CHAPTER 06

City Hall that works with business

Clear answers from City Hall, usable access during construction and a fair chance to compete.

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London, Ontario · October 19, 2026

This is the plan I'll bring to City Hall. Putting it into action means securing Council decisions, detailed costs and agreements with the people delivering it. I'll report what gets funded, what moves ahead and what has to change.

06 / City Hall that works with business

I'll improve the business help London already offers, set useful service standards and make access to shops and workplaces part of construction planning.

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Make City Hall easier to deal with

Opening a shop can mean paying rent while you're still waiting for an answer about the space. Expanding a workshop can leave a hiring decision hanging until an approval comes through. Owners need to know what's required, how long a step usually takes and who can help when something stalls. I'll focus on those everyday dealings with City Hall, alongside the infrastructure and public spaces businesses rely on.

London already has a Service London Business Hub, a business checklist, economic development partners and a Small Business Centre with advice and training. [1][2][3] I'll ask how well the connections between them work from an owner's point of view. Someone should get an understandable answer and reach the right person without explaining the same situation over and over. The staff and tools already doing that work give us a place to start improving it.

Council endorsed London: The Centre of Opportunity, the 2026 to 2030 economic development strategy, on June 23, 2026. Implementation is underway and annual reporting is planned. [4] I'll work through that framework and connect priorities to the budget. If I think something needs changing, I'll bring the proposal forward publicly. Existing partners and businesses have already put time into London's direction, and the next steps should recognise that work.

Help people find the right person

I'll ask staff and partners to walk through common business tasks: choosing premises, checking zoning, getting licences and approvals, renovating and opening. Where are we asking for the same information twice? Where are instructions confusing? Where does nobody seem responsible for the next step? The review should include small firms, businesses run from home and owners less familiar with municipal processes, alongside established employers who deal with City Hall often.

I want a clear municipal contact and an agreed way to refer people to partners offering advice. That person should help navigate the process and explain decisions. If a use isn't permitted, an early explanation of the issue and available options helps an owner avoid wasted spending. Professional reviews and approvals still follow their proper process. Human help and accessible information need to stay available alongside online services, especially when a situation doesn't fit a form.

I'll seek response and processing standards based on measured starting figures. An acknowledgement, a useful answer and an approval should each be reported for what they are. Separate files waiting on the applicant from files waiting on the City, and distinguish application types. That gives residents a fairer picture of delays and gives staff a way to identify problems that keep coming up. The standards need to help people understand the next step.

Cut down on avoidable back and forth

Clear checklists, earlier advice and coordinated reviews can prevent late redesigns while protecting safety, accessibility and the environment. When departments ask for conflicting things, the City should resolve it and explain the final requirement. If a rule is unnecessary or disproportionate, Council can consider changing it through the proper process. Applicants should be able to expect the same rules and explanations regardless of who they know.

I'll seek public reporting on question response times, processing of complete applications, the age of open cases and common reasons for repeat work. Confidential business information needs protection. Staff should explain which steps the City controls and which wait on outside approvals. Difficult applications need attention too. A target that pushes staff toward easy files would give us a flattering number while leaving the most stuck owners in the same position.

Before buying technology, I'll ask whether we understand the process we're trying to fix. Any proposed system needs training, maintenance, a responsible service owner and a business case covering staff and applicants. Some problems can be solved with better instructions or a meeting between departments. Those improvements should move ahead as capacity allows. An owner waiting to open needs a useful answer, and that may be a pretty small fix on our side.

Plan for businesses to keep trading

Road and utility repairs can be necessary and still put a huge strain on nearby businesses. I'll seek business access planning within major City projects on commercial streets. Before planned disruption starts, teams should consider walking routes, temporary stops, deliveries, accessible entrances, waste pickup and parking. Owners and business improvement areas can point out details a drawing misses, including delivery times and entrances customers with mobility devices depend on.

A named contact and current access map give owners something to share with customers and staff. Notices should explain the next change, alongside the final expected completion date. Contractors and City staff need a way to escalate problems and update signs as the site changes. Underground conditions and emergencies may force revisions. When they do, businesses should get the new arrangement as soon as practical, with an explanation they can pass along.

I'll ask for access costs in project estimates, coordination with other owners and reporting on whether identified problems were resolved. Any proposed compensation or relief program needs legal advice, eligibility rules, money and a fair way to assess losses. That's a separate decision to bring into public view. Meanwhile, better access planning can deal with problems we already know businesses will face. Keeping a doorway reachable is a basic part of delivering the job.

Give smaller suppliers a fair chance

London's procurement policy calls for fair processes, value and compliance with trade agreements. It also addresses sustainable purchasing and opportunities for small and diverse suppliers within those requirements. [5] I'll support practical supplier guidance and a review of barriers we can reasonably remove. Procurement staff need to run the competitions and awards fairly. Local firms deserve a clear way to compete under the rules that apply to City work.

The review should ask whether insurance and other requirements fit the contract's real risk, whether opportunities are easy to find and whether large bundles shut out capable smaller suppliers unnecessarily. Separating work can improve competition in some cases and add cost or complicate accountability in others. Staff need to weigh those effects. All bidders should have the same important information, with evaluation criteria clear before bids go in.

I'll ask for results beyond the number of training events held. How many responsive bids came in? Are new suppliers competing? How did the contracts perform, and did administration costs change?

Guidance should explain safety, insurance, invoicing and bidding requirements, including that attendance doesn't guarantee work. Businesses put time into preparing a bid. The City should make the opportunity understandable and be able to explain how the decision was reached.

Be clear about what business support delivers

I'll bring employers, institutions, development organisations and other governments together to identify municipal barriers, coordinate infrastructure and work on the adopted strategy. Investment reporting should distinguish discussions, announcements and work actually underway. Private hiring also reflects market conditions and decisions outside City Hall. The City needs to show its own contribution honestly, with enough detail for residents to judge the public benefit.

Any incentive needs a lawful basis, public criteria, an identified cost and a reason to believe it would help achieve something unlikely to happen otherwise. I'll seek measurable conditions, reporting and protection if the agreement isn't met. We also need to consider fairness to existing firms investing without special help. That comparison belongs in the decision, along with the proposed jobs or investment.

In the first 100 days, I'll seek the service baseline and meet existing partners about immediate improvements. In year one, I'll bring standards, construction access requirements and procurement outreach changes to the responsible decision makers, with costs shown. Through the term, results should sit alongside the economic strategy's annual reporting. I'll use business feedback and the figures together to see where the process still needs work. Owners should be able to see follow through on the concerns they raised.

What I'll bring forward

01 / Make existing business help easier to use

I'll review the Business Hub and partner referrals, clarify who's responsible and seek response standards for business questions and municipal applications.

Who can act: The mayor brings people together and proposes priorities. Administration manages services and Council approves resources and policy changes.

How we'll pay for it: Start with existing Business Hub and partner capacity. Extra staff or technology needs a business case.

What we'll check: Publish starting figures and standards for responses, application times, repeat work and unresolved cases by application type.

What could get in the way: A reply to a question and a permit approval take different work. Report statutory reviews and incomplete applications separately.

02 / Keep businesses reachable during construction

I'll seek access and communication plans for major City projects on commercial streets, with a named contact and current delivery, walking, transit and parking information.

Who can act: The City controls its projects and contracts. Utilities and other owners need to agree to coordination, and businesses help identify access needs.

How we'll pay for it: Include eligible access and communication costs in estimates. Any relief program needs its own lawful, funded decision.

What we'll check: Publish plans before scheduled disruption where practical. Report update times, access problems resolved and business feedback.

What could get in the way: Emergencies and site conditions can change access. Relief and compensation require separate decisions about eligibility and funding.

03 / Help small suppliers bid for City work

I'll seek supplier guidance and a review of avoidable barriers, including disproportionate requirements and work bundled into unnecessarily large contracts.

Who can act: Council sets policy and procurement staff run fair competitions under policy and trade obligations. The mayor advocates and oversees results while staff handle awards.

How we'll pay for it: Use existing outreach where possible. Cost administrative changes and check their effect on total contract value.

What we'll check: Track supplier participation, responsive bids, competition, contract results and the cost of changes.

What could get in the way: Smaller contracts can add administration or lose bulk savings. Check legal requirements and value before changing the approach.

When I'll bring it forward

First 100 days

Review the Business Hub and partner referrals, establish application and response baselines and identify immediate communication fixes.

Year one

Seek approval for practical service standards, business access requirements on major projects and procurement guidance improvements, with costs and responsibilities published.

Years two to four

Report service results and economic strategy progress annually, adjust processes using evidence and assess the full public cost of incentives.

Sources and notes

Source numbers refer to this chapter. Publication and access dates are listed below, with notes on what each source tells us. Programs and rules can change, so check the linked source for current details.

1. **Business licences**
City of London · Undated; accessed October 2026
Accessed 18 October 2026. Provides existing licensing information and the Business Hub contact.
Read source

2. **My Checklist**
Service London Business · Undated; accessed October 2026
Accessed 18 October 2026. The existing startup checklist links municipal, provincial and federal requirements and advice.
Read source

3. **Economic development**
City of London · Undated; accessed October 2026
Accessed 18 October 2026. Describes partners including the Small Business Centre, LEDC, TechAlliance and the Chamber.
Read source

4. **London: The Centre of Opportunity**
City of London · 7 August 2026
Accessed 18 October 2026. Records June 23, 2026 endorsement of the economic strategy for 2026 to 2030, with implementation and annual reporting arrangements.
Read source

5. **Procurement of Goods and Services Policy**
City of London · 1 October 2025 revision
Accessed 18 October 2026. Sets competition, trade agreement and sustainable purchasing requirements. Changes must follow current law and policy.
Read source