policies in doing maintenance and clean-up to providing incentives, such as awards, for businesses and homeowners who take the time and money to beautify their properties.

Color is an important element of the beautification, as is bringing life into an area they see as dying. Life means trees, green grass, parks, hanging

flowers, and planters. As for other color, banners, and brightly coloured murals were suggested.

## **2. Enticement of particular entrepreneurs (shop-keepers) into the area**

This is absolutely key to the success of this initiative and it strikes me that beautification may be a precursor or at least a partner to this element. What will attract a good baker to take a chance in this neighborhood? A good butcher? A green grocer who appreciates organics? Some creative restaurateurs? A hardware store owner? Some boutique owners?

First and foremost, they need to see the vision and they need some help to see themselves in it, making money! They need to have a close connection with at least one member of the leadership team in whom they have complete and total trust and confidence. They need to know the plan and they need information on how this kind of initiative has been successful in other communities. They need to see us taking action, meaning it and getting where we say we want to go. And they need key locations on the main street, for starters.

Rather than putting it out to the community that we are looking for these particular individuals, we may choose to identify and go after people who are already successful in doing this work, either here or in another community.

## **3. Restoration of heritage buildings**

There is a genuine pride in and love for the heritage buildings in this area, both commercial and residential. People appreciate the history of the community and want to see it preserved and celebrated.

While there are municipal loans available at low or no interest for certain types of renovations to commercial space, we need more information on what is possible in this area.

## **4. Clean-up and maintenance of the streets and buildings**

It will be challenging to find a way to maintain an ambiance of cleanliness and order in a community with more than its share of social problems and homeless people but if good services are there for these people, and many are, it is not impossible and this seems to be a priority for a lot of people: improve the lighting, fix the streets and sidewalks, clean up the abandoned buildings and put some people in them, if necessary by changing the buildings intended use. Get some fresh paint on the buildings and water the flowers when they are planted.

## **5. Safety and the perception of safety in the community**

Not only are there present users of the community who feel fear when they are here, but fear and insecurity are seen as major reasons why people will not come into this community to shop and enjoy recreation. We will not succeed in getting entrepreneurs to invest in this community unless we can assure them beyond reasonable doubt that we have a good plan in place to make people feel safe in the community.

- increased police presence, preferably as neighborhood foot patrols
- get rid of the drug addicts and biker gangs
- get rid of prostitution in the area
- ensure no more adult entertainment and rowdy bars open
- improved lighting
- security in large parking lots during performances

People said repeatedly that we need to stop tolerating drugs and prostitution in the area. Why, they wondered, have we tolerated them for so long when no one else would or does.

## **6. Celebrations for the community and the larger community**

People want to feel better about themselves living in this community and they want the rest of London to feel better about the community and about coming here. What better way to do both than to organize one or two really big celebrations per year in the community. Suggestions included a multicultural festival, a street dance, concerts in the parks and churches, and of course, in Aeolian Hall and the Palace, and/or a busking festival.

Economically, we need to draw in people from more than just the local community if new shops are going to fly. When a large event is held in the community and people come for that, they see these other things that are happening and they check them out. When they do that and are happy with what they find, they come back, just for the shops.

The proud labour history of the area could be celebrated with a Labour Day Festival highlighting the achievements of unions and workers in the area.

## **7. Re-education of the larger community**

People feel a certain measure of despair when they hear the words east-of-adelaide. They believe that the neighborhood has been unfairly condemned by those who see only a surface part of what goes on here. A concerted effort needs to be made to change the things we don't like about the community and to promote promote promote the things we do like about

this community. While some people would like the term east-of-adelaide to disappear from people's vocabulary, it might be a whole lot easier to simply give them reason to re-conceptualize the term positively by showing them the good things.

## **8. Communication**

People don't know what's going on in their own community. They do not have confidence in the London Free Press. Other ways have to be found to support people within the area to know what is going on, as well as to inform Londoners and those in other communities as to what is worth their attention here.

How about a Towne Crier during the good weather months, who announces loudly things people might want to know about? How about forming a Village Voice, a large one-page (two-sides) newspaper funded through advertising but which also communicates community events and people's stories? I know that Todd Hutchinson is working on a website. This too could be a key way to keep a lot of people informed but remember, in this community, a lot of people do not have access to computers nor do they belong to the Internet culture in the way some of us do.

An important element of communication is getting everyone in the neighborhood on board with whatever initiatives are decided upon. People need to feel and be included if they choose to be. This means an effort to let people know about community meetings and ensure that necessary support is there for them to attend and participate.

If the theme of "village community" is chosen to consolidate the initiatives, it would be important for business staff in the area to all understand that in a village community, we know everyone's name and use it. We ask about the children, the dog and the trip to the big city last week. We know who has been sick, how they are feeling now, and whether or not Aunt Minnie was able to get her wheelchair fixed. If we chose that theme, we have to live that theme, in each and every venue people come to. The first-time visitor into such a village needs to feel that homey atmosphere and want to be a part of it, so that they will return again and again because it *feels good* to do so!

Those responsible for communication might also want to work closely with the leadership team to determine appropriate ways of acknowledging and recognizing those volunteers who contribute time, money and resources to improving the community. It is important to say thank-you and to honor these individuals publicly.

## **9. Employment**

There is a higher rate of unemployment in this area as well as a desire on the part of the area's youth to find part-time work in the area. Addressing this may involve incentives for business people who hire people from the area. It may mean some job training programs for adults, and some job-search and job placement services for those looking for work. An employment office in the neighborhood could enable relationships with employers in the area that would make it much simpler to match people with the new jobs that new entrepreneurs will bring.

## **10. Affordable Housing**

While restoration of historic properties and beautification of the neighborhood, as well as new commercial services will inevitably cause a rise in the housing prices in the neighborhood as demand increases, the community felt strongly that they wanted to ensure the ongoing availability of low-cost housing alternatives for people in the area. They want to ensure that London's vulnerable citizens continue to feel at home in this area and that they can afford to live here. In addition, new services are best supported by ensuring a solid residential base here. To that end, it was suggested that there be other Tolpuddle-type initiatives, one being designed with seniors in mind.

## **11. Support for the Arts**

While there is already a strong artistic presence in this area with the London Community Players, the Aeolian Hall initiative, and Forest City Gallery, for example, people recognize the vibrancy to be found in artistic endeavour and they would like to see that expanded.

In part this means, supporting what is happening now and getting the information out there to the rest of London and area so they will come. In part it means ensuring that people feel safe here when they do come. In part, it means ensuring that they can find cheap parking when they come to an event. (People felt some directional signs would be helpful.)

It also means attracting other artists into the area, perhaps through the festivals or special events, perhaps through education. The youth want more opportunities to learn to make theatre, play stringed instruments and paint, for example.

## **12. Health and Wellness**

While the many wonderful services of the London Intercommunity Health Centre are valued and appreciated by the residents and other participants in the focus groups, there was a strong sense that we needed more doctors here, more family doctors and perhaps a drop-in clinic. The LIHC is stretched far beyond its capacity in dealing with the special needs clientele it was designed to support. The rest of the community also needs medical services.

In addition, what kind of wellness initiatives are in place to support single parents, caregivers, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, and especially, the large numbers of mentally ill persons in the community?

#### **D. Volunteer Bank**

We have a good start to the designing of a volunteer bank with the names given us at the focus groups of people who offered their strengths to help. It is my understanding that there have also been capacity-building exercises done through the LIHC in the past. These resources need to be pooled, updated and organized so that when an initiative is being considered, the planning team can quickly refer to the volunteer bank and contact people to see what kind of support they will have.

#### **E. Monitoring of the Political Processes of the Area**

We need to know about the decisions the City, the Province, and indeed, the Nation makes which impact this community. What new funding pots are there that we could draw on? What zoning decisions are being considered that might effect us? Who stands up for us and cares about us and who clearly doesn't? This community is not disenfranchised; it is simply uninformed.

Whoever works in this area might want to do a little refresher on Saul Alinsky's writings. He was a well-known community development activist who got results because he knew how to push the right buttons!

#### **F. Research**

The more information we have about any one of the elements in the working initiative, the easier it is to convince people of its viability and to apply for needed funds. We need a database that has easy reference to what has been done in other cities in Canada in terms of development. With such a resource, it would be easier for the staff or member of the leadership team, when they approach a potential entrepreneur, to pull out related success stories and contact names for the individuals.

#### **G. Establish Policies and People for Promotion and Networking**

Some systems need to be created and set in place to ensure that the right information goes out to the right people at the right time for maximum effect. Who is going to be responsible for press releases, stories in the news media, advertising, etc.? How will that person or persons know that it is now the right time to get the word out?

#### **H. Fund-Raising**

It's a big challenge but someone has to do it. No matter how great our volunteers are, they are going to need materials, advertising space and at times, expertise we do not have in our volunteer base. What funds can be sprung from our governments and foundations? What monies do we need to get out there and raise ourselves?

#### **I. Accountability Structures**

First, the BIA already has a treasurer an auditor and a system to ensure that there are checks and balances in place to protect the financial integrity of this project.

Secondly, while financial statements audits and annual reports ensure accountability to the funders we need to develop an open easily accessible reporting system for the community at large.

#### **J. Dealing with Absentee Landlords**

In that absentee landlords are seen to not care about the condition of their buildings or the activities of those who rent them, people feel strongly that these folks need to be identified and held accountable for their action, or in more cases, inaction.

#### **K. Learning What it Takes to Work as a Community**

Anyone who has worked together with a group to create anything of importance knows that one cannot assume that just because the ideas and the resources are there, that people will necessarily know how to work together to make use of both. It may be worthwhile near the beginning of the process, and/or at some point when conflict begins to detract from success, to take some time to learn some principles of working together and attending to the needs of the individuals on the team, as well as the project. Many good projects have failed when the team failed to honor the needs and personhood of the individuals working on it.

### **II. An Integrating Theme: *The Village***

In that the most overwhelming plus this community has going for it is the people and the sense of the community people experience here, and in that history is also seen as

valuable to this community, it makes the most sense to me to build on *the village* as an integrating theme.

We live in a society in which money and greed, with the concurrent emphasis on efficiency and speed, are promoted as being of high value. Workers and managers alike are more stressed, tired and frustrated with the workloads and lack of free time, than they have ever been. Budgets continue to get cut, especially by governments but also by large corporations, and what people are remembering with fondness were the good old days in which they had time to talk to one another and enjoy the small, daily events of life. The malls are popular because they are efficient and save time but few people think of them as fun. They are also popular because they are convenient. There is lots of parking and parking is free. But in the mall, it is rare for the clerk to know your name or anything about you that is not on your credit card.

In a village, people are friendly. They take time to talk with you, to carry your groceries to the car. The baker gives your toddler a cookie and the butcher gives your dog a bone. In a village, the hardware man knows how to give you advice about your building project, and the restaurant installs a wheelchair ramp because they know Bill can't use the building if they do not.

In other cities in which a community, or cottage industry approach has been the key to development, it usually starts on one block, then spreads down the street as the idea catches on. It would be useful to identify one block which has the empty space that could easily be developed for our butcher shop, bakery, and green-grocer, for starters. We also want a village a hardware, drycleaners and a garden shop. And don't forget some nice clothing boutiques for our young women. And we need those restaurants for when other people come to participate in arts events or Western Fair or just because they want a night out in an interesting area that takes us back to gentler times.

American tourists love these recreations of historical times. Look at Solvang, California where tourists come from all over to the Danish theme: pastry shops, restaurants, shoe stores, curio shops, china shops. People come from all over to enjoy something out of the ordinary. Look at Stratford, a small town to your north. People come for the theatre but they enjoy there the restaurants, country inns, and wonderful, huge bed and breakfast community which has been a response to the theatre patrons desire to do something different. The thousands of visitors which come to Stratford each summer could very easily be enticed to spend a day or two in London to experience the kind of village they have also lost. They would pay to go on the History Tour, the Ghost Walk and of course, they would love to stay in a bed and breakfast in some renovated heritage home. They would eat in the restaurants and enjoy summer theatre at the Palace or in the park. The potential for this community is huge. It needs commitment, yes, but the results are there for the taking.

Other areas worth including in the research include Whyte Avenue in Edmonton, Osborne Street in Winnipeg, Gastown in Vancouver, and several areas in Toronto.

If sufficient people within this community are willing to learn to work together and to be patient in achieving their ends, I believe the resources are there to be successful in transforming Dundas Street from Adelaide to Egerton into a Village that will be the envy of the rest of the country and the pride of London.

## **Appendix 1: Focus Group Notes**

### **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

**Session 1 Facilitator Training/Focus group: Tuesday afternoon, Palace Theatre, May 21st.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- Its history! Families, commercial roots, strong industrial base, its firsts (London was the first cross-cultural learners' center in Canada and took a traveling van across the country to help start others.)
- that it IS a community! There is a warmth and feeling of being in community here.
- the honesty of people. You may disagree but people are up front with their feelings and thoughts (not as polite as most places, a plus.)
- the strong arts presence
- that's a village--you meet people you know wherever you go.
- it's East London, and not London. The negative imagining has created a sense of solidarity within the community.
- the authenticity e.g. empowerment is a scary idea to service providers; it would mean an end to unilateral decision-making.
- "London's best kept secret"
- her diversity, it 's great for raising children
- incredible kids who have been inspired by their parents to the notion of community service
- Lorne Ave. School
- good public transportation
- community-minded, politically knowledgeable service (political consciousness)
- Dundas is a visible measure of how London treats its most vulnerable citizens
- lots of raw potential here
- amazing architecture
- heritage buildings
- more assets than we give ourselves credit for
- interesting people
- memories e.g. street fairs, vibrant shopping "I was in charge of garlic sausage buying!", the Brass Rail (a popular restaurant), Hudson's (a popular store)

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- an inclusive community
- an end to unilateral decision-making
- confidence in ourselves
- dynamic community
- pride
- where everyone has enough, beyond survival
- employment for those who need/want it
- caring for those who can't work
- interdependence
- celebration
- green space and children laughing
- faith
- security, feeling safe
- “a deli with all the options” i.e. a full-service community
- stronger expression of the arts community
- a place to be real, authentic
- color
- a classy supermarket for the area
- a hardware store
- a coffee shop with patio that brings people to the street
- greening of the space, trees
- more garbage bins
- free recitals e.g. churches, jazz
- things to stay for (600 curlers come into the community to curl and then leave to socialize because there is nowhere to go here)
- centre with green-space, markets, free parking off main street
- maintenance of properties by absentee landlords
- good playgrounds and more of them
- improved lighting
- higher standard of policing and safety
- faster response to calls, foot patrols

**3. What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- not everyone is included
- negative imaging of community
- a hard energy here at times

**4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

NA.

**5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?**

N.A.

**6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 2: Tuesday evening, Palace Theatre, May 21st.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- architecture
- PEOPLE!
- community feeling
- history: industry, places, events, people
- sentiment to keep something of value
- great ethnic restaurants
- small, locally owned businesses
- underestimated Palace Theatre: educating, gathering and keeping the culture alive
- more young people moving in, young professionals
- diversity and widespread acceptance of diversity
- people speak with authenticity
- help available to those who need it (good communication services)
- pedestrian traffic
- kids playing
- Tolpuddle Housing Co-op: pride of ownership, impeccably clean

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- lots of flowers and trees
- unity, peace and harmony
- street side cafés
- small-town downtown
- no strip clubs
- more Tolpuddle-like housing: clean and well-kept property
- advocates at City Hall
- Farmers Market, butcher, bakery, candle-maker, cottage industries
- more people walking around and sitting on patios on Dundas
- bicycle racks, bicycle paths
- Neighborhood Watch, Business Watch programs
- way of linking businesses together, a business network where people support one another
- more arts and music
- festivals, promotions outside E. London, street dances

- public art in buildings, sculptures, etc.
- improved lighting (seems to be less power coming into our streets, new bulbs are brownish in color) Needs to be better, especially where there are parking lots
- personalized service, shops and cafés where staff know the names of their regulars
- City Hall being more involved!
- restoration of our historic buildings
- more activists
- free shuttle from downtown to our strip
- name for this area that reverses negative image of “east of Adelaide”--how about The Village?
- a cap on adult entertainment establishments (some would abolish them altogether)
- a reverse tollgate where discount coupons are given out for shops in the area
- responsible bar owners who don’t serve those who’ve had enough

### 3. **What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- despair
- our reputation
- prostitution
- fear
- drugs
- absentee landlords
- restrictions to work for those on disability pensions
- lack of money
- train tracks (the shunting is done here and there is sometimes a lengthy wait to get across the tracks)
- dirt flying up from unkempt streets
- abandoned buildings
- people don’t believe they can make a difference
- mega-businesses elsewhere (e.g. malls) that make it hard for small businesses
- no advocate at City Hall
- lack of consideration for business owners when work is done on roadways
- Western Fair! (attracts people but does nothing to bring people into the Village itself. They leveled two blocks of historic buildings to build a parking lot!)

### 4. **What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

- strength in numbers, safety in numbers
- as a group, we represent a good cross-section of London

Eila: I’m a great promoter.

Tracey: I beautify the neighborhood.  
 Mary: I have strong desire, passion, energy for this community.  
 Kathy: I'm a quiet observer with good ideas. I'm not afraid to take real risks or to fight (it's my heritage!)  
 Ken (curling manager): valuable networking. I bring 600 people a week into this community  
 Rodney: I'm a writer, I know a lot about our roots and I take pride in E. London  
 Scott: I do website development. (student at Fanshawe, wants to help and is enthusiastic.)  
 Keith: enthusiastic optimism  
 Dan (group homes): access to 20-30 youth who might help with labor in projects  
 Jackie: I'm a gardener, I grow food.  
 Libbey: I write grassroots poetry, work on harm reduction, outreach, critical analysis, not afraid to wade in.  
 Mike: stories, access to stories on inspiration, success and failure. I have skills in synthesizing.  
 Maryse: I'm an administrator, organizer and I am committed to this project.  
 April: I have access to a wonderful venue (Palace); 2000 people come here 6X a year.  
 Rob: Busking!  
 Daniel: I'm a woodcarver.  
 Fred: I do restoration on stone, sand-blasting.

## 5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?

A. This group brainstormed what I would see as a list of the principles by which a community works together towards a common goal:

- will/commitment/strong desire/tenacity/focus
- courage/risk
- respect/dignity/tolerance
- vision
- integrity
- teamwork
- accountability
- response-ability/sharing
- reconciliation
- adaptability/compromise
- K.I.S.S. (simplicity, one step at a time)
- resilience
- understanding
- celebration
- inclusiveness
- hope and faith
- communication

- trust and trustworthiness acknowledgment<sup>5</sup>

B. What individuals need:

- opportunity
- mutual cooperation (from unemployed stone mason who asked Sarah if he could come to all the sessions, saying no one ever asks them to do anything.)<sup>6</sup>
- commitment (from each other, from City Hall, from the federal government, the police, from Trillium)
- hope
- living on disability allowance comes with impediments, disenfranchisement (Ontario Disability Support Program---ODSP)

6. **Who are our allies in this process?**

- people in the neighborhood
- media, could be, should be
- C.O.R. (Community Oriented Response) Team of police
- Lorne Ave. School
- beat police
- business community in the area
- non-profit agencies
- buskers and artists
- other communities which have been through this
- children

Contacts:

- Major Finney, Salvation Army (Dan)
- Joe Fontana, local MP (Mary)]
- Virginia Kelly, radio, (Maryse)
- Dan Brocke, History Society (Maryse) re: restoration

It was suggested that we make an effort to contact people who have lived in this community and value those memories, people who have gone on to bigger and better things

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<sup>5</sup> It never ceases to amaze this consultant that this same list is generated by so many groups of people with whom I have worked, people who know what it takes to work together to improve their common good.

<sup>6</sup> I read this as an expression of desiring to be valued for the gifts we bring.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 3: Wednesday evening, Centennial United Church, May 22nd.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- its diversity
- close to the city
- history
- lot of changes
- architecture
- older neighborhood
- mature trees that new areas don't have
- established neighborhood
- red cardinals
- potential
- side-streets
- boulevards with canopies
- good services
- friendly people
- Diabetes Museum
- level of social consciousness and creativity
- unique shops
- Cross-Cultural Learners' Centre
- quiet at night
- strong network of stay-at-home moms and caregivers

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- Chinatown
- a good coffee shop
- stores with facelifts like Wortley Village
- a lot more ethnic restaurants, antique shops and furniture stores
- an old European flavor: flower shops, culture-based
- produce market
- streets repaved, new sidewalks (we're neglected)
- support from City Hall
- outdoor cafes, space for children
- green space in lot behind Melody
- greening beside TD Bank on Lyle e.g. market, green space
- outdoor entertainment
- reclaiming historical attractions

- small library
- good bookstore
- good bakery
- increased pride in living here
- communicate that pride to the rest of London
- neat clean lawns so homes look nice
- more restoration from new homeowners
- greening of the streets and better lighting
- a system of recognition for good homeowners and business owners
- neighborhood association
- diversity of murals--Beal Art School
- garden center
- dynamic realtors to sell business fronts
- better health services, enough doctors

**3. What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- City Hall has to recognize us
- EOA-reputation
- natural progression to suburbs, malls and one-stop shopping
- flea market
- bars and people who frequent them
- Teen Centre--kids hanging around, perceptions
- absentee landlords
- youth in large numbers in few apartments
- Teen Centre needs development in back, outside
- drunkenness
- bikers
- irresponsible bar management in not cutting people off but instead allowing them to leave intoxicated
- high vacancy rate
- buildings that look abandoned
- sex trade
- drug trade
- adult entertainment
- pawn shops
- Walter and his barbershop
- lack of gainful employment leads to drinking

**4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

Vicky: time, if I have notice; I talk easily. I am interested in my property and my neighborhood; I am a good listener

Jacqueline and Brian and Len: ability to maintain our properties and the area around us, to set an example

Libbey: integrity, poetry, courage and candour

Sonja: graphic designer, block parent

Johann: communication skills, great network, optimism, ambition

Len: ability to promote and foster classical music in area

Yvette: I know we CAN make a difference; photography

Sarah: My house is beautiful. I have a nice garden.

Shelley: my work in the school, bringing the kids voices out, building pride  
in themselves and their neighborhood

Todd: website, sound, computers

## 5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?

- Aeolian Hall needs a change of perception of this area. Groups won't book when they find out it's east of Adelaide.
- positive promotion of the area and what goes on here
- a street festival with lots of media promotion
- support for initiatives e.g. Open House, Aeolian Hall, concert
- clientele
- time dedicated to this work
- gainful employment
- opportunities to use my gifts.
- encouragement
- information
- communication
- money
- commitment to the neighborhood
- a local directory of services available for a small fee
- an association

What it takes;

- ✓ political savvy
- ✓ leadership
- ✓ organization
- ✓ commitment
- ✓ interest/involvement
- ✓ someone to set an example
- ✓ people
- ✓ clear goals and vision
- ✓ strength of character
- ✓ belief in the power of community and the power of one
- ✓ persistence
- ✓ a healthy indignation
- ✓ patience

## 6. Who are our allies in this process? N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 4: Thursday morning, Palace Theatre, May 23rd.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- the buildings---they just need to be looked after
- stained glass windows
- multiculturalism
- free parking along some streets
- not boring
- a very different attitude about life
- more creative, exciting community, people are not worried about conforming
- the gardening
- Cooking for Kids Program at Lorne Ave. School
- a lot of helping services here
- vitality!
- Queen's Park (behind Adelaide)
- trains
- Tolpuddle Housing and Office Co-op
- First Nations Housing Co-op
- "real" people
- great big parking lot behind Theatre (the Palace people love the parking---others wish it were green space
- that there's no mall here'-available shopping nearby, everything we need is within reach
- lo-cost shopping<sup>7</sup>

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- the stores all fixed up; and operating effectively, with lots of customers and no drug fronts
- lighting needs improvement
- a new image of us by the rest of London
- less tolerance of prostitution and drug culture
- more affordable housing
- flower pots and flowering trees, someone to water them<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I had breakfast at the Melody for \$2.79: bacon and eggs, toast, including coffee or tea.

- move wiring below-ground
- improve condition of roads
- restaurants and places to go after other activities, like the theatre, curling, Western Fair
- other recreational options
- more recreational opportunities for youth in the area
- better utilization of Western Fair
- maintenance of Aeolian Hall as Concert Hall

### 3. **What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- media bias against us
- fear
- negative image outside the community
- a lack of clear identity within this larger community (seniors, youth, vulnerable groups, they are not part of the circle)
- perceived lack of interest from City Hall in this area
- lack of maintenance e.g. one light has been burned out for one year across from the Palace, in spite of numerous phone calls to have it replaced
- absentee landlords
- our own reps on City Council have a lot of attitude towards this area. Federal and provincial reps also appear disinterested. e.g. we need more affordable housing in this district but no one is doing anything about it.
- prostitution
- drugs
- presence of homeless for some. Their harassing behaviour creates problems.
- condoms and needles in abundance
- mental health
- people falling through the cracks
- presence of services for vulnerable citizens attract these people into the area, thus creating more problems
- relief is symptomatic, not longterm. We need to work at longterm solutions.

### 4. **What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

Rob: I represent a community church with a history of involvement. We want to be a partner. Space? People? (Bishop Cronyn Memorial Anglican Church)

Dave: We are already a community organization and care about this community. I like talking to people. I also do electrical systems (used to work for Kelloggs--all there electrical equipment.)

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<sup>8</sup> A project in the recent past saw the installation of lovely flower pots on the street but the flowers died because no one watered them.

Gladys: I have incredible parenting skills. I am persistent. I don't give up. I keep at it until the problem is dealt with.

Susan: architectural technologist. Western Fair. I have the technology at my disposal and I know who to talk to. Persistent. Access to resources.

Carmen: retired administrative assistant at Western Fair. I like gardening and people. I like my volunteer work at Mission Services.

Kadro: small repairs, can show others how to do.

(Croatian landlord, owns building that Bosnian Fast Foods is in)

## 5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?

- as a community, we need money, goals and planning
- we need project-based work so that people have a sense of achievement and a return of self-worth
- persistence. Change does not come easily.
- commitment
- acknowledgement
- acceptance of responsibility. People need to follow through on what they say they will do.
- integrity
- honesty
- accountability
- response-ability
- celebration
- patience
- reconciliation and forgiveness of past conflicts

## 6. Who are our allies in this process?

Potential allies include:

- London Free Press
- the people who support London
- members of the churches
- trades and industrial unions (that is the history of this village)
- teachers and teacher unions
- parishes
- parent-teacher associations
- service clubs

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 5: Thursday afternoon, Palace Theatre, May 23rd, 9 people.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- that people live here
- good inspirational people e.g. staff at LIHC--exceptional caring people
- people interacting more here than in other areas
- interesting and intelligent people when they open up and talk to you-- street people
- my job! Completely different here than in a mall
- rich architecture
- good public transportation system
- The Beal Arts School
- the arts community
- a working class community with layers and layers of different people and activities. "That's where the richness comes from."
- medium-density environment (they fought to keep Tolpuddle to 6 stories)
- ethnic mix of people
- parking lots
- residential and retail and manufacturing in one community (a mixed use community)
- complexity of interrelatedness
- a meeting area
- interesting establishments
- rich history
- easily accessible businesses, even for those with disabilities

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision? (In this particular group, the question was What would you like to see/feel/experience in this community?)**

- annual festivals for fun: musicians, crafts, a market....
- more people at work on this part of Dundas, doing interesting work, as well as living in the area
- outdoor cafes
- more co-op housing
- congregation areas--indoors and outdoors
- more jobs and more housing, full circle to the past
- a living museum of the people's history "The People's Palace"

- possibility of a TV station moving to this neighborhood
- a Towne Hall as a meeting place with market green space (an authentic statement for this area) (There is now a 100-seat common room in Tolpuddle)
- use empty spaces and some parking lots for affordable housing, the key to development of the area
- environmental perspective by using the space fully
- enhanced pride in this area
- healthy housing (lead pipes in some housing a real health hazard)
- East London become a destination, a niche market e.g. strudel, theatre, etc.
- more awareness of the good stuff here
- convincing people that this is a safe community
- promoting and taking control of the narrative
- keep the library alive by encouraging people to use it
- co-op placements (paid or volunteer practica) in the area
- small businesses such as a green grocer, bakery, butcher shop. The priority should be on services those who already live here need, with second thought to attracting others in
- knowing the people who live here and using their talents
- priority on hiring people who live here
- keeping good public transit---how about adding a trolley bus?

### 3. **What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- false perceptions of the community
- night: prostitution, pimping, drug culture, (The question was asked: Why does the City accept it here? Why do WE tolerate it here?)
- litter from these “trades” in our lanes
- break-ins, vandalism
- absentee landlords
- We need short and long-term solutions to these problems
- lack of political awareness
- the ward system: this neighborhood is divided into 3 wards and the homeowners in suburbia control the wards

### 4. **What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

Tom: interest in urban development and how cities function as ecological spaces; links with other communities that have experienced growth. Artist, Writer.

Libbey: commitment, education, integrity, poetry,

Gil: network, knowledge of neighborhood and city’s history; ran for City Council, 33 years of experience in labor and co-ops.

Didi: administrator, commitment to live theatre, people skills, producer

Dave: commitment to community theatre, to volunteerism, technical skills in electronics

Karen: business strengths, passion for life

Frank: desire to see community revitalized; access to funders

I try not to piss people off.  
Keith: enthusiasm

**5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?**

- money--our cities don't get enough to run the cities well
- time: too few people are doing too much
- greater will by the City to move beyond papers and task forces
- political mobilization to pack City Hall
- ethical politicians

**6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

**Session 6: Thursday evening, Palace Theatre, May 23rd<sup>9</sup>.**

### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- friendly people who smile and say hello
- good services: health clinic, art gallery, library, Teen Centre (?),
- schools
- don't have to go far for shopping but we may need more stores
- history of the area
- people tend to know about issues
- social consciousness
- diversity in the population -- we can learn a lot of things from a lot of people
- the low density of the population
- no wind sheer from high buildings because no high buildings

### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- rental housing with multiple beds, a great space saver
- totally wheelchair accessible on south-side of street
- entrance to heritage housing district off Dundas
- designated smoke free area e.g. outside cafes
- recruit home-based businesses to area and expand BIA to include them
- return Queens Ave to 2-way traffic and slow down!
- free curbside parking
- keep open skies--no high-rises here
- More people knowing about and using Carling Heights Community Centre
- revitalization of Western Fair
- if there were more businesses in the area, there would be more people coming in to work, and they would realize that this is a great community----the reputation would change
- more color: signage, banners, buskers
- life/activity on the street: music, cafes, patios
- social activities--you need a reason to get people together
- restoration of buildings
- clean up the alleys and the streets
- sidewalk displays
- more antique shops like one on Ontario St.--it's visible because goods are outside and people stop there

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<sup>9</sup> Facilitated by Sarah Merritt.

- incentives for more businesses to locate here
- seniors' residential complexes so that more seniors can stay in the area
- more healthy co-op housing, no lead pipes in plumbing
- memorial to the history of the working class people who lived here, history of the railroad
- mix of stores and specialty shops
- continuance of ambiance and aesthetics from the Thames to Egerton (EOA)  
Streetscape
- drugstore
- hardware store
- grocery store, a good one!!
- cars to turn left on Adelaide, taking traffic out of the area
- more green parks, e.g. at Centretown
- youth night at Western Fair: films, games, pizza parties, affordable
- youth employment opportunities
- underground parking
- mixed use buildings

3. **What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- negative perceptions of area
- prostitution, seen as increasing in past 1 1/2 years This is attributed to poor lighting
- more johns coming into area
- absentee landlords--no by-laws to ensure landlords take care of their property or select tenants with consideration They have an anything goes attitude.
- by-law enforcement shoddy in this area. City Hall, garbage, dumping
- lack of police foot patrols because we don't matter
- we need to be a squeaky wheel to get what we need
- money
- emphasis is on downtown development; the money set aside for this area, no one asked for so downtown took it. (This reserve fund is now overspent by \$1 million) No one at this end of the city is watching money allocations
- we have no input into the decision-making at City Hall. They are very secretive. We need democracy and accountability from our municipal politicians.

What we need to see happen:

- we need to cap services so as not to draw in needy people
- more employment, education and training for people
- a problem in the way the wards are divided: marginal opinions do not get represented by our councilors
- we need a welfare system that allows people to get off the system
- more support services for people with substance abuse

#### **4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

Maryse: administrative helper, board member LPC, looking for ways for LPC to be mutually helpful in community

Susan: offered to monitor standing committees on behalf of the area

Sherry: fund-raising, special events

Ken: good business networker

Darlene: administration, fliers, good at getting donations

Dawn: will pray for us, offered to talk to Rendezvous, doesn't find it hard to talk to people, a risk taker

Libbey: commitment, integration, activist, poetry, education

#### **5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?**

- purpose, focus
- structure
- a group to make absentee landlords accountable
- allies
- realistic attainable goals with timeframe
- reform to Disability Act and Ontario Works (a work for welfare scheme)
- we want a healthier community:
- inclusion
- consistent communication
- goodwill
- focus
- integrity
- honesty
- respect
- open-minded
- patience/understanding in our group
- no bias
- There's a need for all of us to be allies: police, media, realtors, Scene Magazine, alternative media, non-profit groups, small businesses, corporations, homeowners

#### **6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

**Session 7: Friday morning, London InterCommunity Health Centre (strong youth contingent, J.H.), May 24th.**

### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- the mix of people, business and activity
- a community that WANTS to improve itself
- people buying properties and improving them
- the location: it's very convenient to everything
- heritage homes
- a real sense of neighborhood
- affordable housing
- huge support for community initiatives; participation!
- people take care of one another
- I feel I belong! It's a village.
- good support services for those who need them
- I can get answers to my questions.

### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- new businesses: unique, specialty stores, locally owned, a good bakery like Chapmans'
- focus on what people need in their daily lives (most here don't own cars): produce, meat, dairy, bread
- re-creating a village with people living above the shops
- kids need a place to hang out without structures and people telling them what to do. Malls provide that in the suburbs. We don't want to go all the way out to Masonville to hang out.
- green spaces
- planters
- clean it up!
- more basketball courts. The H.S. kids take over when we try to play.
- more parks
- enlarge Carson Library and add more computers and more services.
- an outdoor swimming pool--it gets very hot here in the summer.
- a community center where women can share their skills and teach them to others as well as make things for the well-being of the vulnerable in the

community. also, trades for men to use similarly e.g. woodworking. There are a lot of people in this community who can't get a regular job.

- a Post office
- a drycleaners
- a carwash
- a gas station
- fix up the shops
- a bike shop
- a bike path and walking trails
- a safe place for women to gather during the day
- activities for people with mental health issues
- fix up Centretown
- more people taking pride in their homes
- help for those who need it with reading and schoolwork
- people to talk to for kids who can't talk to their parents
- mentorship for new businesses e.g. The new Bosnian Fast Food has no English menu, no prices posted, no bills and no receipts. They use cheap plastic forks that break when you eat with them.
- a daycare center
- a support center for youth who need it
- a MacDonalds (some don't want it; kids do)
- a public water fountain--we get thirsty in the summer
- a youth dance every week. (Beal holds one once a month) with funds going to a charity such as the children's hospital
- a sports center for elementary kids where they feel safe
- create more jobs or student employment options (they don't want a lot of hours, just enough to earn spending money.)
- a Teen Challenge Program where youth sell what they produce
- a place where youth can learn to make theatre without paying a lot of money suggested donating ticket sales from plays to a charity)
- A center that exposes the young to the arts and gives them an opportunity to develop skills in the arts e.g. stringed instruments. (Lorne Ave. has a brass section but no strings) We'd like to learn to paint too.
- stores for young people where they can get clothing, shoes, supplies and which have everyday access (what youth need is never in this neighborhood)
- a walk-in clinic-none in the area
- free training for babysitters and an agency to screen both sitters and clients
- opportunities for youth to work in restoration p.t.
- volunteers to run centers
- a place where people who have skills can teach people who want to learn them e.g. singing, strings. etc. There is no youth choir here.
- a pet store where kids could work helping the animals

### **3. What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- affordable housing, because slum landlords buy it up and don't care who they rent to nor do they maintain the property
- negative perceptions of East of Adelaide (we have our problems but it's not like the rest of London thinks--they don't see us as we are)
- absentee landlords
- lack of money
- lack of support from the larger community
- negative perceptions

4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?

N.A.

5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?

N.A.

6. Who are our allies in this process?

N.A.

(This group ran out of time as they had to leave early.)

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

**Session 8: Friday afternoon, London InterCommunity Health Centre (Included several high school students from H.B. Beal S.S), May 24th.**

### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- diversity
- interesting houses
- sense of community. People know each other and help one another; they come to community meetings.
- it feels safe
- it's convenient; we're downtown
- good access to transportation 'though it takes a while to get where you're going
- big trees
- interesting shops
- keeps you grounded, you're involved in the community because you know the problems. In the suburbs, it is easy to forget they exist.
- people are friendly, sometimes crazier, but definitely friendlier
- there are a lot of support services for the community (those in extra need, not necessarily the taxpaying community!)
- a lot of opportunities to give back to the community
- a lot of potential
- there's a high interest in improving the area
- feels more like a community than other places I've lived
- giving people, caring people
- choices in schooling
- good affordable housing
- lots of the arts: Forest City Gallery, Palace Theatre, The Embassy Bar which plays a lot of local and alternative bands
- history
- Western Fair (although it needs to keep reinventing itself. It never changes and it's now boring
- family-owned, independent businesses, not chain-stores

### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- a positive reputation in the rest of the community

- more restaurants, more stores, more advertising. We don't know what's here
- fewer empty spaces (buildings and parking lots)
- more mainstream shopping, fewer pawnshops etc.
- campaign to promote the area
- a nice club for the twenties crowd
- encourage stores to open past 6
- a good grocery store
- a Chapman's type bakery (they say it was even better than Angelo's)
- restoration of building fronts
- more color in public art (there has been a lot of criticism of one artist who did a few murals in beige and grey tones) It was suggested that the Beal art students be invited to design and do some brightly-colored murals for the area.<sup>10</sup>
- a more visible presence by police so that outsiders feel safer
- fewer hookers
- more encouragement and help for our most vulnerable citizens
- more activities for youth would attract people to the area
- young people have more time to do things than older people who are always busy. Develop the village for them. If they start coming, they'll keep coming as adults.
- a seniors' center with Bingo etc.
- Make things CLEANER in and around the stores. People go to Walmart in part because it is sterile. They know its not a front for drugs.
- Do something about the johns. (Constable Hicks said this community isn't ready for what some other communities have done, namely, recording the license plates of the johns and publishing them in the paper.)<sup>11</sup>
- more unique shops and better promotion of them
- landlords who screen their tenants carefully
- positive media attention
- more police near homeless shelters
- more counselors for mental health clients
- zoning changes to keep strip clubs away from residential areas
- more appealing playgrounds
- restaurants
- improved information re: library
- more happening at Western Fair and a closer link with this community
- (Youth perceive Western Fair as a once-a-year event)
- use the Fair to promote the area

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<sup>10</sup> This idea has been done in other communities to great success. In Chemainus, BC, colourful murals throughout the shopping area detail the history of the area: native peoples, logging, fishing, etc. They are a popular tourist attraction on Vancouver Island.

<sup>11</sup> This was very successful in the Norwood community in Edmonton as community members said "No More!" The police and paper cooperated and they got rid of the johns from their neighborhood.

- make the Imax cheaper and advertise it better
- have festivals here, in our community

**3. What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

N.A.<sup>12</sup>

**4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

N.A.

**5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?**

- leadership
- common interests
- pride
- money
- time

**6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

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<sup>12</sup> The students were only able to be with us this afternoon for about two hours.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 9: Sunday afternoon, Centennial United Church, May 26th.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- this church!
- friendliness
- memories
- people know each other!
- history
- architecture
- central to the rest of London
- Western Fair (positive and negative)
- LIHC
- optimism
- 4 bus lines go by the church
- sidewalks are often full of people
- wide diversity of people
- unpretentiousness
- where real people live
- the potential
- young people enjoy the Embassy Hotel and the bands they bring in
- Palace Theatre
- Tony's Pizza-the first pizza parlour in London (a member of the church works there)
- Aeolian hall (was originally the Old East London Town Hall and Fire Hall)

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- a seniors high-rise building on lot behind Banting House
- safe routes for cyclists
- a really good grocery store
- more affordable rental housing
- City Centre Mall open--good place for grocery store, maybe also a mix of housing, offices, and shops
- Queen Ave made a neighborhood street with 2-way traffic
- a nicer image for corner stores
- flower pots
- security behind the Palace when it's in use
- Trillium Awards for renovating older houses--an incentive to do renovations

- awards for renovating store fronts
- a good clothing store like Hudson's was
- repertory movie theatre
- grants to attract younger people in the area to renovate their homes<sup>13</sup>
- "I wish more people knew what was available"
- no more destroying heritage homes to make parking lots!!
- a good park for youth to play ball
- more green space: trees, flowers, grass
- a skateboard park
- drop-in center for teens
- improvement in attitude by City Hall and media towards E. London: stop using the term East of Adelaide---it's derogatory
- leave Dundas in a straight line
- improved appearance and safety has to be a priority if we are to attract people in from other parts of the City
- free parking on Fridays and Saturdays<sup>14</sup>
- approach Western Fair to offer free parking when fair isn't on (lots are prepaid so coupons won't work)
- a seniors' center
- outdoor market in summer
- street cafes, awnings, ambiance, fruit and flowers for sale on the street
- bakery like Chapman's
- a drycleaners
- a bookstore
- a boutique
- people need to know where parking is for shops. How about some green P signs like Toronto has for public parking?
- cleaner air, more trees
- replace old trees that are coming down (City Hall will do this on request but many people don't want them because of problems with sewer lines and costs of repairs. One couple said they had spent \$15,000 over the past 15 years (A subsidy is available to replace the old clay sewers. The Homeowner pays \$500 and the city pays \$14,500)
- more family doctors in the area who are willing to take new patients
- walk-in clinic in area
- Aeolian organization becoming fruitful
- Keep the tracker organ in Aeolian hall
- Could Lac Mac(sp?) Parking lot be used for performances? (Aeolian Board member said this wasn't needed, that there was already ample parking for the Aeolian Hall.)

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<sup>13</sup> The City has loans available interest free for façade improvement and fire barriers to separate residences from businesses. Available by application, first come, first serve out of a limited pot of money.

<sup>14</sup> This is do-able in that several of the lots are City-owned.

- street festivals to entice people into the community
- a rent bank where tenants can go for interest-free loans when they fall behind in their rent, as in Toronto
- get rid of Hudson's sign at Adelaide and Dundas (someone explained that Ms. Hudson refuses to have the sign removed or moved to another location as a memorial.)
- an ongoing publication for Old East London Village, in which organizations in the area can stay in communication with the community about what is going on
- get realtors to stop using e.o.a. as a term
- cultural events to draw people in from the rest of London. This is London's best kept secret.
- an old-fashioned ice-cream park with real London ice-cream
- promotion of the good things here
- Western Fair needs to take responsibility for being part of THIS community
- more sheltered bus stops
- a bowling alley for the teens
- a community center (this is the only area in the whole city without a community center. There is an awareness at Parks and Recreation that this is a problem.
- more bicycle parking.
- simple visual attractions like petunia planters
- better lighting
- bringing our internal community together so that we present a clear, solid front to the rest of London
- focus on the children. They are our future.
- churches that open their space to regular coffee houses for youth
- a song celebrating East London
- increased police foot patrols--they've decreased in recent years along Lorne Ave., residents say

### 3. What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?

- Let's call them challenges, rather than obstacles; it sounds much more do-able.
- high commercial rents in some areas e.g. Western Fair which drove out Seniors Centre; the seniors had enjoyed free rent there.
- negative perceptions of area, including a lack of security
- no clear theme around which to build (there is a perception that successful turnarounds are always built around a theme which attracts people e.g. history, multiculturalism, or both; Banting House, Curling club, CCLC (Cross Cultural Learners' Ctr.), organ in Aeolian Hall is tracker organ-the model for the one in Massey hall in Toronto
- we need to form a meeting of the minds
- *feeling* unsafe

- internal stigma of living in this community: w need to learn to understand and accept all the members in our community. If we're unified, we have a solid front to offer others.
- The Rendezvous (a strip club and nasty bar in the old Park Hotel)
- state of the economy is a challenge. How do we attract investors? Baby steps won't do it. We need something dramatic that will make the risk worthwhile to get the momentum going
- money
- "Queen's Ave. Raceway" (cars go too fast on the one-way)
- lack of youth--we've lost some schools
- finding a way to embrace people in the community so that they feel at home in the church
- security issues--we have to keep our building locked during the week
- closing of London Psychiatric Hospital. Mental health issues create fear in this community
- the media's negative perception of East London
- realtors who refer to E.O.A.
- prostitutes on the street (church is the center of prostitutes hangout)
- drug-dealers in our parking lot
- lack of security cameras in area
- social inequality
- we need creative ways to reach children in the schools (churches are prohibited by law from approaching schools)

**4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

N.A. (This group left early)

**5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?** (This group interpreted this question as what will it take, and they came up with the following principles.)

common will	listening
love thy neighbor	respect
understanding	loyalty
pride of ownership	serve as well as lead
patience	commitment
perseverance	hope and faith
trust and trustworthiness	communication
responsibility	response-ability (compassion)
accountability	reconciliation
celebration	acknowledgment
risk	honesty

**6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

Old East London Village BIA

May, 2001

### **Session 10: Monday Morning, Centennial United Church, May 27th.**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- the history-a lot of people aren't aware of this. "Public history tends to cater to elites. There is also a strong working class history here."
- "History links the past and the present." History shows us the commonalities and continuity in community. If people can connect to the past, they realize it's important to connect to a group. "It's my roots. It's where I come from."
- a community of workers and immigrants
- "The openness of this community helps me to respond emotionally and gives me a sense of belonging."
- resilience! This community survives and continually strives for self-improvement
- "I left for 13 years and came back. I feel like I can be myself here and I have friends who feel this way also. There's an openness to doing new things. We're not afraid to try new things."
- potential
- the way people support each other
- There is a culture here perceived to be different from other areas.
- Lorne Ave. School--people support each other there. That's what makes it so unique: community health, Cooking for Kids, Green Club, etc. Everyone supports what happens in the school and the school responds in kind to the community.
- commitment from volunteers
- diversity, eclectic atmosphere: stores, restaurants, shops, cultures
- Lorne Ave's "climate committee" to check out the feelings in the school. School pride assemblies, parent-teacher committee. Everyone feels included. We need this at the community level too.

#### **2. When you close your eyes and imagine the best this community could possibly become, what do you envision?**

- an oasis. Western Fair does a contest each year to recognize improvements. The prize is \$1,000 in landscaping.
- more green space for families and seniors to go, sit and feel safe, preferably closer to Adelaide.
- space made available for diverse groups to show their stuff, like Gathering in the Green in Wortley Village
- maybe a street fair on Dundas; it's been done before.

- open Lorne Ave. School playground on the weekend for such an event.
- a forum or community council to ensure arts, schools, business and residents pull together to plan activities and address concerns. This ensures a strong voice to represent concerns, influence voters
- make use of the core of people who've already turned out to support this process
- inclusion: when people want to be involved, there is a growing circle to allow them to be so
- a coming together of groups who are already working to revitalize some part of this community
- a paid coordinator position to keep things going
- more people moving into area, not just working and studying here
- filling up empty storefronts with boutiques
- a bakery like Chapmans'
- more people living here will mean more services willing to come
- a grocery store like Valdi's
- something to replace Shop-Wise (a store like Biway)
- beautification of Dundas with flower pots and people to water them
- more light, maybe special lights with hanging planters
- banners, designed for East London
- historical banners that tell a story
- decorated fire hydrants--it becomes a tourist attraction
- multicultural folk dances
- heritage walks organized at certain times of the year
- markers for historical places, people, events, pictures of former state of buildings
- a ghost walk at Halloween--London has lots of ghosts
- posters designed by kids: what they like in London East
- a safety plan created in consultation with the police. Extra support is needed.
- a neighborhood walk to take back the night in E. London: Seniors in runners with Old East London on their sweats.
- storekeepers dressing in period clothing for a heritage festival

### 3. **What obstacles need to be overcome in order to realize this vision?**

- People don't know all the services available here and so aren't using ones they need e.g. grants, facilities, prizes available
- we are divided. We need to learn to speak with one voice and be one community with diverse parts
- lack of funding--how about a big community garage sale? We can raise our own money
- current lack of coordination of initiatives
- lack of a theme to integrate our image and activities
- negative perception outside the community
- we could have a yard sale at the school to raise money for the community
- negative outside image eats away at self-perception of good organizations here such as Forest City Gallery, LCP, Curling Club, etc.

- we need to develop a very clear image of who we are, here in this community, not as a subset of London
- recognize what's popular in the area e.g. Aeolian Hall will try a Grand Ole Opry to celebrate the popularity of country music here.
- The empty storefronts---we need to connect with the owners.

**4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to this task?**

Inge: research, writing, public displays, delegation, not afraid to go after funding, persistent

Cynthia: positive attitude, drag-racing champion, try to change image, Beal arts grad., visual arts, interested in design

Martha: lunches, sandwiches

Jean: nutrition, helping hands

Carmen: gardening, baking

Ann: commitment, flexibility, organization, LIHC and diversity

Johann: networking, infectious enthusiasm, imagination

**5. What do you need in order to use your strengths?**

N.A.

**6. Who are our allies in this process?**

N.A.

## **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

**Session 11:<sup>15</sup> Monday Afternoon, Centennial United Church, May 28th.**

### **1. What do you Love about this Community?**

- Architecture/heritage
- Hub of the city-center
- Home town feeling – down to earth people
- Good size buildings (no high-rises)
- Good transportation (city bus's)
- Geography – central to the rest of London
- Choice restaurants
- Diversity – agriculture
- Unique buildings
- Community involvement/commitment
- Deep roots/people
- Lots of gathering places

### **2. What do you envision for this community?**

- Gardens/green space
- Fill in store fronts
- Turn the Dundas corridor into a village
- More police presence
- Hardware store
- Market space
- Street festivals
- More residences (convert empty buildings into housing)
- Left turn on Queens Ave to Marshall St.
- Two-way traffic on Queens Ave
- Unique businesses
- More colourful / building colours
- Western Fair to share parking spaces
- Festivals/heritage celebrations.
- Rooftop gardens
- Positive identity
- Bigger street signs to make it easier to find your way around
- Greater business co-operation

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<sup>15</sup> Focus Groups 11 and 12 were facilitated and written up by Mike Driscoll, Consultant, from Guelph, Ontario.

### **3. What do you see as the obstacles the community must overcome?**

- Negative perceptions of the area
- Lack of traffic/volume (how do we get people to stop and shop?)
- Perception of safety
- Low local re-investment
- Parking costs
- Accessibility
- Lack of response from City Hall transportation department regarding traffic issues in the area
- Funding is hard to get
- Expensive
- Red Light district (sex-trade issues)
- Lack of unified vision
- Lack of local governance
- Lack of appreciation and knowledge of the area's gifts
- Absentee property owners

### **4. What strengths do you as individuals bring to the task?**

Brian Vaughn:

- Vision

Bill Carter:

- Vision, mentor, business experience and good listening skills

Nina Kappos:

- Community commitment, gardening and baking skills

Ted Zurbigg:

- Problem solving and passion

Mary Jane Murray:

- Real estate license and small business experience

Anne Eadie:

- Media relations and Western Fair facilities and people skills

Donna Currie:

- Interior design

Phil Singeris:

- Community voice, passion and leadership skills

Grant:

- Heritage building experience, huge mailing list info

Mike:

- Historical experience (story telling)

Ivan Korotvickova

- Skills and experience in working with people

Phil:

- Writing

Gary Matt:

- Power of example

Sister Marcelline:

- Get the job done and skills with working with people

John:

- Conflict resolution, communications, computers and landscaping experience

Paul Dettollander:

- Program planning and facilitation skills

Libbey:

- Writing, tenacity, research skills and mediation

Lee-Al:

- Computing, Optimistic and details

Shelly Happy:

- Experience in working with children
- Video production and connection to networks

## **5. What do you need to use your skills!**

- Leadership/champion, coordination
- Money
- Strong voice with government
- ownership of plan/process
- To be proud
- Political support
- Community support/engagement
- Gathering places
- Institutions must become part of the solution
- Enlightened media
- Re-define words around neighbourhoods
- Values/principles

- Accountability
- Commitment/conviction
- Respect
- Enthusiasm
- Integrity – real
- Pride
- Hope
- Open communication
- Thoughtfulness
- Value each other
- Prayer
- Giving/accommodating
- Ecumenism

### **Creating Our Heart's Desire: FOCUS GROUPS**

**Session 12: Monday evening, May 28, 6:30 pm - 9:30 pm, Centennial United Church**

#### **1. What do you love about this community?**

- the people
- That there is a library in the neighborhood
- the Western Fair
- Children playing in the streets
- There is a good sense of community with people sitting on porches saying hello and giving positive feedback
- Beautiful streets
- Great restaurants
- Nice homes
- Old and interesting buildings
- There is everything I need in the neighborhood and I don't need to go outside of the neighborhood to shop.
- The area has great potential
- The diversity
- Housing is affordable
- It is conveniently located in the city
- There is good access to transportation, good bus routes
- Partnerships are built, in particular, with Lorne Ave Public School

- There are many people with character and personality
- People are friendly and will say hello to you on the street and in the stores
- There is a mix of businesses and they are not cookie-cutter mall-type stores.
- There are micro communities within the community.

## **2. What do you envision for this community?**

- Trees and plants
- Outdoor markets and cafes
- Craft stores where artisans can do their work and sell it.
- Retirement housing complexes
- More youth activities
- Cooperative businesses
- Clean streets.
- Fresh paint on the store fronts, but not paint on the brickwork
- Responsible property owners who look after their buildings and responsible landlords.
- No drug houses
- Safe streets where people feel safe to walk
- No strip clubs
- A bakery
- No sex trade
- A police presence
- More play areas for children and adults
- Education and training opportunities
- Curfews
- A garden center
- Community gardens for growing vegetables
- Appropriate services and activities for all citizens
- A wellness center
- Tea houses
- Street festivals.
- A village center more centrally located than the Tolpuddle building's community room, for gatherings and activities
- Affordable housing that is healthy.
- Banks where people can do business so they won't have to take a cab downtown.
- Pedestrian shopping
- More businesses
- Hardware store
- Coffee house
- Accessibility for the disabled for buildings and public pay phones
- More lighting
- More support for vulnerable people so that they can become a part of the community

- Affordable childcare.

### **3. What do you see as the obstacles to overcome?**

- Taxes are too high
- Poor lighting makes dark alleys and streets and people do not feel safe.
- Many properties are rental properties, leading to a transient population
- Irresponsible property owners
- Bikers
- Poor police response; for example, the principal of Lorne Ave Public School said that the police take two hours to respond to a call from the school.
- It is not bicycle friendly
- There is a concentration of social service agencies in the area, drawing significant numbers of people who use them to the area.
- There is a fear of people we don't appreciate or don't understand.
- There are not opportunities for people to contribute: work, volunteer, start a business, be creative.
- There is a lack of support for young families who need, for example, effective parenting skills, and relief from single-parent duties.

### **4. What are our strengths?**

Diana Goodwin

– Ties to a kids' band, and adult bands; access to building community partnerships through her role as principal at Lorne Ave Public School.

School Teachers from Lorne Ave Public School

– ties to the community and will support what we need to do.

Mary Williamson:

– can write funding proposals.

Mary Ann:

– Time and energy, gardening and clean up.

Jessica:

– can volunteer time, energy, support. Do garbage clean up either weekly or bi-weekly; can plant and paint

Jackie – has connections to farmers

Eila:

– Media relations and contacts.

Harvey:

– can mentor relationships among multicultural interests and can give advice on how the community can tie interests together, especially in creating connections between newcomers to Canada and to businesses, and property owners who want to rent space, and in creating a multicultural festival in the neighborhood.

Carmen:

– attended a previous group and passed on saying her strength this time.

Dave:

– can offer interface of our plans with planning expertise; he has family connections to the police and said that he might be able to find out who we need to talk to; he can also do research to city hall.

John:

– can give time and is a planning student

Frances and Fanny: can work as a team and have many contacts. Fanny has experience with Heritage Canada. Paula can help out new businesses.

Mary:

– had neighbourhood contacts and knowledge; she can offer trucks for cleanup

Frank:

- has community experience and non-profit experience

Mary:

– can facilitate coordination with multicultural activities and make new business referrals.

Libbey:

- is a word smith and has wide experience walking and knowing the streets in the neighborhood.

This group did not have time to address the remaining agenda items.

## **Appendix 2**

The following was an ad hoc focus group done by a staff member of the LIHC with a group in the Homeless Drop-In Centre:

### **Opinion Group May 15, 2002**

Present: Tom, Denise, Doug, Tim, John, Alfred

Tom explained Old East Village Transition and Revitalization Study Focus Groups. He gave information to people who were intended in attending focus groups.

Following are a sampling of quotations, themes, and ideas that came up in the discussion:

“We need more colour. It looks dark. There are too many boarded up buildings. We need things like flowers pots and paint. When you’re walking down the street, you want to feel proud of it.”

“We see a lot of drugs and prostitution. We need that cleaned up. No one’s going to want to live where a prostitute works. This is a boulevard for homeless people. There’s nothing wrong with homeless people, but if we want to clean it up, we need to not have all these services here.”

“People are afraid to walk along Dundas Street at night”

“We have no security ...except each other. No one else will protect us.”

“There are too many slumlords that ignore the Landlord-Tenant Act.”

“The Rights and Freedoms of the people must be protected by the government, and they aren’t.”

“There should be no law against being homeless.”

“Dundas is no more dangerous than any part of London.”

“There’s nothing but Coffee shops downtown. At least Dundas St. has some variety.”

“We need to get some middle-class people in this neighbourhood to support the businesses.”

### **Appendix 3: Written submission by Revington group**

Madam Chairman and friends of East of Adelaide or as I like to call it East London

What we are trying to do – we think – is to give the area a bit of sparkle; get the vacant stores rented or sold to caring, responsible landlords or entrepreneurs – fix up the street and cleanup the facades of the old buildings; this means getting interested, innovative, visionary people involved.

As you may gather, we are zeroing in on the retail, wholesale business as well as small and large industry. From what we can see the residential areas are already on the move with new young families settling in the area.

We feel that too much valuable time is spent on how to clean up prostitution and drug trade. These trades will eventually be squeezed out by a new populace and they will move on.

It is our belief that any monies available for heritage or promotion be directed for the purpose of attracting more business to East London. We would hope that a lot of time and money not to be spent seeking a solution to the problem from outsiders.

Firstly, we suggest that someone e.g. /s students or one of the present staff of the BIA carry out a demographic of East London. Count the number of different cultures in our area and/or in the city, and of course include representatives from all provinces. A list of vacant store owners should also be noted. Somehow these parties should be introduced – store owners and interested entrepreneurs. On their behalf we could approach the city for any available financial help e.g. reduction of real estate and business tax. Get these people involved and interested in settling in East London.

Secondly, we are suggesting that immediate action in the form of an AUTHENTIC MULTI-CULTURAL FESTIVAL be held as soon as possible, preferably by the end of August this year.

On the morning of the chosen date both the “vacant” property owners, multi-cultural representatives and provincial groups could tour East London by rented bus – afterwards meet for discussion.

We should approach Western Fair people and with their help and permission “Rental” tents could be setup in their green areas (outside). Each of the participating cultures could display their dance and costume and sell their food – “ADMISSION FREE”.

We know this idea is not new but at least we know it has been tried successfully in other cities. It brings people together without featuring “booze” and long distance travel.

We think that with the help of volunteers, TV, radio, the press businesses and the City – we can make it happen.

And don't forget to promote our heritage – buildings and history – at the same time.

Not so far out – we should raise money to purchase Aeolian Hall – an ideal meeting place for East London, as well as a venue to continue the very popular orchestral concert.

Harvey Revington - GOOD STUFF & ANTIQUES  
872 Dundas St. East London