

Railway Lands Area Master Plan

Phase 1: Context

Background and New Directions
Summary Document

July 2026

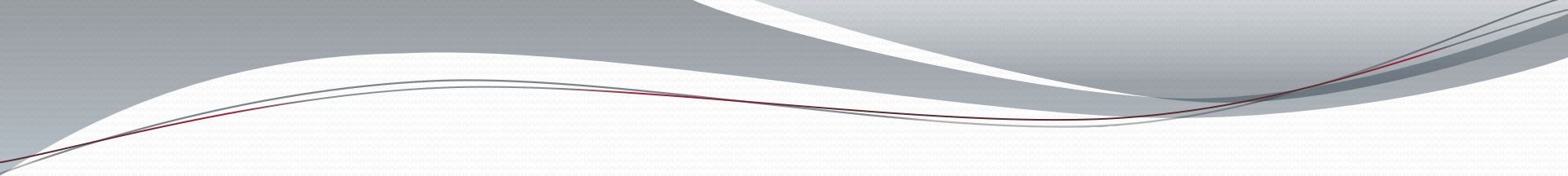


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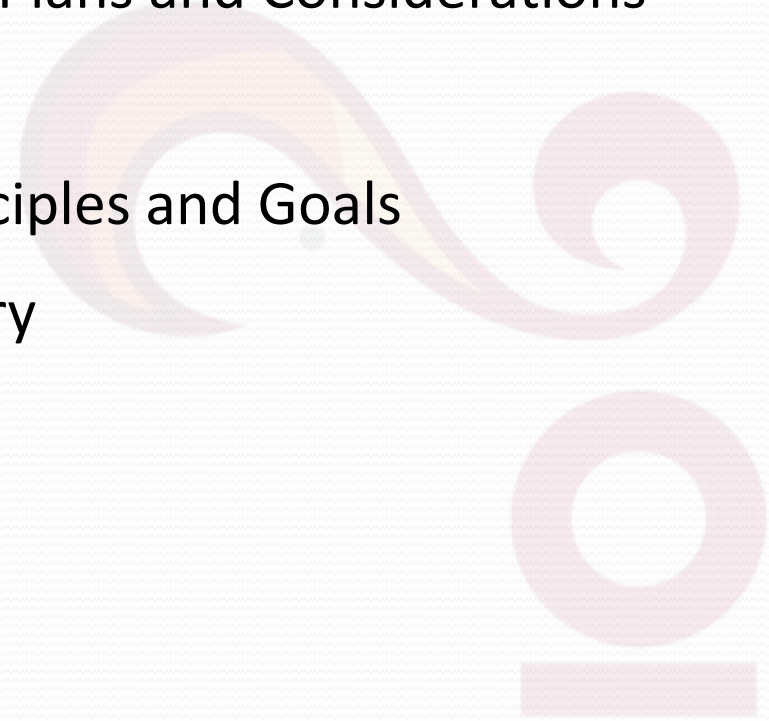
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Overview and Purpose

Section 1



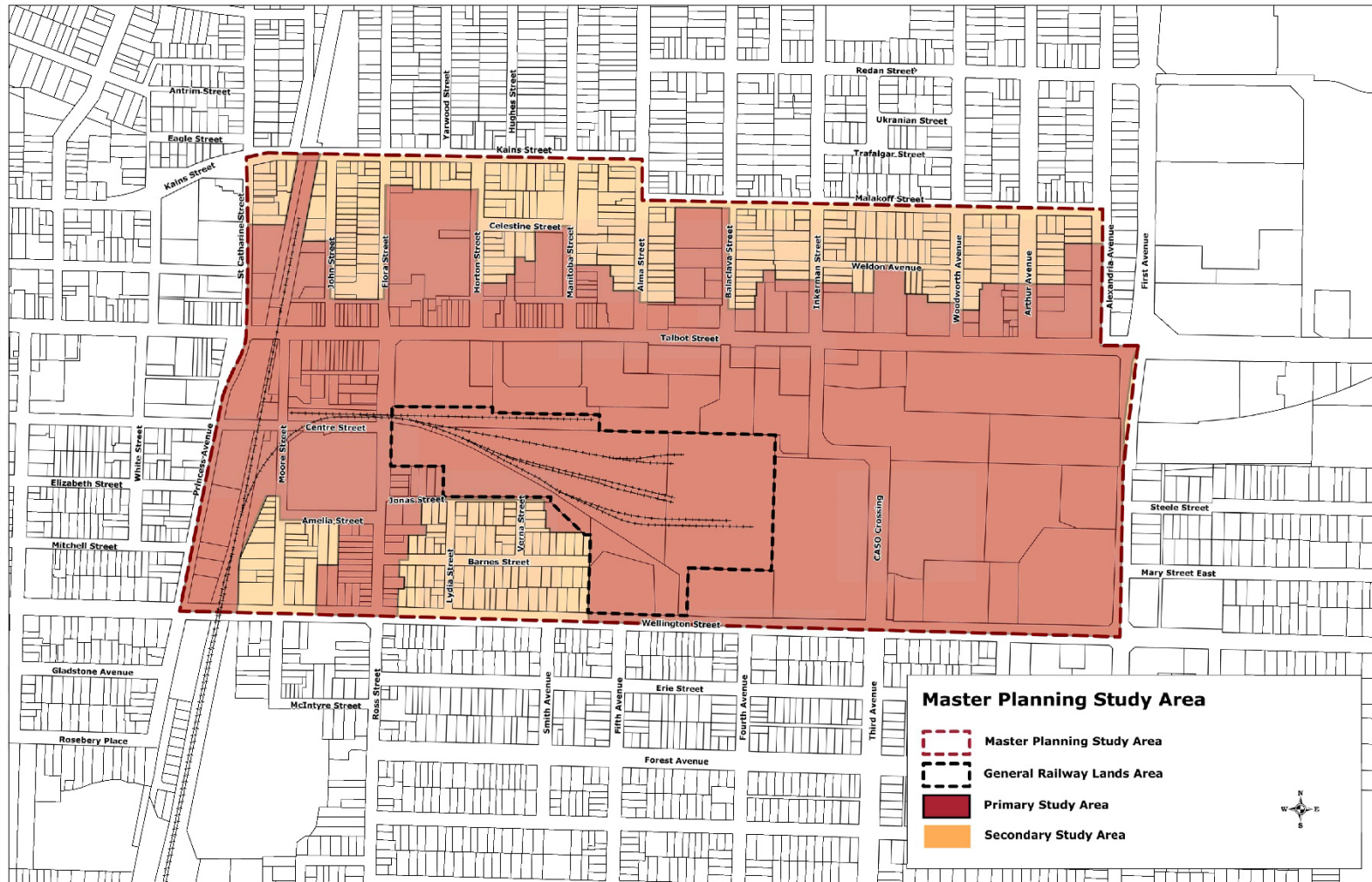
Overview

This Phase 1 document is a compilation of summary materials regarding the background purpose and approach for the Master Plan study, the existing conditions within the study area for the land use planning framework and infrastructure network, other related master plan directions and considerations for preparing a 25-year plan, a preliminary analysis of the Study Area, an outline of the draft guiding principles and goals for the area, and a summary of the initial engagement about ideas and important aspects of the area to consider.

Purpose

- The City of St. Thomas is conducting a land use planning process for a central portion of the Railway City. The intent is to prepare a Preferred Master Plan to help guide future development within the study area over the next 25 years (to 2051).
- The Plan will identify areas for development/redevelopment, permitted land uses and built form, transportation and mobility connections, parks and the public realm, public service / community uses, and infrastructure strategies while recognizing and considering significant cultural heritage resources (including the historical significance of the Railway Lands and Downtown St. Thomas Heritage Conservation District) and ensuring appropriate transition of new development to low-rise residential areas.

Where? (Study Area)

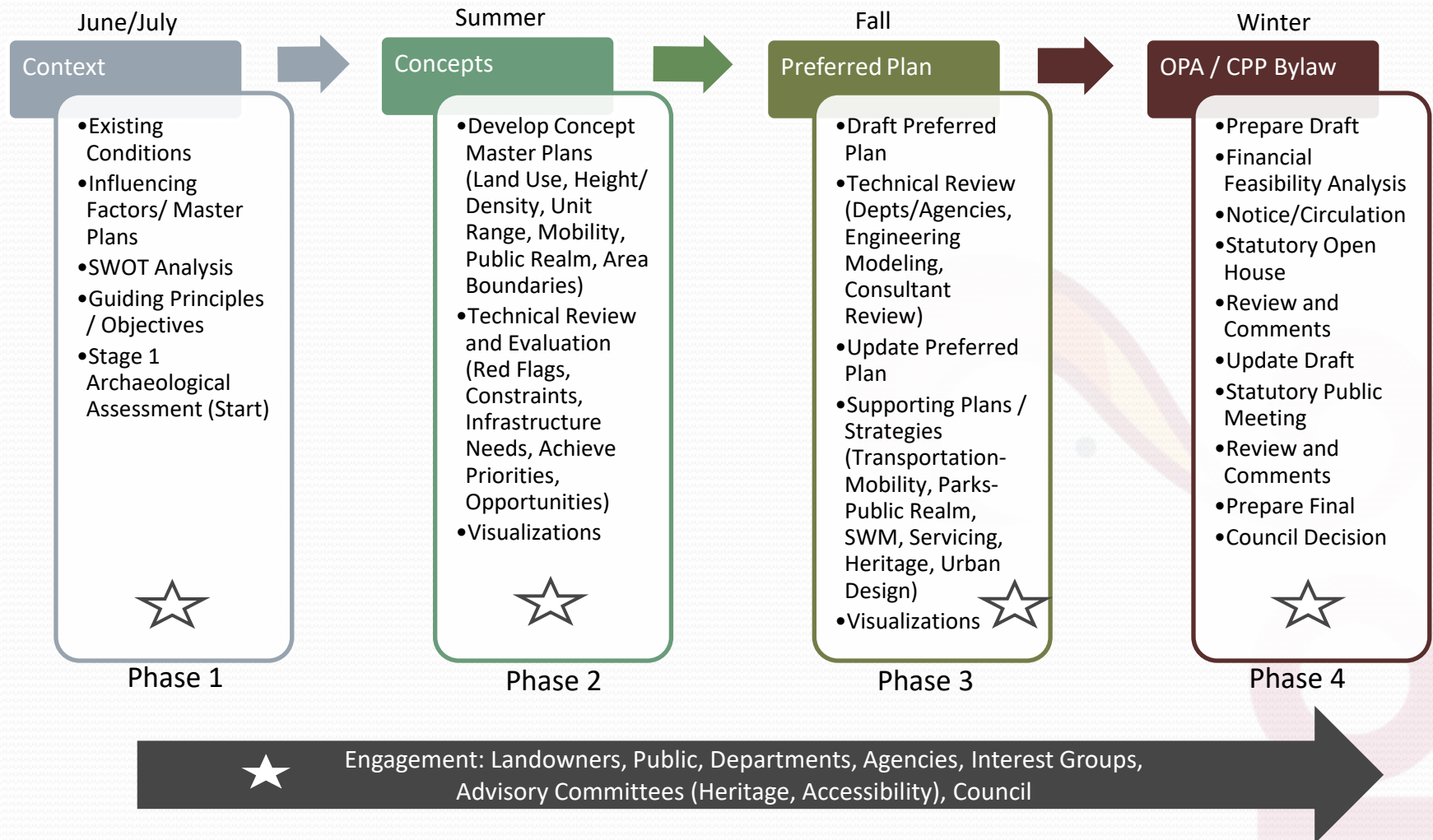


Why? (A Plan for this Area)

- As part of the planning for our overall growth in St. Thomas over the next 25 years
- To identify appropriate areas for new residential housing and density to provide housing options as we grow
- To ensure there is a comprehensive plan for this redevelopment area
- To facilitate redevelopment of known or suspected brownfield lands
- To ensure there is a plan in place that addresses the potential for larger scale intensification in an area with significant cultural heritage resources
- To help support commercial/business and employment uses on Talbot St, Wellington/First Ave and surrounding areas
- To review the existing land use and development permissions for properties within the Study Area and allow for a range of land uses that could occur on future

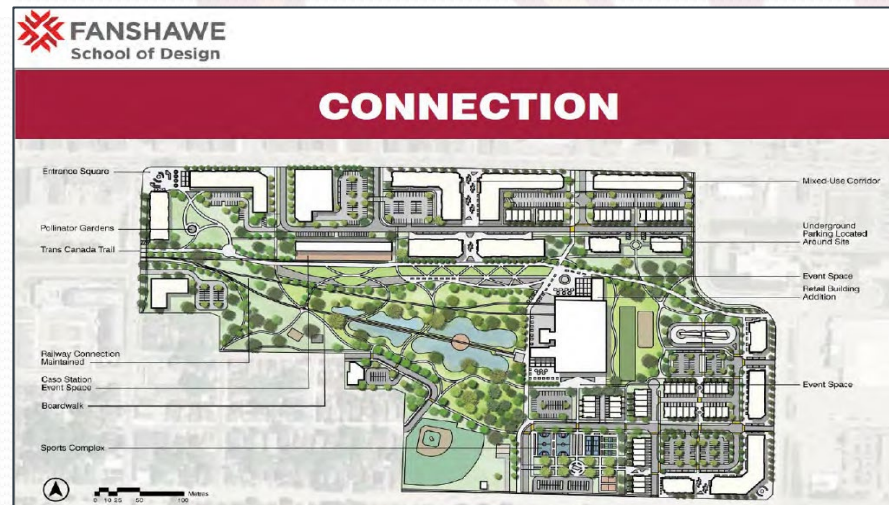
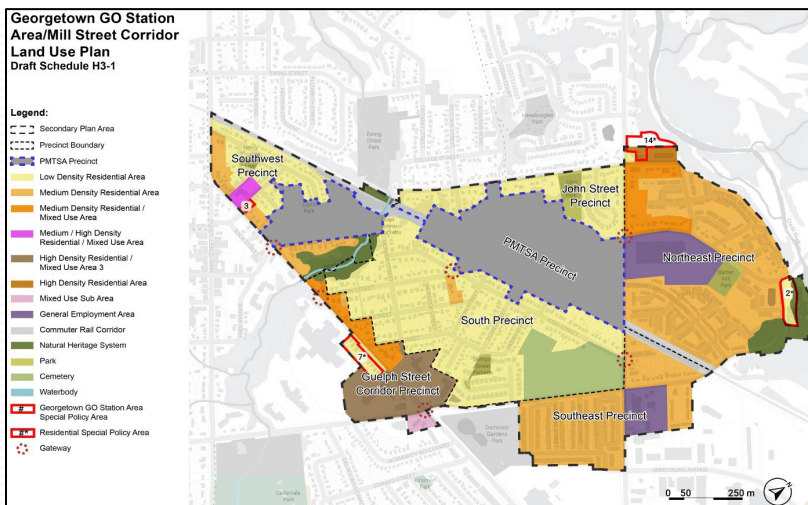
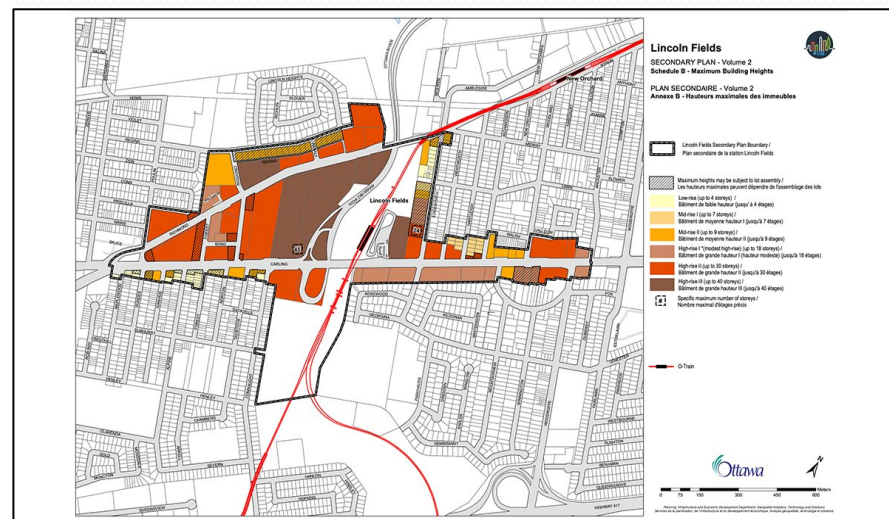
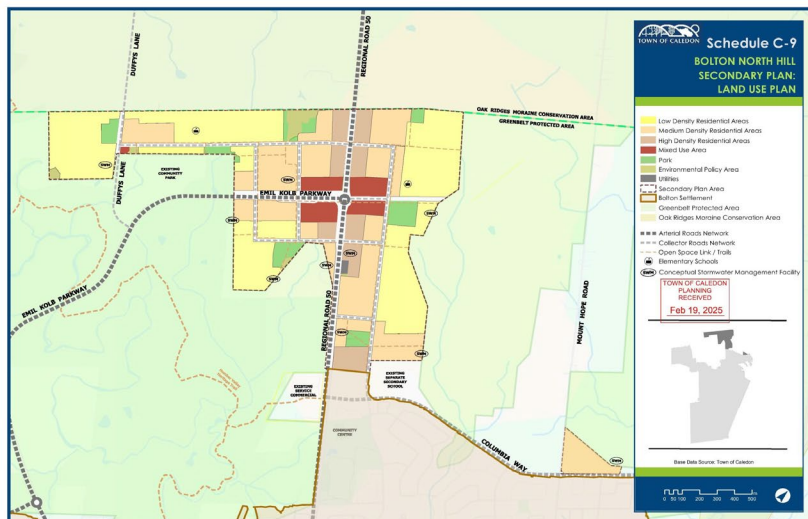


How? When? Who?



City staff led, consultant supported master plan and amendments to planning documents

What? (Could it Result in)



What? (Could it Result in)

Official Plan
Amendment

Secondary Plan
OR

Special Policy
Area OR

Land Use
Changes w/ Site
Specific Policies

Community
Planning
Permit
Bylaw

Amendment to
Existing Bylaw
OR

New Bylaw

Recommendations for zoning,
any added urban design
guidelines, other

Master Plan would
recommend which
portions of the Study
Area to amend the
Official Plan and
where to amend or
create a new
Community Planning
Permit Bylaw

What? (Could it Result in)

In 2025, St. Thomas adopted Official Plan polices to allow for a new Community Planning Permit System for development areas of the City as a land use planning tool for more streamlined development approvals.

What is a Community Planning Permit Bylaw?

It is a land use planning tool that combines Zoning By-law Amendments, Minor Variances and Site Plan Applications into one application and approval process.

Formerly known as the Development Permit System (DPS), a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) provides an alternative to the typical planning approval process.

How does it get used?

The Bylaw would replace zoning and provide steps for the development process. A permit would be needed for development which must be reviewed within 45 days. A Building Permit is still needed upon approval of a Community Planning Permit.

What would be in a CPP Bylaw?

The permitted land uses along with discretionary uses, the development standards, community benefits, classes of development, approval authority, criteria for conditions of approval, agreements, the application process, the land area, etc.

What are some of the benefits?

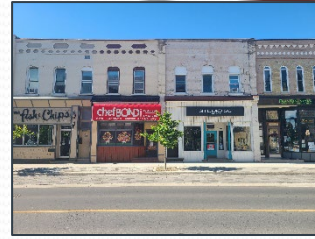
A streamlined development process; reduced complexity, flexible system; a broader scope of review; support for local goals like housing diversity and affordable housing, high-quality sustainable design, amenities and environmental protection.

Existing Conditions, Future Plans and Considerations Summary

Section 2

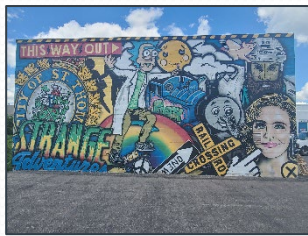
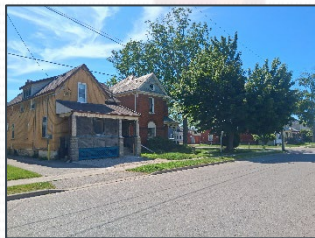
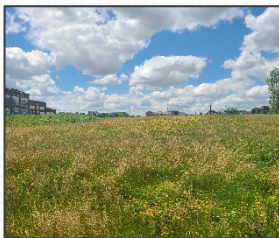
Primary Study Area - General Railway Lands

Primary Study Area – Talbot St



Primary Study Area – Other

Secondary Study Area



Existing Conditions / Future Plans

Community Profile: Study Area Snapshot (Estimates)

Study Area Size = ~85 hectares (210 acres)

Population & Housing

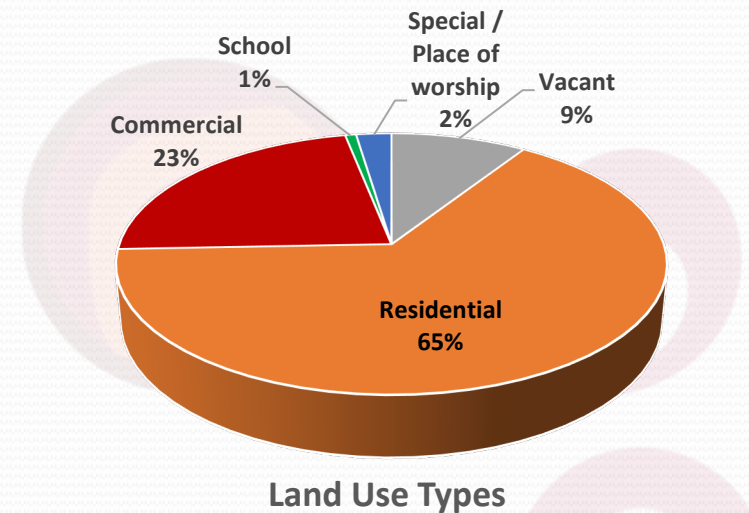
- Properties with Residential = ~420
- Average household size = 2.3 persons per unit (2021 census)
- Dwelling units by type = single detached, duplex, triplex, semi-detached, apartment

Employment

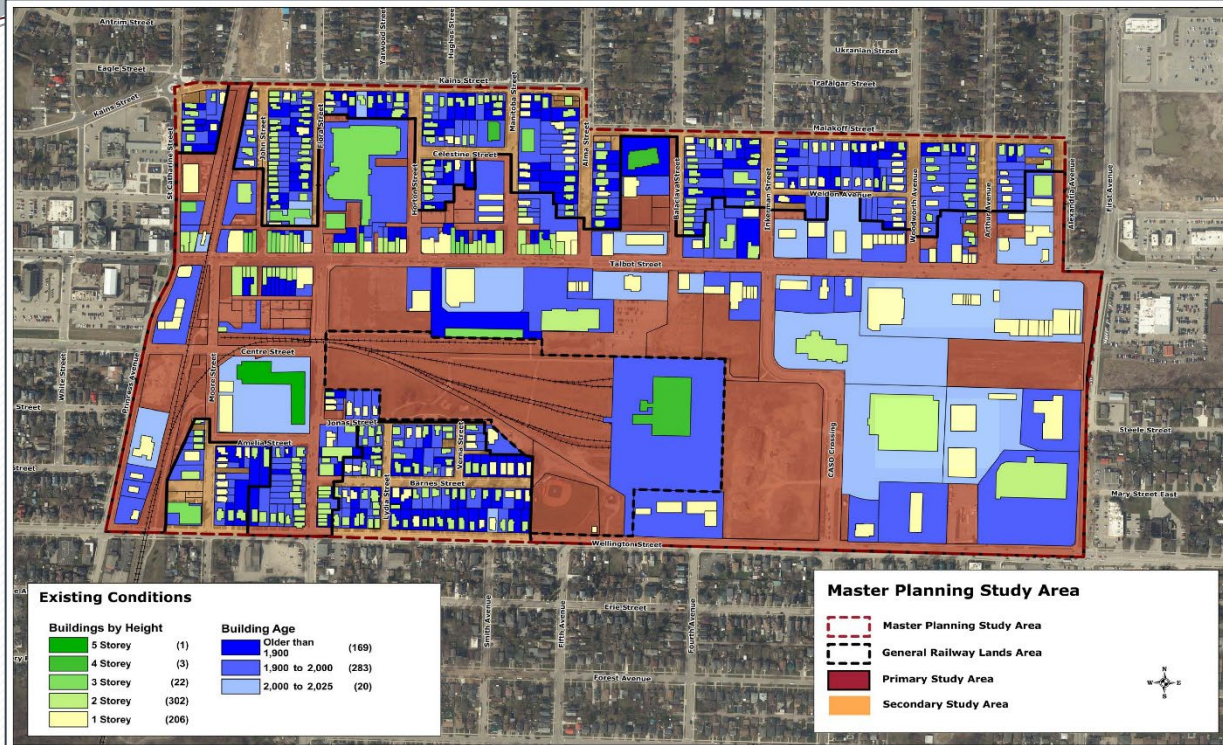
- Businesses (not including home business) = ~180
- Employment sectors = retail trade, professional scientific and technical services, creative arts and design, business consulting and finance, food services, personal services

Land Use

- Existing land use breakdown = (see graph)
- Vacant properties = ~11+ hectares (27+ acres)



Existing Conditions / Future Plans



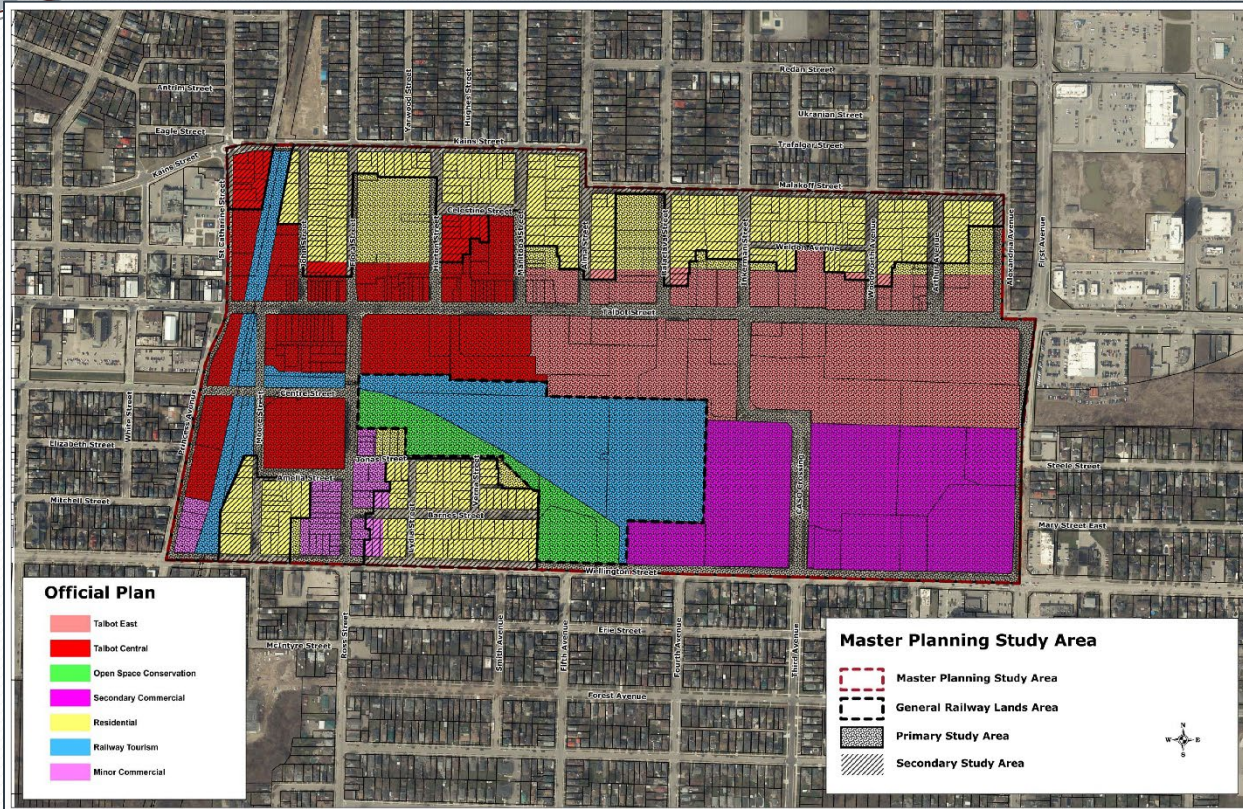
Built Form

Existing Conditions

- Low-rise residential neighbourhoods – 1 to 2 storey dwellings, large number of peaked roofs, significant amount of front porches, almost no garages in front, reduced front yard setbacks, mix of brick and siding, range of lot sizes, generous lot frontages
- Talbot St (Central) – main street condition 2-3 storeys, ground-floor commercial with mixed use/res above
- Talbot St (East) – mainly 1 storey commercial buildings, small lot coverage
- East side - Some larger commercial blocks with <20% lot coverage, 1-2 storey buildings, surface parking, flat roof
- Ross St – low-rise, mixed-use buildings
- Recreation and institutional blocks



Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Official Plan

Existing Conditions

- Downtown (Talbot Central, Talbot East), Commercial, Residential, Open Space and Railway Tourism land use designations

Future Plans

- Planning Act changes (Bill 28) that dictate standard table of contents, land use designations, compliance for Official Plans
- [New Official Plan \(2026-28\)](#)
- Most existing designations will need review and revision

Talbot Central –historic downtown. Permits pedestrian-oriented retail, restaurants, cultural, tourism, recreation, entertainment, accommodations, office, personal services, medium & high density residential, public services, institutional, parkettes (5.3.3.3.2)

Talbot East – permits auto-oriented commercial uses - dealerships, service stations, food stores, restaurants, plazas, rec (5.3.4.3.1)

Secondary Commercial – permits a range of retail and service commercial uses – auto services, stores, rest., office, rec (5.6.3.1)

Minor Commercial – permits day-to-day retail and service uses – conv. store, personal services, bank, rest., office, clinic (5.7.3.1)

Residential – permits a range of low, medium and high-density residential, institutional uses-schools, churches, rec, medical (5.1.3)

Railway Tourism – permits railway operations, repair/mtce, museum, tourism, events, transportation, parks, public uses (5.16.3.1)

Open Space and Conservation – permits parks, rec uses, conservation uses, necessary utilities, services, infrastructure (5.12.3.1)

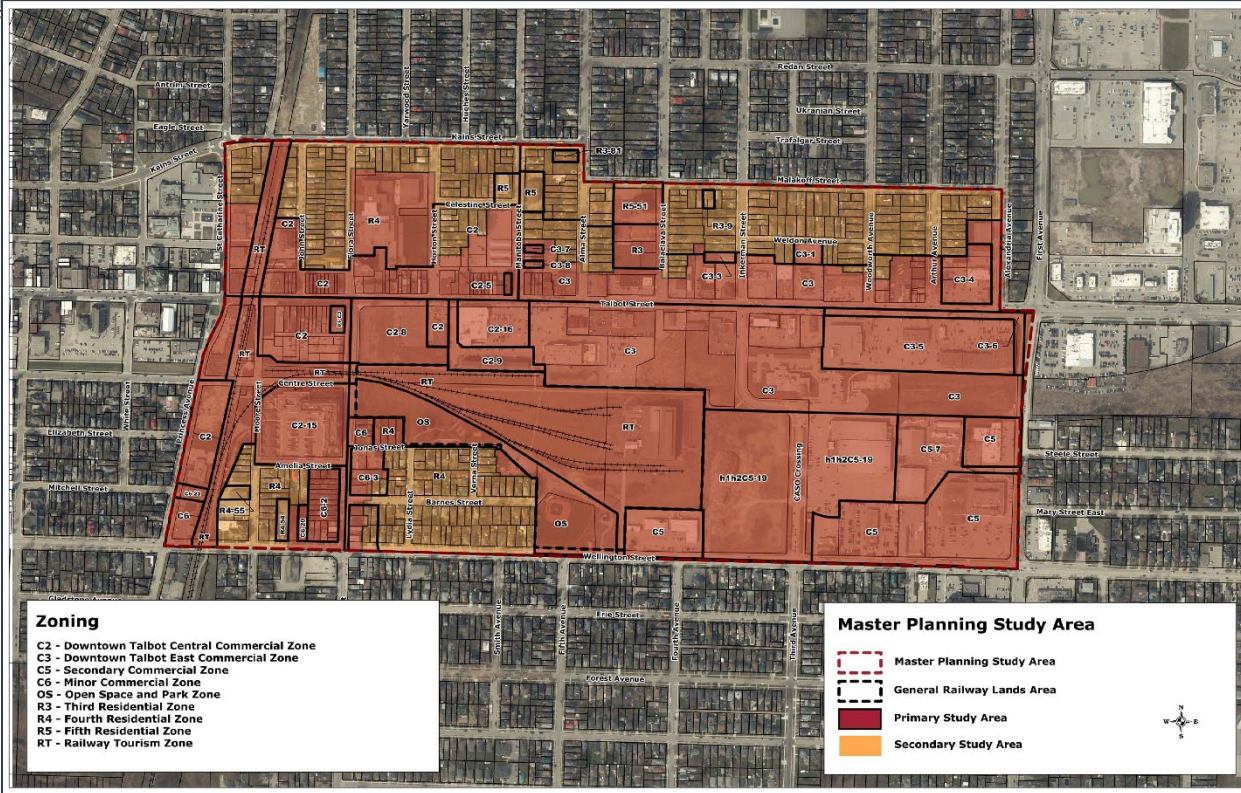
Existing Conditions / Future Plans Official Plan



General Policy Excerpts:

- The “Downtown” will remain as the centre of pedestrian oriented retail, office, civic, cultural, entertainment and government uses in the City of St. Thomas. In particular dining, tourism, recreation and entertainment uses will be encouraged to locate in the “Downtown” to reinforce it as a “people place” and community “meeting place” for residents and visitors. (3.4.1)
- Mixed use commercial/residential development/redevelopment as well as free-standing residential infill and redevelopment projects will be encouraged in the “Downtown”. The redevelopment of underutilized and/or incompatible sites will be encouraged. (3.4.3)
- Direct municipal involvement in the Talbot Central, Talbot East and Talbot West is necessary to encourage investment in development/redevelopment and revitalization/beautification of the “Downtown”. (3.4.4)
- The City will endeavor to ensure that future development/redevelopment projects on the adjacent Railway Lands will make provision for pedestrian linkages and open space connections to the “Downtown” (3.4.6, 3.4.7v)
- ...Other areas of commercial activity are the Secondary Commercial area in the Wellington Road/First Avenue area and various Minor Commercial areas located throughout the City... (3.6.1)
- Transportation and land use are interdependent variables and will not be considered in isolation from each other in evaluating development applications (3.8.1)
- "Talbot Central" shall be reinforced as a community "meeting place/focal point" for both residents and visitors to come together. A downtown civic square shall be planned in conjunction with the future redevelopment of the adjacent Railway Lands (5.3.3.3.11)
- A system of pedestrian linkages/walkways will be developed to connect the focal points of community interest/significance in the “Downtown” area including Talbot Street, the future civic square and future redevelopment projects on the Railway Lands (5.3.3.3.12)
- ...to improve the visual aesthetics and urban design of “Talbot East” as the east gateway/entranceway into the “Downtown” through streetscape/landscape improvements and built form design (5.3.4.2iv)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Zoning

Existing Conditions

- Commercial zones of various types including Downtown (C2,C3), Secondary (C5), Minor (C6)
- Residential zones of various types including Third (R3), Fourth (R4) and Fifth (R5) Residential
- Railway Tourism (RT), Open Space and Conservation (OS) zones
- Various site-specific provisions

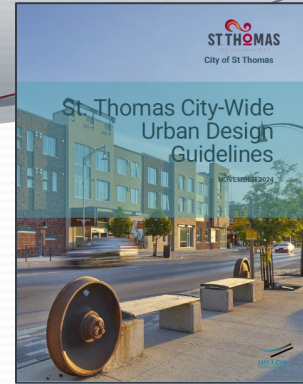
Future Plans

- New Zoning By-law (Future)
- Community Planning Permit Bylaw

Zoning Provisions (summary)

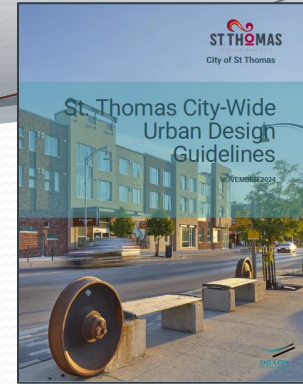
- C2 – commercial, office, clinic, institutional, recreation, entertainment, residential – up to 45m building height
- C3 - commercial, office, clinic, institutional, recreation, entertainment – up to 45m building height, retail max. size limit
- C5 – commercial, office, clinic, recreation, entertainment – no max. building height or size limits
- C6 – some commercial, office, clinic, institutional, entertainment – no max. height, max. 300m² comm. floor area(lot), 2300m²(zone)
- R3 – all dwelling types up to 4 units, most home types, daycare, private school, church - 11m max. building height (15m for church)
- R4 – all dwelling types up to 6 units, all home types, daycare, private school, church - 11m max. building height (15m for church)
- R5 – towns & multiple dwelling to 75u/ha, home types, day care, private school - 11m ht., apartment to 250u/ha, 45m ht., church
- RT – railway uses/operations, transportation incl. active, park, trails, events, municipal works, museum, parking lot – no provisions

Existing Conditions / Future Plans Urban Design Guidelines



- 1.2 Vision
 - The City of St. Thomas is committed to promoting a consistent and high standard of urban design for all development in the City, which responds to the needs of a growing and thriving community that is sustainable, inclusive, and celebrated while remaining connected to its rich cultural heritage
- 1.3 Design Principles
 - 1. Place-Making; 2. Human Scale within Urban Fabric; 3. Safe, Attractive and Green Streetscapes; 4. High Quality Materials and Building Design; 5. Sustainable Development; 6. Heritage Preservation, Sensitive Integration; 7. Natural Heritage; 8. Accessibility/Universal Design
- 1.4 Design Priorities
 - Priority 1 – Create a universally accessible and inclusive urban environment that supports residents and visitors of all abilities
 - Priority 2 – Encourage sustainable forms of residential, employment and commercial development that enhances the built form and prioritizes elements of place-making
 - Priority 3 – Protect the heritage significance and character of the Downtown and support adaptive re-use and new built form integration that supports the heritage values
 - Priority 4 – Create a walkable and pedestrian-friendly city that supports modes of active transportation, and a well-connected street network that is safe, comfortable, and accessible
 - Priority 5 – Support a well-connected street network that is safe, comfortable, and accessible, and enhanced with place-making elements, such as gateways and public art
 - Priority 6 – Promote the use of green infrastructure and building practices while protecting the existing natural heritage network

Existing Conditions / Future Plans Urban Design Guidelines



2.1 Downtown St. Thomas and Heritage Conservation District

- Vision – To strengthen and protect the railway city identity, cultural heritage resources and the downtown core’s heritage character, while enabling compatible development and high-quality streetscapes and open spaces that support the City’s sustainable growth and place-making within the downtown core and beyond

2.2 Residential Infill and Intensification Areas

- Vision – To adopt clear policies, zoning, and guidelines that are vetted through the community, ensuring that infill projects are positive neighbourhood additions that support managed change and advocate for complete communities, inclusive of new dwelling additions and all associated servicing

2.3 Mixed Use and Residential Areas

- Vision – To adopt clear policies, zoning, and guidelines for developments that are sustainably built to support growth targets, protect, and celebrate the natural heritage, and help create more complete, accessible, and vibrant communities throughout the city.

2.6 Corridors and Gateways

- To create active and green streetscapes that encourage the use of safe active-transportation routes and trail linkages for all ages and abilities, with appropriate pedestrian and cycling amenities that encourage multi-modal travel (e.g., seating, sheltered bike parking, bike repair station, electric scooter parking, etc.). Gateways and public art are to be used as place-making and identify-strengthening elements of the public realm.

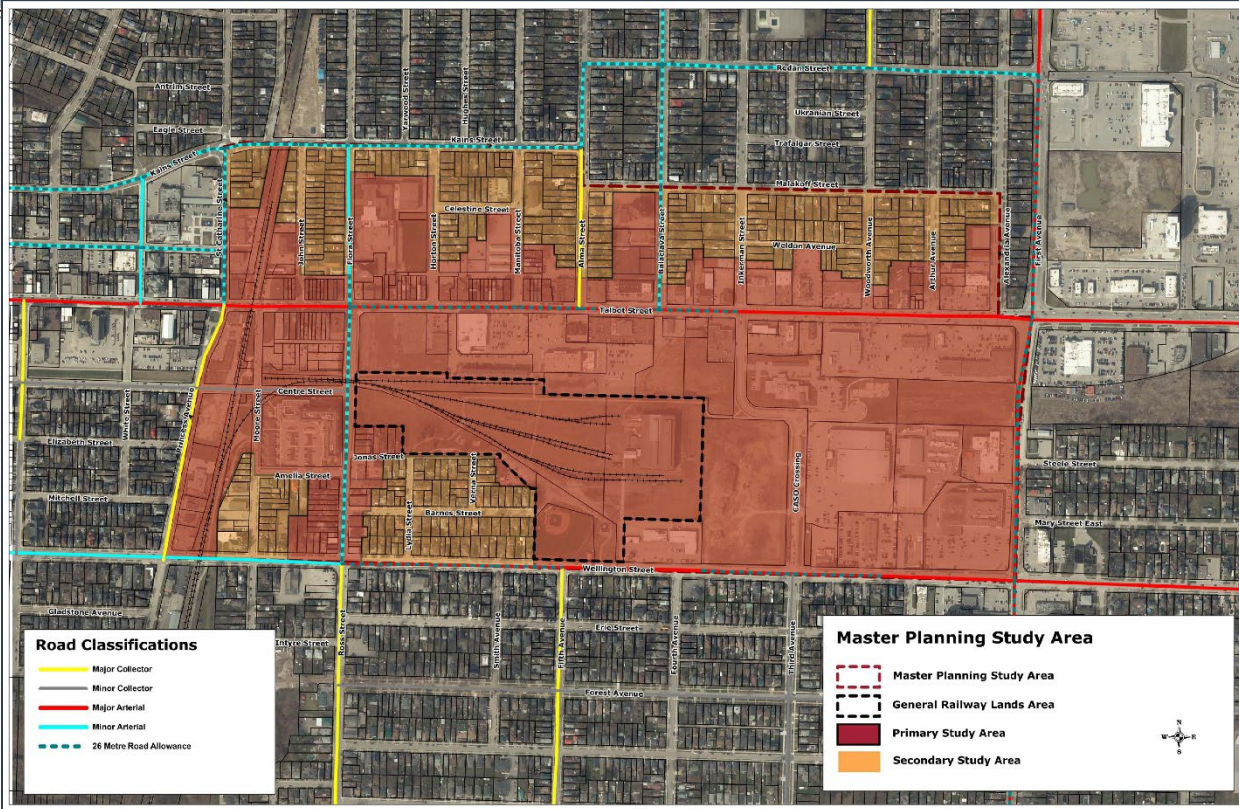
2.7 Destination Landmarks – Includes CASO Station, Elgin County Railway Museum

- Vision – To strengthen these tourism destinations as nodes, by providing complimentary public realm elements to support their sustained heritage and economic contributions to the City

2.8 Trails, Parks and Open Spaces

- Vision – To create public spaces that foster social connections and gatherings, celebrate local heritage, encourage healthy physical activity for all, and are well-connected to adjacent land uses and active transportation networks

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Transportation - Roads

Existing Conditions

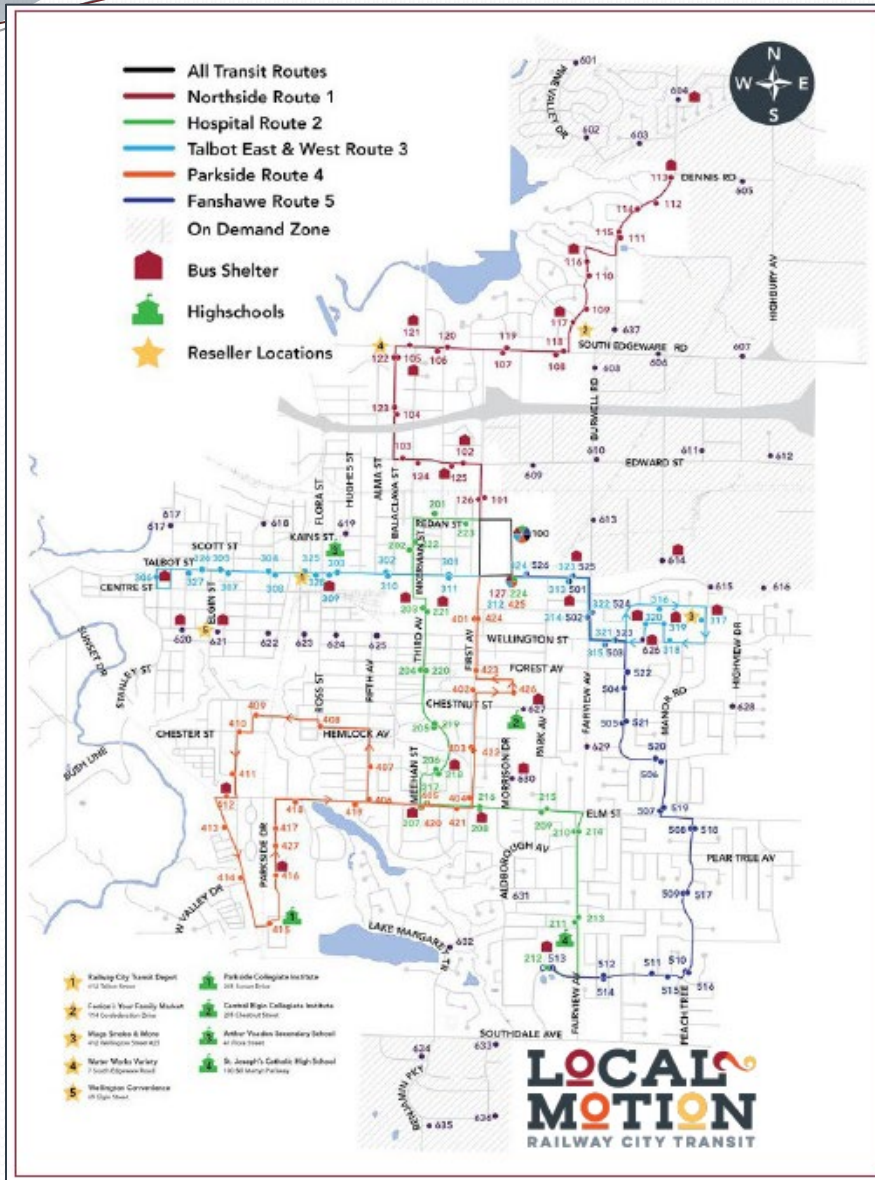
- Major Arterial–Talbot, First, Wellington
- Minor Arterial–Ross, Kains, Balaclava, St. Catharine
- Major Collector–Alma, Princess
- 26m road allowance–First, Talbot, Ross, Wellington

Future Plans

- [Transportation Master Plan: City-wide \(completed 2025\)](#)
- Undertake transportation strategy (Railway Lands Study)

- An arterial street carries large volumes of all types of traffic at relatively high speeds. An Arterial street provides a through route in the City and traffic flow should only be interrupted at traffic lights (9.1.1.6).
- Major Arterial has a 2-lane capacity of 16,000 vehicles and a 4-lane capacity of 32,000 vehicles (9.1.1.6).
- Minor Arterial has a 2-lane capacity of 14,000 vehicles and a 4-lane capacity of 28,000 vehicles (9.1.1.6).
- A Collector street serves as a link between the Arterial and Local street and has the functions of providing traffic service and property access (9.1.1.7).
- Major Collector has a 2-lane capacity of 10,000 vehicles (9.1.1.7).

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Transportation - Transit

Existing Conditions

- Currently fixed routes on Caso Crossing/Inkerman (Route 2), First Ave (Route 3), Talbot St (Route 4)
- Stops on Wellington St (On Demand)

Future Plans

- [Transportation Master Plan](#) – recommendations for Transit
- [Transit Master Plan \(2026-27\)](#)
- Undertake transportation strategy (Railway Lands Study)

Official Plan Policies (Portion)

- Public transit service shall continue to be provided in the City of St. Thomas in accordance with approved financial resources (9.1.2.1)
- Council shall encourage public transit and shall support measures designed to increase ridership within the context of providing an efficient public transit service (9.1.2.2)
- Supportive land use patterns and proper land use design shall be encouraged in order to make the transit system more efficient (9.1.2.4)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans

FIGURE ES.5 RECOMMENDED ROAD CLASSIFICATIONS

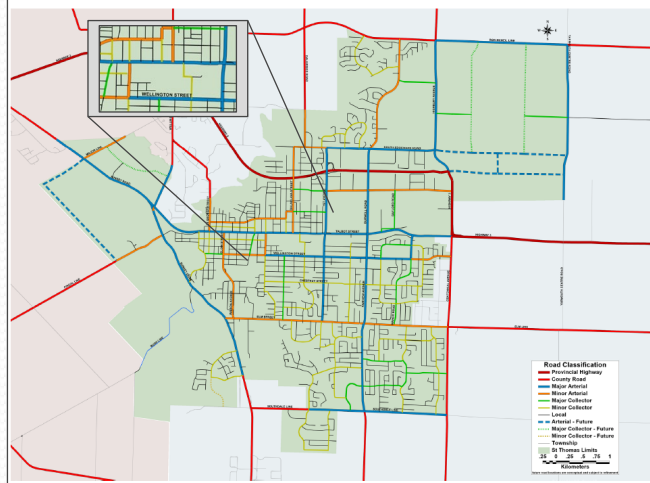


FIGURE ES.1 INTERIM FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT NETWORK

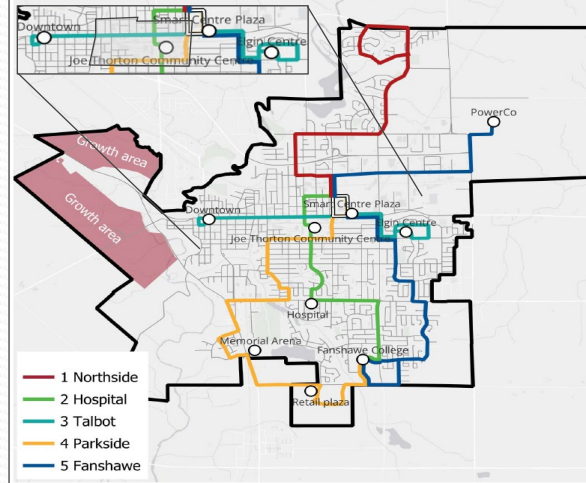


FIGURE ES.3 RECOMMENDED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

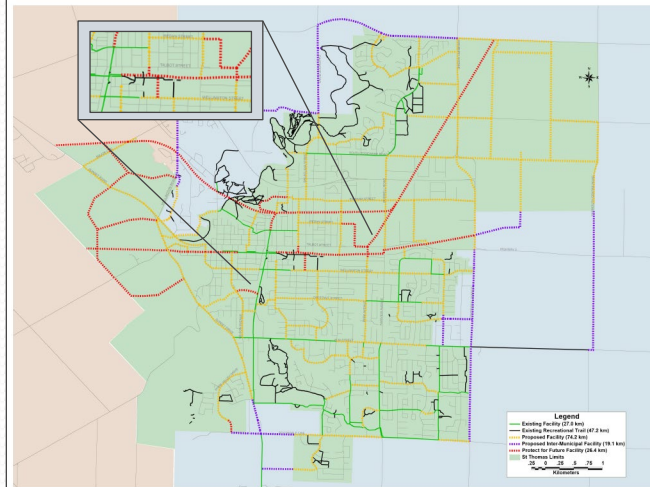
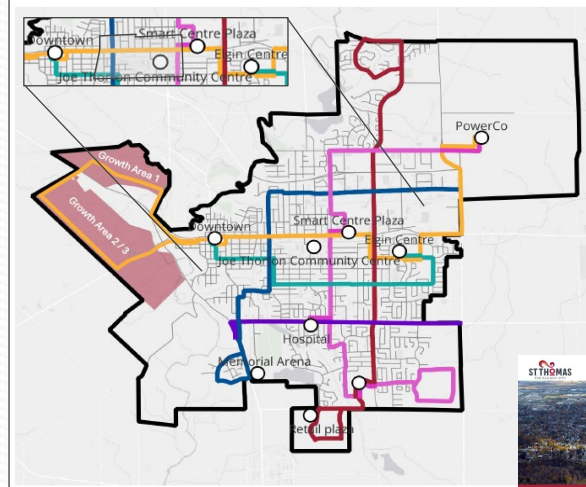


FIGURE ES.2 LONG TERM FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT NETWORK



Transportation Master Plan

Study Area Highlights:

- Recommendation R.15: it is recommended that the City consider undertaking a land use and urban design study for the Centre St Active Transportation Corridor to provide a concept design for the Active Transportation facilities in the corridor and to establish a vision for the future land use in the surrounding area to guide future planning.

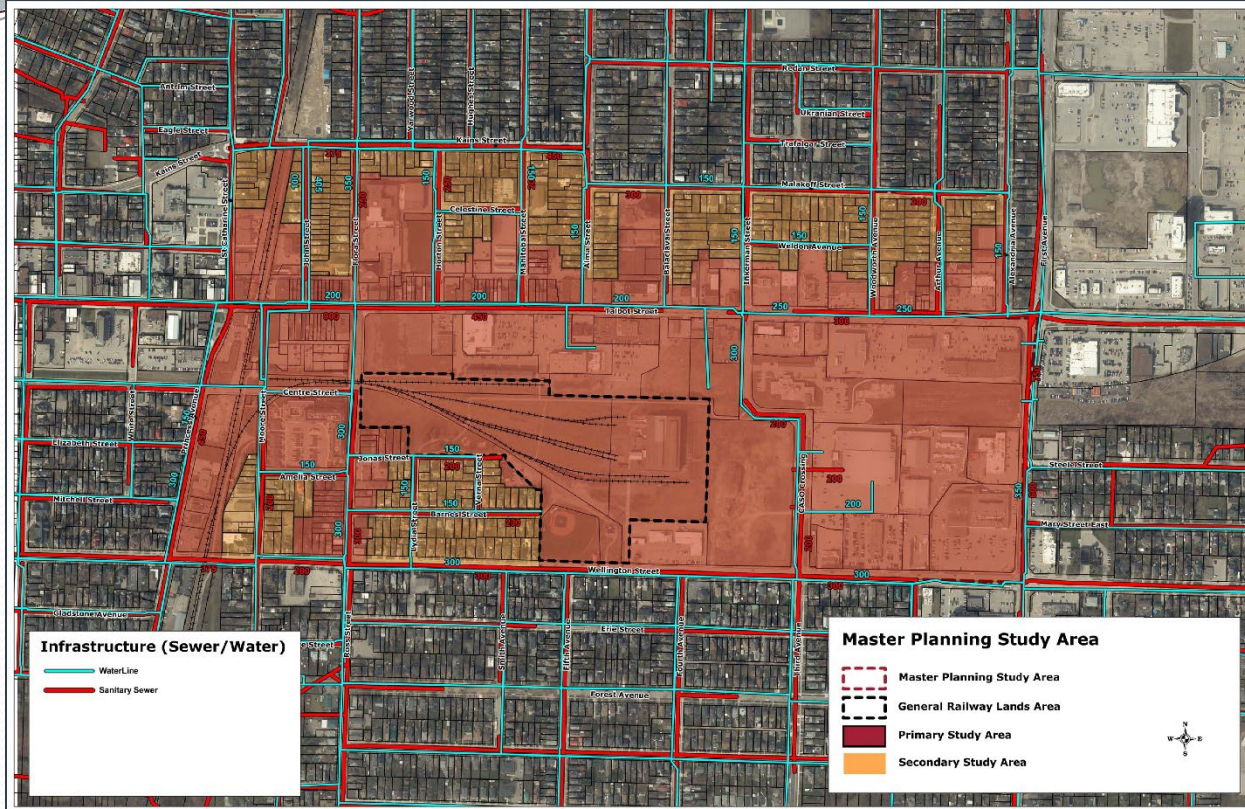
Proposed Corridor Projection Opportunity:

- CP3 – Centre St Corridor – East (Ross St to East City Limits)
- CP12 – CASO-Wellington Trail Connection (Centre St Rail Trail to Wellington St)

THE CENTRE STREET ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION CORRIDOR CONCEPT



Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Sanitary and Water Servicing

Existing Conditions

- Sanitary sewers and watermains exist on all streets w/in Study Area
- Larger sanitary on First Ave, Talbot St (west side of St. Area)
- Sanitary primarily drains to Sunset WWTP

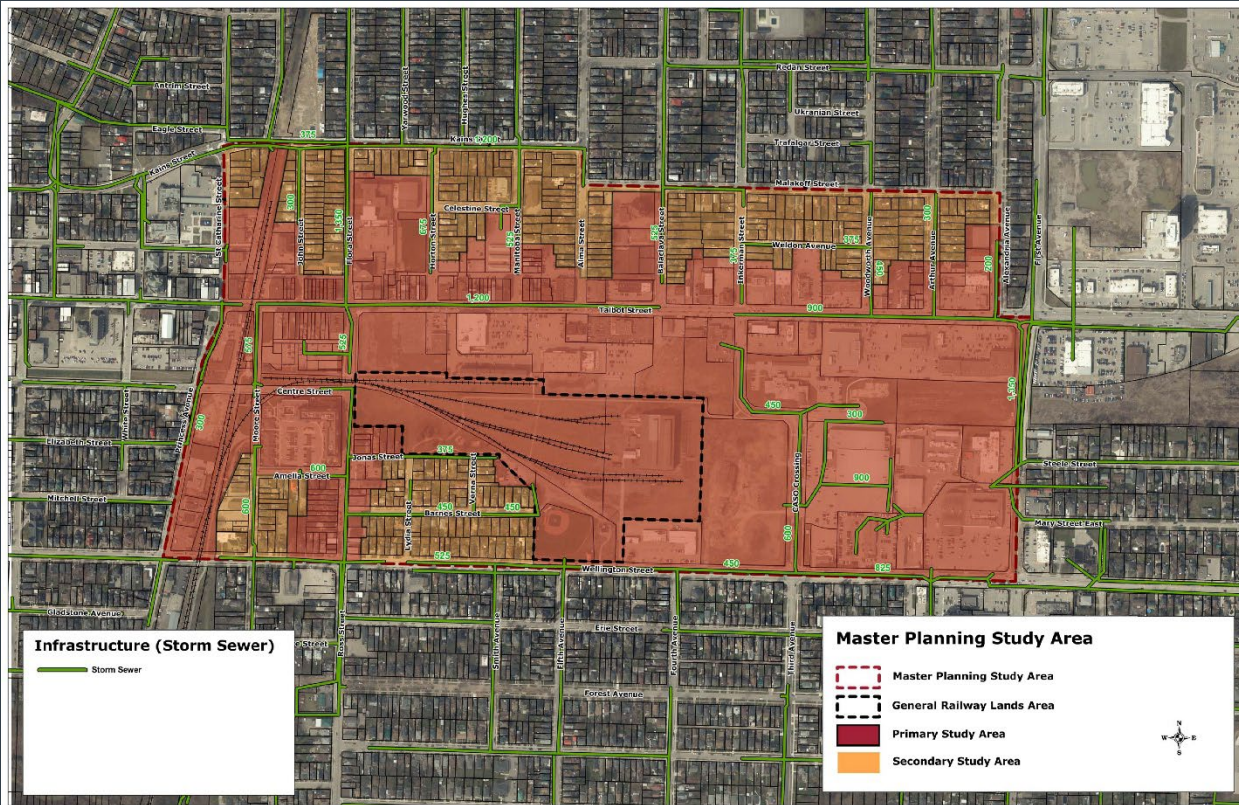
Future Plans

- Sanitary Master Plan: City-wide (2027-28)
- Undertake sanitary and water modeling (Railway Lands Study)

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- Improvements to the sanitary sewerage system and storm drainage system will continue in order to serve the projected population (3.8.5). An adequate water supply is available to service the projected population (3.8.6).
- New development, infilling or redevelopment for medium or high density residential use shall be reviewed based on...adequate municipal services including storm and sanitary sewers, are required (5.1.3.3vii, 5.1.3.4xii)
- All redevelopment/infilling must be on full urban services and existing municipal services and facilities should be adequate to accommodate the proposed development (5.1.3.6), subject to any necessary improvements to piped municipal services...(9.2.2.1)
- Talbot East – ...new space-extensive commercial uses are subject to...adequate municipal services are required (5.3.4.3.2vi)
- Commercial – The suitability of residential uses as part of a mixed-use development shall be assessed on a site-by-site basis using the following criteria...capacity of existing infrastructure services and roads to accommodate the proposed use(s) (5.6.3.12ii, 5.7.3.6iii)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Drainage, Storm, Stormwater Management

Existing Conditions

- At least 4 different drainage areas w/in Study Area
- Existing storm sewers on all streets w/in Study Area except portion of a few blocks
- Larger on 1st/Wellington/Talbot
- No stormwater mgt. ponds

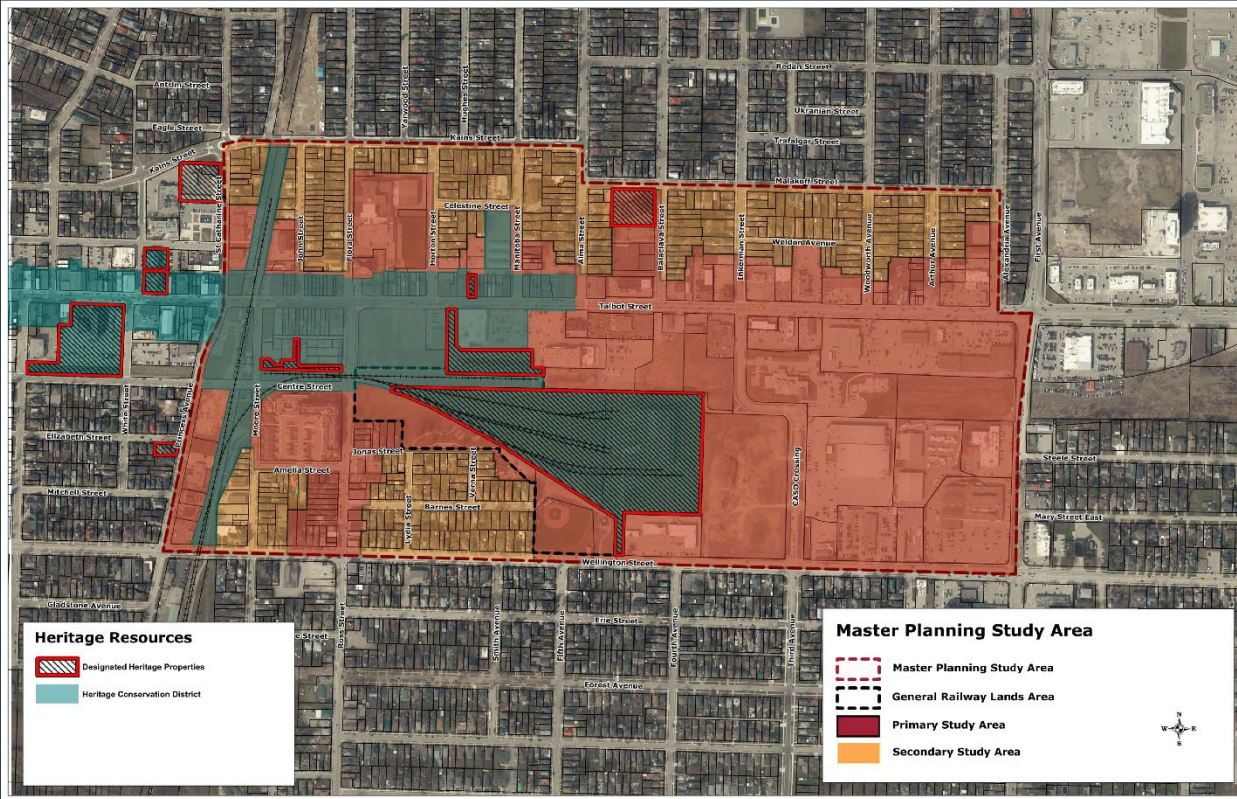
Future Plans

- [Stormwater Management Master Plan \(2026\)](#)
- Undertake storm modeling (Railway Lands Study)

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- To ensure that sanitary sewers, storm sewers and watermain are sized to accommodate current and planned development along Talbot Street (4.12.2i)
- Through the implementation of Best Management Practices, stormwater management measures that promote natural groundwater recharge shall be encouraged where applicable (8.6.2)
- Current stormwater management techniques shall be used in the design and implementation of all development to control both the quality and quantity of surface water runoff and to maintain the quality and quantity in the receiving watercourse (8.6.3)
- Master Drainage Plans shall be prepared using engineering and hydrologic models acceptable to the City and KCCA (9.2.5.5x). Where a Master Drainage Plan has not been prepared for an area, the City shall require applicants for development to prepare individual Storm Water Management Plans for their lands that demonstrate the manner in which on-site storm water will be controlled...(9.2.5.5xi)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Cultural Heritage Resources & Archaeological

Existing Conditions

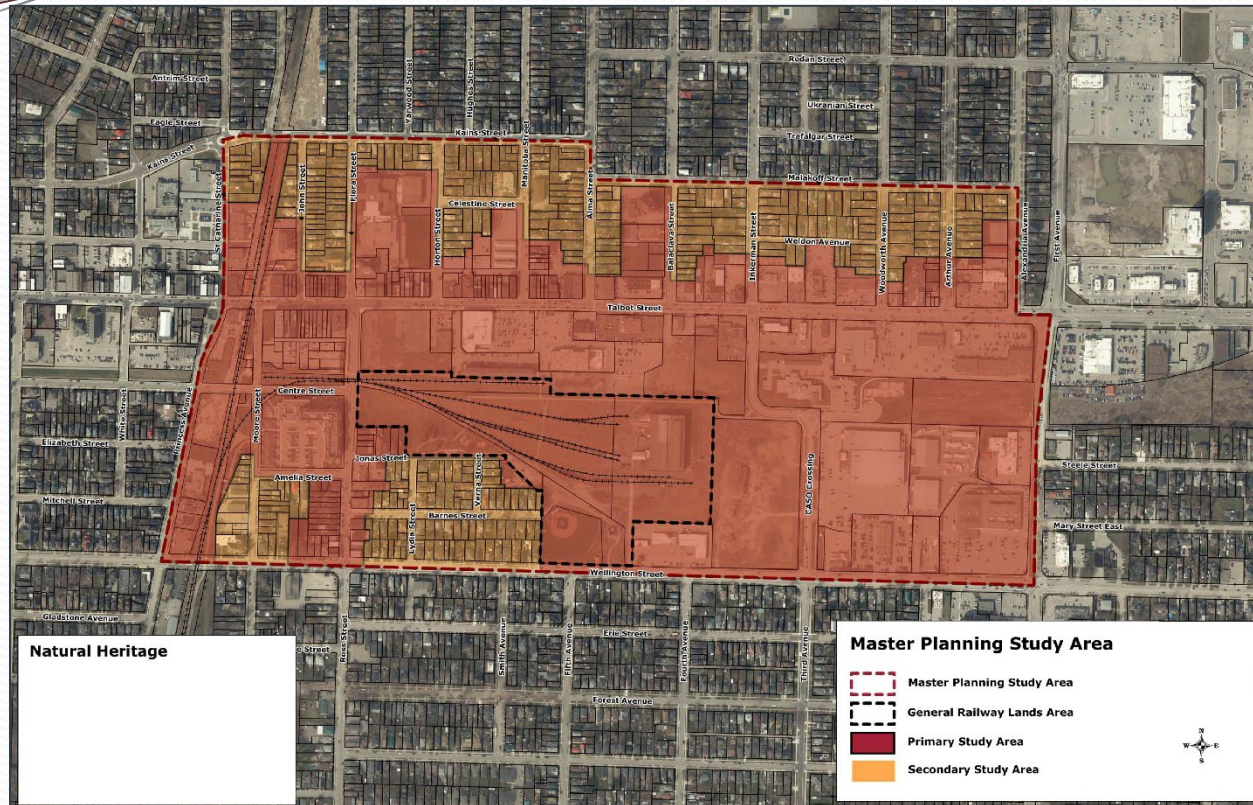
- 7 properties in Study Area designated under Part IV
- Lands in Study Area within Part V Downtown St. Thomas Heritage Conservation District
- HCD Study, Plan, Guidelines

Future Plans

- Undertake Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment (Railway Lands Study)
- Undertake Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment (Railway Lands Study)

- ...Council shall endeavor to recognize and preserve the heritage resources of the City of St. Thomas. Heritage resources include archaeological sites, buildings and structures of architectural, historic or engineering interest, groups of buildings or structures which are of interest and value in the landscape and rural and urban landscapes...(4.6.1)
- A heritage conservation district for the downtown area of St. Thomas has been designated by City Council and...will be used in the evaluation of planning and development applications in the area...(4.6.11.2)
- The Downtown St. Thomas HCD Plan includes a comprehensive set of design guidelines to direct future development and to protect the unique character of the area and encourages the retention of existing structures and landscapes that contribute to the downtown character of the area. The design of buildings in the Downtown St. Thomas HCD shall, at all times, have regard to the detailed architectural and urban design guidelines and intent of the Downtown St. Thomas HCD Plan. (4.6.11.3)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Natural Heritage Resources

Existing Conditions

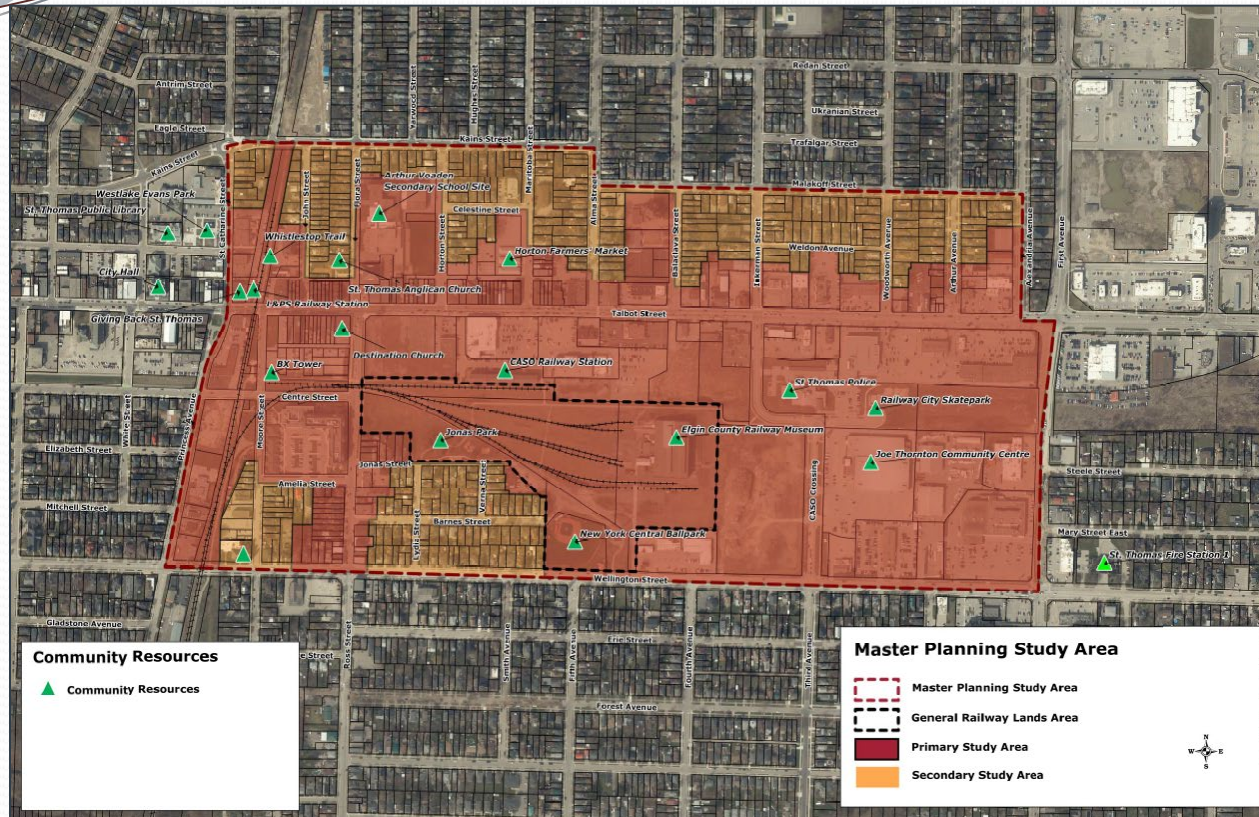
- There are no known significant natural heritage features within the Study Area, identified on Schedule E or designated on Schedule A of the Official Plan

Future Plans

- Natural Heritage Systems Study will be under preparation as part of new Official Plan process (2026-28)

- The natural heritage system in the City provides a wide range of benefits to the residents of St. Thomas. Where possible, it shall be protected from the negative effects of development (8.3.1.1)
- Natural Heritage designation – permitted uses are passive open space, walking/biking trails, forest and resource management uses, conservation uses, erosion and flood control, low-intensity public and private recreation uses, necessary public utilities, infrastructure and services, existing agricultural uses and accessory buildings and structures. Development and/or site alteration associated with a permitted use shall only be permitted when it can be demonstrated in accordance with the policies of the Plan, that there will be no negative impacts to the natural heritage features and/or their ecological functions (8.3.2.2)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



Community Infrastructure

Existing Conditions

- Includes the Horton Market, Joe Thornton Arena, Elgin County Railway Museum, CASO Station, St. Thomas Police Services, New York Central ballpark, Jonas St Park, Moore St food garden, religious institutions, Arthur Voaden SS site, & more
- Nearby: Fire Stn, City Hall, Library

Future Plans

- [Parks & Recreation Master Plan + Community & Aquatics Feas. Study \(2026\)](#)

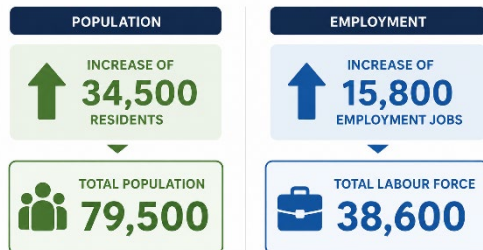
- Parks and recreation facilities are programs are recognized as essential and desirable municipal services. Parkland also functions as a major land use and influences the shape of physical development within St. Thomas (7.1.1)
- ...adequate library services for the residents of St. Thomas will be maintained (9.3.1)
- Adequate fire and police protection will be provided to accommodate increased population or development (9.4.1)
- ...Any proposed new use of a school site must in accordance with the policies of the Official Plan (9.5.3)

Existing Conditions / Future Plans

Growth Analysis Study (2024): City-Wide

- Drivers and disruptors of change and growth: global economic outlook, evolving macro-economic trends post COVID/changing nature of work, national/provincial economic outlook, immigration changes, manufacturing/EV Battery Plant, migration flow, commuting, labour force trends
- 2% annual growth rate for population and employment

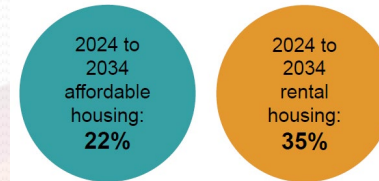
BY 2051



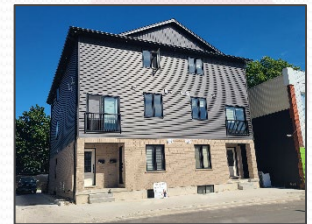
- Increase in youth and especially older senior population
- Increase of approx. 15,300 households (2021-2051)
- Housing forecast comprises 55% low-density units, 19% medium-density units, and 26% high-density units. This shift in dwelling type preference towards medium and high density is anticipated to be driven largely by the aging of the population and, to a lesser extent, from continued upward pressure on local housing prices.

Housing Needs Assessment (2025): City-Wide

- Housing need for 7,700 units (2024-2034)
- St. Thomas will require a more diverse housing range of housing to accommodate future housing needs:



- Strategic Priorities:
 1. Increase affordable housing supply
 2. Support local development
 3. Support for people facing housing insecurity



Other Considerations & Influencing Factors

- City-wide review with planning horizon to 2051
- Will establish land use and other guiding policies
- Commercial, Land Studies

New Official Plan



- Streamline Official Plans and land use designations
- Build more homes faster
- Housing and jobs growth
- Streamline development

Provincial Direction



- Former rail-lands and industrial uses
- Site assessments / RSCs
- Rehab to allow new uses
- Community Improvement

Brownfields



- L&PS rail corridor
- Future use / connections
- Land use compatibility and new adjacent uses
- Tourism function

Rail-line /Corridor



- Railway Lands – Talbot St
- Public street access for land parcels
- Recreation, cultural and transit connections

Connectivity



- Future needs
- Recreation, museum, events, community use
- Shared use/ structured
- Transport. demand mgt.

Parking



- Height of new buildings
- Compatibility/existing area
- Bldg. setbacks/step-backs
- Airport zoning/heights
- Urban design, heritage

Compatibility



- Existing bldg./future plans
- Synergy with other uses
- Access, parking, events
- Views and connections

Railway Museum



SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats)

Section 3

Strengths



Strategic Location

- Centrally located within the city
- Gateway into downtown
- High visibility from major arterial roads
- Strong regional connectivity



Redevelopment Opportunities

- Significant underutilized and vacant lands
- Few residential displacement issues
- Comprehensive master plan opportunity



Railway Heritage

- Rich railway history and identity
- Heritage buildings and industrial character
- Placemaking opportunities



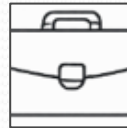
Existing Infrastructure

- Municipal servicing generally available
- Existing roads surrounding study area
- Multiple transit routes



Downtown Proximity

- Walking distance to shops / services
- Supports downtown vibrancy
- Existing civic amenities / public service uses nearby



Employment Base

- Existing commercial / employment uses nearby
- Access to skilled workforce
- Industrial and commercial history



Transportation Access

- Existing arterial and nearby highway access
- Multiple existing bus routes and stops
- Multi-modal potential

Weaknesses



Physical Barriers

- Former rail corridor divides areas
- Limited north-south connections
- Large blocks reduce walkability



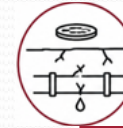
Brownfield Conditions

- Potential soil contamination
- Environmental remediation costs
- Uncertain site preparation requirements



Fragmented Land

- Multiple property owners
- Land assembly and coordination
- Requires cooperation or plan (for access, etc.)



Potential Infrastructure Needs

- Confirm status of underground services
- Review capacity regarding any constraints
- No existing stormwater ponds, SWM needed



Image & Perception

- Industrial appearance
- Vacant and underutilized properties
- Wayfinding challenges



Compatibility

- Railway and new land uses
- Surrounding road noise
- Adjacent residential neighbourhoods and cultural heritage resources



Disconnected Public Realm

- Few public gathering spaces
- Need to retain/expand active transportation facilities
- Streetscape character

Opportunities



Mixed-Use Redevelopment

- New residential neighbourhoods
- Commercial and office uses
- Entertainment and cultural destinations
- Balance growth with character



Transit-Supportive Development

- Future redevelopment opportunities
- Transit integration
- Reduced automobile dependence



Housing Supply

- Diverse housing types
- Affordable / attainable housing opportunities
- Missing middle housing



Public Realm Improvements

- Parks and plazas
- Complete and green streets
- Trail connections
- Community-centred space



Heritage & Tourism

- Railway museum opportunities
- Cultural programming
- Destination development



Active Transportation

- Walkable
- Multi-use pathways
- Cycling network connections
- Better neighbourhood connectivity



Downtown Vibrancy Catalyst

- Increased population
- New businesses
- Enhanced tax assessment

Threats



Economic Conditions

- Construction inflation
- Broader economic uncertainty
- Market absorption rates



Changing Development Market

- Reduced investor confidence
- Different forms of housing
- Competition from greenfield development



Environmental Risks

- Unknown contamination
- Review drainage issues
- Climate change impacts



Rail Operations

- Railway tourism operations
- Safety requirements / constraints
- Compatibility with railway infrastructure



Infrastructure Costs

- Determine if servicing upgrades
- Utility, service, rail, trail relocation costs
- Limited municipal and funding resources



Regulatory Challenges

- Environmental approvals
- Development studies and approvals
- Provincial policy changes



Implementation Complexity

- Multiple processes and review agencies
- Implementation timeframes
- Landowner cooperation required

DRAFT Vision, Guiding Principles and Goals

Section 4



Vision

Transform the Railway Lands Area into a vibrant, connected, mixed-use district that celebrates St. Thomas' railway heritage while providing new housing, employment, parks, and cultural destinations that strengthen downtown and support sustainable city growth.



DRAFT Guiding Principles and Goals



Welcoming Neighbourhoods



Community Character
and Heritage



Responsible Growth



More Choices for Daily Life



Better Public Spaces
and Connections

DRAFT Guiding Principles & Goals

1 Welcoming Neighbourhoods

- Welcome new homes, residents, shops, services, and jobs in areas that already have roads, sidewalks, and municipal services.
- Bring new life to empty or underused properties.
- Support places where people can live, work, shop, play and gather.
- Make it easier to walk, bike, take transit, or make shorter trips by car.
- Enhance the area as a destination in the central part of the city.



DRAFT Guiding Principles & Goals

2

Community Character and Heritage

- Care for the buildings, places, and landscapes that help tell our community's story.
- Respect the features and areas that may have cultural or historic importance.
- Make sure new development fits well in and around heritage areas, local landmarks, and visitor destinations.



DRAFT Guiding Principles & Goals

3 Responsible Growth

- Make the best use of existing roads, water, wastewater, stormwater, and other municipal services.
- Plan ahead so new growth is practical, coordinated, and cost-effective.
- Use green solutions to help manage stormwater, protect local water, reduce flooding risks, and support a healthier environment.



DRAFT Guiding Principles & Goals



4 More Choices for Daily Life

- Make everyday needs easier to reach, including shops, services, parks, and community spaces.
- Encourage a wide range of housing options for different ages, incomes, and household needs.
- Help new development fit comfortably near existing homes, businesses and neighbourhoods.
- Provide new residents, uses and design that supports the vibrancy of Talbot Street.
- Design places that are safer, more resilient, and better for the environment.

DRAFT Guiding Principles & Goals



5 Better Public Spaces and Connections

- Improve streets, sidewalks, parks, and open spaces so they are safe, comfortable, and welcoming.
- Create stronger connections between the Railway Lands, Talbot Street, the rest of downtown, and nearby neighbourhoods.
- Make walking, cycling, and other active transportation options easier for people of all ages and abilities.
- Add trees, landscaping, shade, and green features where they can make outdoor spaces more pleasant.
- Design streets and buildings to support comfort, accessibility, safety, and community well-being.

Initial Engagement Summary

Section 5



Q. What is important about this area – past, present, future?

- It is important to use this space for something that will benefit our community. It Currently sits mostly unused with no real benefit to anyone in our community of than those who want the idea of hanging into it for "heritage".
- That it includes a community centered space, the railroad history and architecture and the proximity to downtown.
- The area is extremely walkable, so close to downtown and filled with excellent paths for exercise. Walkability should be preserved. Also important to this area is Jonas Park. Lots of young families in the area that use this park - no other parks currently within walking distance. The parking area serving Centennial Sports Club and New York Central Ballpark is used daily and remains important.
- Jonas Park and the trees they have if they need to cut them down the need to be replanted elsewhere on the property. I don't want to sacrifice green spaces for apartments building that are heat syncs with no trees
- Keeping the heritage of the railway lands intact. That means supporting the Railway Museum as well as a Central Park that pays homage to the history of the city. The central part of the city shouldn't turn into suburban sprawl. We need to have a reason for people to come from the outskirts of our city to the centre and spend money in town, instead of have them go outwards for other options.
- We need to keep the museum! We need to keep the tourist dollars coming! There is so much history that we've lost! Look at the stations and roundhouses we have allowed to be destroyed!
- The central core of St. Thomas developed as an industrial area, but for the future, we need to turn it into a people place - residences, recreational, attractions. We need a "city centre" which can be the focus of municipal happenings.
- A blend of it all. Preserving the character and history, its so stunning and unique while having a place to gather and for community today.

Q. What is important about this area – past, present, future?

Theme



Preserve railway heritage



Protect parks & trees



Create a vibrant city centre



Walkability & downtown connections



Community gathering spaces



Tourism & local economy



Appropriate redevelopment

Frequency



Key Takeaway:

Respondents are not necessarily asking to preserve the area exactly as it is—they are asking for thoughtful redevelopment that celebrates railway heritage, protects green space, strengthens walkability, and creates a vibrant, people-focused city centre.

Q. What challenges need to be considered over the next 25 years as we plan and guide future development for this area?

- The challenges are the current congestion of the area. We need to open up more land and space for properly planned commercial land that is easy to get in and out of. Our commercial spaces are at capacity and as we add population we need to look at how people will live, shop and still be able to drive around easily.
- Acknowledgment and respect for the history of the space without letting that pigeon hole the future of the space. Don't let the past stunt or block future plans, but also pay homage to it's past. A balance is needed.
- Homeless community and drug users frequent this area, causing major disruption sometimes right in front of young families. If we encourage this behaviour, we encourage the decline of our downtown. If we encourage growing young families to move to this area, we encourage positive traffic for our downtown - and more money for our downtown businesses.
- We need to implement a green spaces strategy plant trees with the housing we been having record heat years for a while now and its only gonna get worse we need as much tree cover as possible
- Parking space needs to be thought of smarter. We can't keep losing land to parking lots, we need to think of parking structures or alternate parking solutions. This also means we need to support public transit to give people other options aside from driving everywhere in town. Parks don't need roads and cars going through them.
- It's going to be a tough balancing act! But supporting not only the PSTR as well as the museum will bring more tourists! More money to the core! As to the core we need to do something about the burned down empty lots plaguing us!
- Main challenge - clean up brownfields! The city and province need to get together to either do it directly, or provide financing to private landowners.
- A place for community. to gather. something to do after work and outside of the home.

Q. What challenges need to be considered over the next 25 years as we plan and guide future development for this area?

Challenge

Frequency

- 🚧 Infrastructure & transportation
- ⚖️ Balance heritage & growth
- 🌳 Climate resilience & green space
- 🏠 Vibrant community & downtown
- 🅅️ Smarter parking & mobility
- ♻️ Brownfield redevelopment
- 💼 Economic development & tourism



Key Takeaway:

Respondents recognize that redevelopment will require balancing growth, heritage, infrastructure, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. There is support for creating a vibrant, climate-resilient district with improved mobility, revitalized sites, quality public spaces, and investment that benefits both residents and the downtown.

Q. What opportunities are there for future development in this area to enhance the City over the next 25 years?

- There are a few options for future development. First would be building large commercial plazas similar to south Wonderland. Our city needs to have big commercial plans to match our big industrial and residential plans. Second would be to use the property to put in the high density housing for the city. Multiple tall towers with the ground floor being all retail. Build your customers right in top of the commercial property.
- I would love to see some of this area turned into public space with an outdoor skating rink/splash pad to bring the community together in a downtown park. The rest of the area would be a community of both storefronts, shops and medium dense housing, capturing the history and vibrant railroad past of the city.
- A nice useable greenspace /open space / park is desired in this area with areas to sit and walk. This specific area in St Thomas does not have any nearby, and adding it to this location will offer not only the residents a place to utilize, but also visitors to the area or as an extension to downtown.
- It would be nice to either expand Jonas Park with a splash pad, outdoor seating which could serve events, families and the large Senior community at Seasons Retirement building; or surround Jonas Park with more family homes. Another good option for the area could be recreation fields or facilities - with the ballpark and Joe Thornton Arena close by.
- The original rail way buildings if possible should be used for mixed use housing and the land across from Joe Thornton arena should be more housing
- A Central Heritage Park that pays homage to the history of the city: A pedestrian park (parking off site), with walking paths, historical plaques, and beautiful trees and gardens / ponds. Look at Aylmer and Belmont for inspiration. Historical plaques are needed! This park would also be home to festivals / community events, food truck events, etc. A city centre / city square on the vacant lot on Ross and Talbot. Cobblestone grounds with a centrepiece fountain or statue/artwork, with mixed use business/residential lining the outside edges of the square, with pedestrian entrances from Ross and Talbot and the Railway lands / Centre Street. Inside the square would have seating space for the restaurants in the square. Another opportunity for an event space.
- A mix of commercial as well high density residential on the outskirts would be great but all railway themed!
- Opportunities - the new rec /aquatic centre should be built in this area. The city also needs a new performing arts centre, and it could be put in the old ECRM.
- Some housing for sure but also community spaces. Thinking like entertainment, arts, play, the trails need to stay for sure.

Q. What opportunities are there for future development in this area to enhance the City over the next 25 years?

Opportunity



Mixed-use city centre



Signature central park & public space



Celebrate railway heritage



More housing choices



Recreation, arts & cultural facilities



Parks, trails & walkability



Retail, restaurants & local business

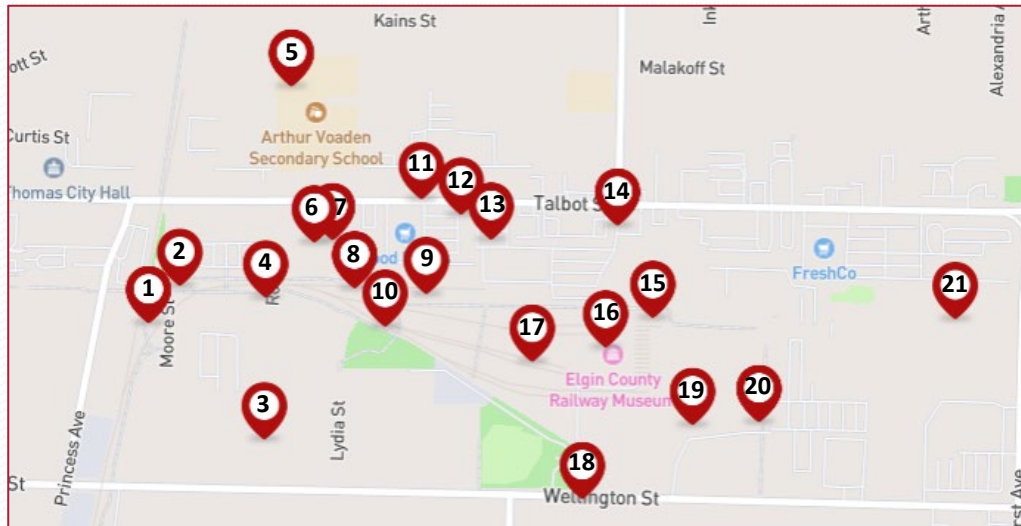
Priority



Key Takeaway:

Respondents envision the Railway Lands evolving into a vibrant, mixed-use district that combines new housing, shops, parks, cultural destinations, and public gathering spaces while celebrating St. Thomas' unique railway heritage. The strongest opportunity identified is creating a destination city centre that serves residents, visitors, and future generations.

“Drop a Pin” – Study Area Ideas and Considerations



1. Reimagine existing underutilized park space in our downtown railway lands.

2. Activate and animate BX Tower as a key community heritage railway asset.

3. Helping the businesses along here thrive with keeping the sidewalks clean, parking in the area, and incentive to beautify their businesses.

4. Be smart about how Centre Street cuts through railway land if there's developments. Line the south side with large trees to provide shade to pedestrians and separate future residential devt.

5. Preserve the built heritage of the historic Arthur Voaden School and promote opportunities for Adaptive Reuse.

6. Would love to see this space utilized. It's such a prime location to sit empty. so many possibilities with this space for housing, community, retail, etc.

7. Buy/acquire this vacant space and turn it into a city square (maybe call it McCaig Centre). Design a centrepiece/fountain/statue and have small businesses and restaurants and shops lining the outsides of the square.

8. Maintain and support existing railway track Infrastructure

9. We have nice trails here but always room for improvement and ways to add more art and culture along there. A focus on safety in the evening would be nice.

10. Ensure that any future residential development is smart, walkable, and has mixed-use zoning. Walking trails to Food Basics. We need to make sure there's enough shops/corner stores/ mixed use that people don't need to be forced into their cars and drive across town to get something when Food Basics is closed.

11. A community staple - this is such a fantastic example of a place for community. Streamliners captures the charm and our history while being relevant for today's needs for community and connection.

12. Enhanced pedestrian connectivity to Talbot Street & Horton Market.

13. Be more mindful of parking lots. Start thinking about parking structures and vertical solutions to save land space on parking.

14. Enhanced pedestrian connectivity to Talbot Street.

15. New Centre St. extension from Ross to Caso crossing can provide the missing active transportation and vehicular connection needed in our downtown. This would also reorientate our key heritage railway assets with public facing frontage instead of them being tucked behind legacy commercial plazas.

16. This needs to be a community space. keeping the stunning history but also a space to gather, for arts, for entertainment, for festivals, for shows along with showcasing our history with the museum.

17. Build a Central Heritage Park in the railway district. Whether its behind the CASO station or south of ECRM, we should acquire land and have a central heritage park with walking paths and historical plaques with information of the history of the city and people and railway.

18. Support for public transit. Look into a Road Diet to better use road space and ensure opportunity for BAT lanes (bus + bike) as well as a central turning lane.

19. This space could use an intentional greenspace / open space / park including trails and places to sit and enjoy the surroundings. Recreational courts could also be included, such as pickleball. More commercial or mixed-use could also be beneficial to the area as an extension of downtown.

20. Recreational facilities or more mixed use business/residential stacked buildings like west end Talbot Street.

21. Active transportation connection eastward to First Ave and beyond.

Feedback on DRAFT Principles & Goals

Overall Priorities

-  Better parks & public spaces
-  Community character & heritage
-  Walkability & trail connections
-  Community gathering spaces
-  Downtown revitalization
-  Compatible infill development
-  Recreation & active living

Initial Support



Key Takeaway:

Respondents seem to support a future Railway Lands district that celebrates local heritage, enhances parks and trails, creates spaces for people of all ages, and strengthens Downtown St. Thomas. While opinions differed on the amount of future development, there was broad acknowledgement that any change should be thoughtfully designed, walkable, and integrated with high-quality public spaces and community amenities.

Railway Lands Area Master Plan

Phase 1: Context

Background and New Directions
Summary Document

July 2026