

St. Thomas 2051

Setting the Track for Our Future

ST. THOMAS
THE RAILWAY CITY

Land Acknowledgement

The City of St. Thomas respectfully acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Attawandaron (Neutral) Peoples, whose longstanding relationships with this land continue to this day. We recognize the enduring presence, knowledge, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples and honour the treaties and agreements that continue to shape this region, including the nearby treaty lands of the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee-Delaware Nation.

We acknowledge our shared responsibility to care for the land, water, and natural environment, and we are committed to fostering respectful relationships, reconciliation, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities as we work together toward a more inclusive and sustainable future.

Introduction and Agenda

Agenda

- St. Thomas 2051 – Setting the Track for our Future
- Where are we going?
- How do we get there?
- Next steps and continued engagement
- Workshop Activities





St. Thomas 2051

Setting the Track for Our Future

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Setting the Track for our Future

"St. Thomas 2051 – Setting the Track for our Future" is the City's initiative to update its Official Plan to establish its long-term vision for growth and development, employment and economic opportunities, environmental protection and open space opportunities, planning for infrastructure and community facilities, and overall community-building.

The new Official Plan will be "Setting the Track for our Future", and the process represents an opportunity for residents, businesses, community organizations, and partners to think about how we live, how we move, how we grow, what makes St. Thomas unique, and how we can create a vibrant, resilient, and sustainable future together.



What is an Official Plan?

- Establishes a Long-Term Community Vision
- Guides Land Use and Development
- Provides the Policy Basis for Decision-Making
- Implements Provincial Policy
- Protects Environmental and Natural Systems
- Coordinates Infrastructure and Growth
- Supports Economic Development and Housing
- Creates Predictability and Transparency
- Encourages Public Participation
- Serves as a Legal and Strategic Framework

Why do we need an update?

- The structure and framework of the Official Plan is 45+ years old.
- There have been dozens of provincial legislative and policy updates since the Official Plan was originally approved.
- The Province requires municipalities to update their Official Plans every 10-years.
- The St. Thomas of 1980 is a lot different from the city of today or what's anticipated in 2051.
- City-wide studies have been completed that identify needed change.
- Engagement with the community to confirm the needed Official Plan changes and establish a clear vision and guiding principles as a basis for further review and update.











Recent Provincial Changes

Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026 received Third Reading on May 15, 2026 *(pending Royal Assent)*. Several major changes were introduced through this legislation that will impact the City's Official Plan update and the direction that the City is able to provide within its policies.

Official Plans have historically been tailored to local circumstances and context, however, as per Bill 98, *"An official plan must contain the chapters, sections and schedules, and use only the land use designations, described in Schedule 1".*

To create consistency across the Province on matters of land use planning, the structure and land use designations have now been prescribed for all municipalities to implement in their Official Plans.

Required New Official Plan Structure – Table of Contents

Chapter 1 - Introduction and How to Use this Plan

Chapter 2 - Strategic Planning Framework

Chapter 3 - Indigenous Engagement

Chapter 4 - Settlement Area Structure and Growth Needs and Management

Chapter 5 - Residential and Mixed Uses

Chapter 6 - Economy and Employment Areas

Chapter 7 - Rural Areas and Agricultural System

Chapter 8 - Infrastructure, Facilities and Community Services

Chapter 9 - Local Landscape and Resource Management

Chapter 10 - Implementation and Interpretation

Chapter 11 - Schedules

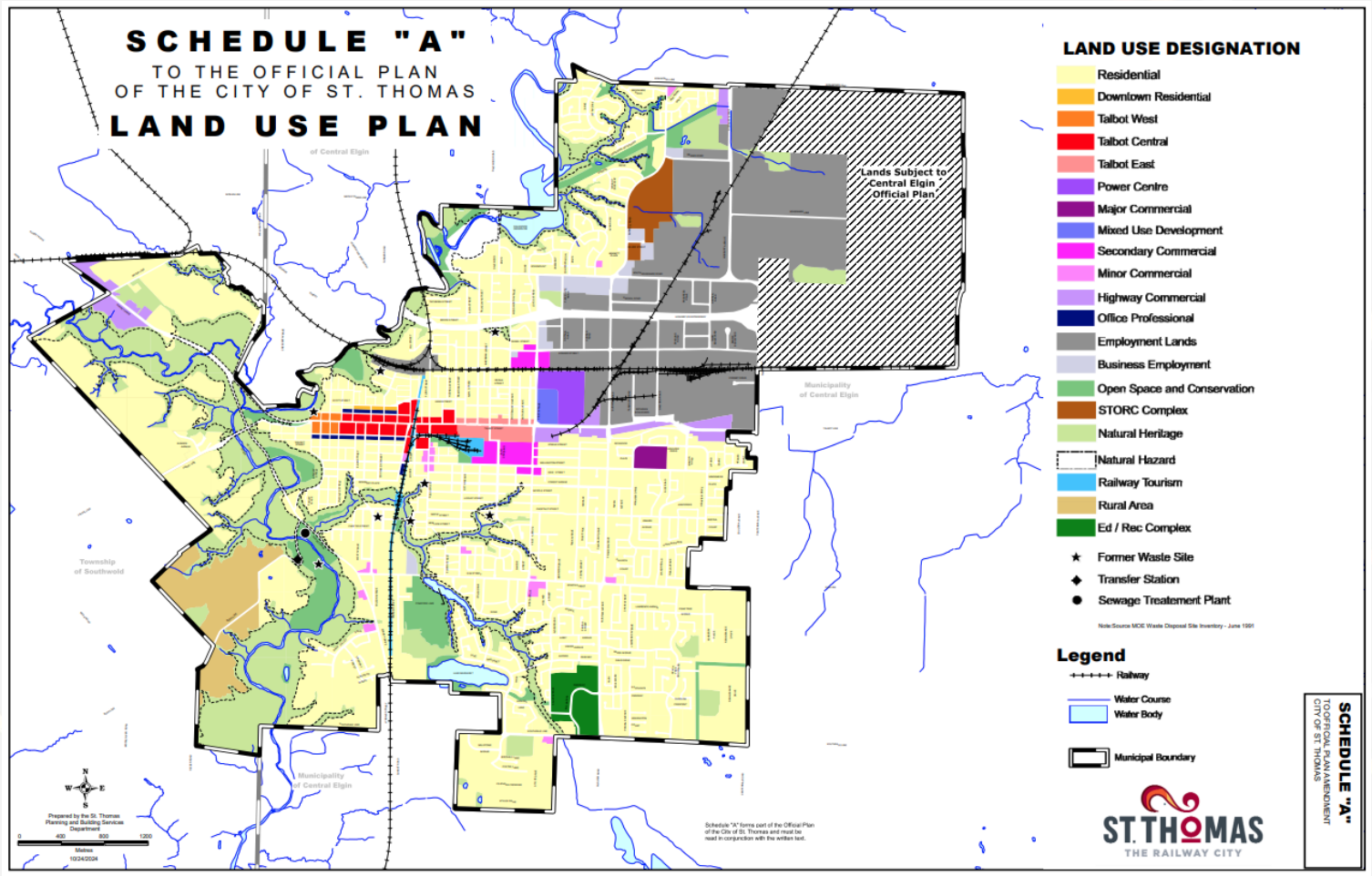
Required New Official Plan Structure – Land Use Designations

Existing Designations (21)

- Twenty-one designations based on geographical location and historical context.
- A lot of overlap between designations.

Required Designations (12)

- Neighbourhoods
- Mixed Use Areas
- Mixed Use Commercial Areas
- Employment Areas
- Major Facilities
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Natural Environment and Water Resource Areas
- Resource Areas
- Rural Lands
- Prime Agricultural Areas
- Specialty Crop Areas
- Shoreline Areas

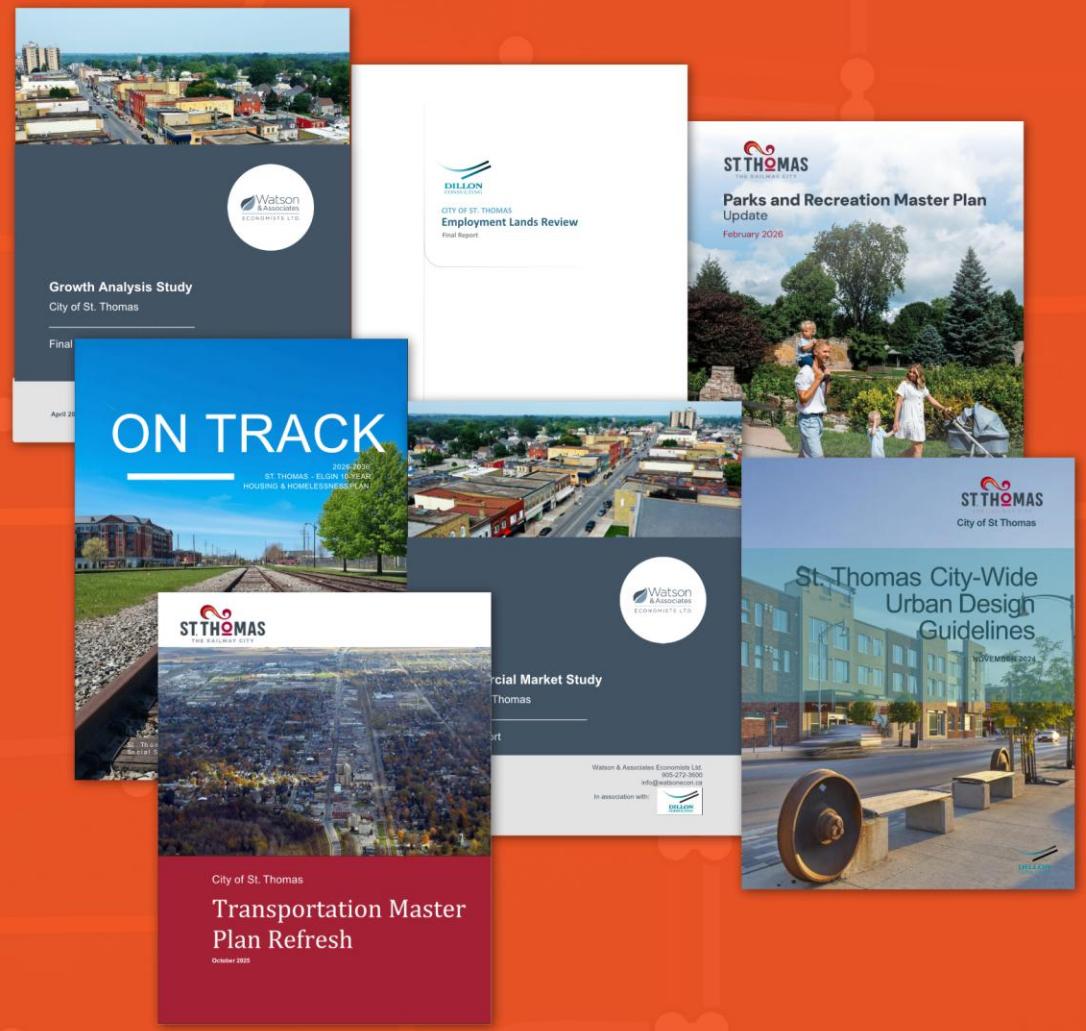


Where are we going?

Where are we going?

The City has completed, or is in the process of completing, several studies to assess its current and future needs, current deficiencies and what should be addressed in the near and long-term, and where potential opportunities for the City are.

- Commercial Market Study
- Growth Analysis Study *(including population, housing and employment forecasts)*
- Residential Land Needs Study *(in process)*
- Employment Lands Review
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan
- Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Transportation Master Plan
- Natural Heritage and Hazard Review *(pending)*



What the Studies Say

The City is growing at an unprecedented rate

- Population of 79,500 by 2051 vs. 44,000 in 2021 *(increase of 35,500 people)*
- 33,400 households by 2051 vs. 18,100 in 2021 *(increase of 15,300 households)*
- Employment of 38,600 by vs. 22,800 in 2024 *(increase of 15,800 employees)*

The population by age structure is changing and the people per housing unit is declining.

A shift in housing forecast toward medium and high-density driven largely by the aging of the population, however, the affordability gap continues to widen.

What the Studies Say

While housing supply has increased in recent years, market prices and rents remain out of reach for many low- to moderate-income households.

The average market price for ownership housing is $556,000 in St. Thomas ($324,000 is considered affordable).

The average rental market price is $1,530 per month in St. Thomas ($1,335 is considered affordable), with average listings now at $1,730 per month.

A forecasted housing breakdown of 55% low-density units, 19% medium-density units, and 26% high-density units to meet demand.









What the Studies Say

Expanded economic and employment opportunities in the City have made how and where people work more diverse but also created a need for employment lands.

Population growth have created a greater demand for new local commercial opportunities and the need to revitalize or increase the City's available commercial lands to accommodate those needs.

The City's destination parks and trails are extremely valued but there is great demand for a wider variety of affordable year-round recreational programs, a need for more facility spaces (e.g. aquatic centre, gyms, flex space, etc.), and improvements to existing facilities (indoor and outdoor).


RAILWAY CITY
FAMILY DENTAL
Booster Juice
COBS BREAD


NAPA AUTO PARTS

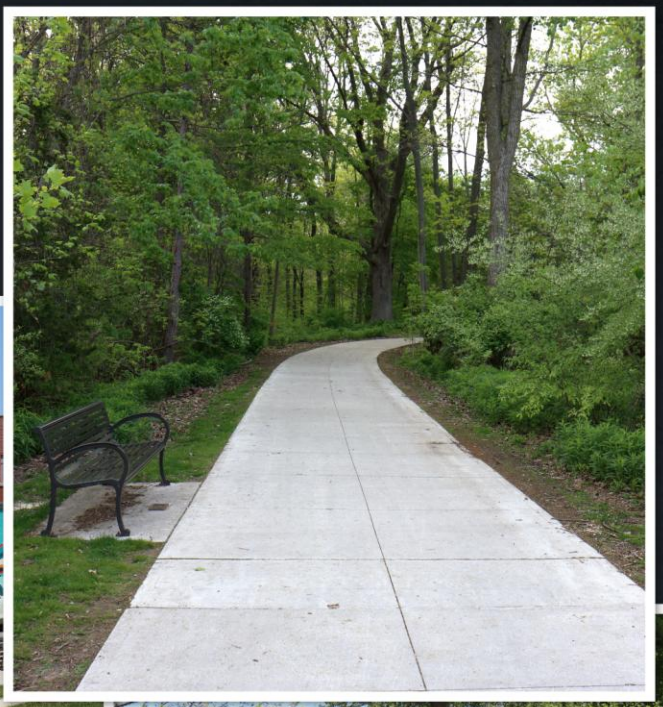

ELEMENT


RAGS FOR HOPE


WINNERS
PETSMART
Mark's

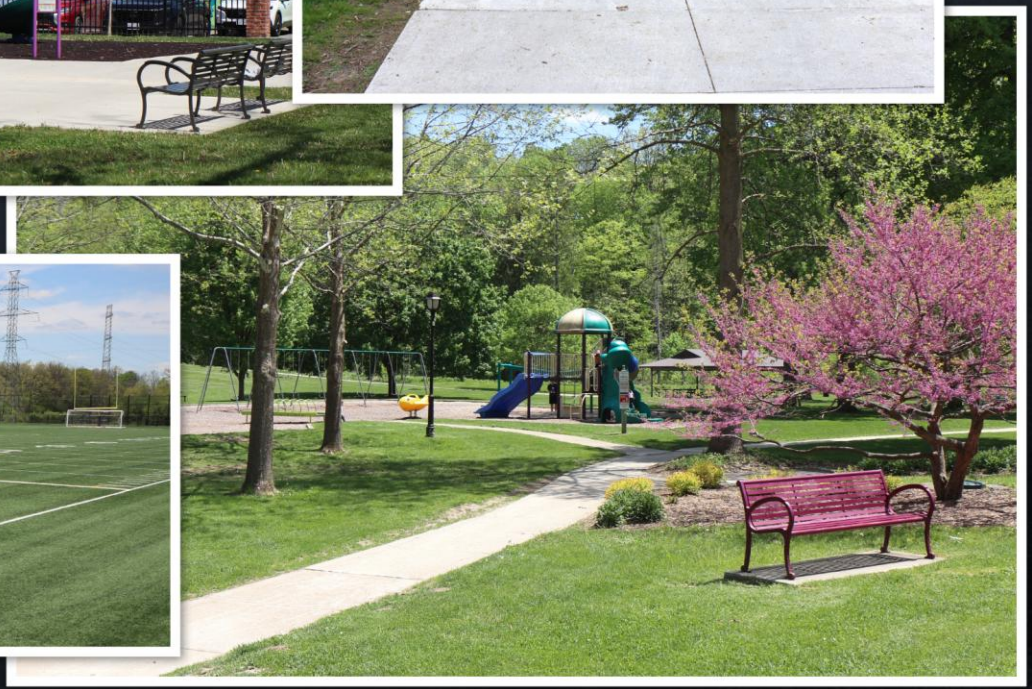

JOE THORNTON
COMMUNITY CENTRE











What the Studies Say

With the anticipated growth, there is a need to enhance the transit system in the community and to provide affordable alternatives that are accessible to all residents and provides choice in how they choose to travel.

There is a strong network of pedestrian and cycling routes separated from traffic is key to encouraging active and sustainable communities and the City should explore “rail to trail” opportunities as part of a connected network.

Opportunities to support future growth through updating of parking polices, managing transportation demand and embracing new technologies should be considered.

How do we get there?

We get there by…

Building on the studies and strategies that have been completed with comprehensive engagement with the people and businesses that call St. Thomas home today and in the future.

Establishing a solid foundation for the policy development and land use designations in the Official Plan by forming a clear vision, goals and objectives for what the City can become by 2051.

Continual community and stakeholder engagement throughout the process to ensure that the Official Plan is reflective of what the City and community needs, and establishes appropriate policies and direction to achieve its vision.

We are in Phase 1



Phase 1

Consultation and Engagement
Visioning and Identification of Issues
Presentation of findings to Council



Phase 2

Policy Development and Review
Creation of Draft Official Plan
Open House and Public/ Stakeholder Engagement



Phase 3

Final Official Plan Document
Review of Comments
Public Meeting and Adoption of Official Plan
Circulation to Province

Next steps and continued engagement

Next Steps in Phase 1

The City will be hosting three (3) community/stakeholder sessions on specific topic areas in the next few month. Session topics will include:

- Growth Management, Residential and Housing Affordability
- Economic Development, Commercial and Employment
- Natural Environment, Hazards and Public Open Space *(timing pending RFP process)*

Review and preparation of findings report, including draft visions, goals and objectives.

Phase 1 Report to Council Fall/Winter 2026

How to stay informed

Your voice and opinions are important to help shape the Official Plan.

To stay informed about future sessions that the City will be hosting, online surveys, and process updates, please visit www.stthomas.ca or submit questions/comments to planning@stthomas.ca.





Workshop Activities