What is St. Thomas 2051?

A project to create a brand-new Official Plan for the City of St. Thomas.

St. Thomas 2051 will be the City's plan for our future by building on the community we are today while shaping the city we want to become. It is an opportunity for residents, businesses, community organizations, and others 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.

The new Official Plan will be "Setting the Track for our Future" by guiding decisions about land use, housing, employment, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, community services, and growth to 2051.



St. Thomas 2051
Setting the Track for Our Future

The project is looking to the people and businesses that call St. Thomas home today and in the future.

This includes long-time residents, newcomers, Indigenous communities, business owners, entrepreneurs, and community organizations. It is about the people who live, work, learn, and invest here today, while also considering those who are not yet part of our community. This includes the young people who will build their futures in St. Thomas, the families who will choose to move here, the workers who will support a growing economy, and the students who may one day decide to stay and call St. Thomas home.

The St. Thomas Official Plan update must consider a broad range of perspectives to shape a vision and policy framework that reflects the needs, aspirations, and experiences of the entire community. This means making efforts to hear from people and groups who have not always been included in planning decisions and includes equity-deserving communities, renters, youth, older adults, Indigenous Peoples, and people who have experienced homelessness, poverty, housing challenges, or other barriers that make it harder to participate.

What do you value most about living in St. Thomas today?

What should never change as St. Thomas grows?

What would make St. Thomas an even better place to live, work, and visit?

What types of new development fit best in St. Thomas?

How can we ensure growth contributes to complete and connected communities?

What should future commercial and employment areas look like?

What types of housing are needed most in St. Thomas?

How can we provide housing options for people at different stages of life?

What would make it easier for people to stay in St. Thomas as their housing needs change?

What natural areas are most important to protect?

How can development support healthier ecosystems and communities?

What role should trees, parks, and green spaces play in the city's future?

How can St. Thomas support local businesses and entrepreneurs?

What would strengthen the city's economic future?

How can employment growth support a vibrant community?

By bringing together diverse voices, the Official Plan can help ensure St. Thomas grows in a way that is inclusive, resilient, and responsive to current and future generations.

What is an Official Plan?

An Official Plan is one of the most important policy documents in municipal land use planning in Ontario.

It is the City's long-term policy document that sets out the community's vision and guides decisions about land use, growth, development, infrastructure, and environmental protection.

The Plan also helps ensure that future land use decisions align with broader community objectives by guiding decisions about:

- Where housing, businesses, industry, and community facilities should be located;
- How growth and development should occur;
- How natural heritage features and environmental systems should be protected;
- How transportation, infrastructure, and public services should be planned; and
- How communities can become more sustainable, resilient, and livable.

Updating the Official Plan helps the City realize its vision for a "Brighter Future" in its Strategic Plan.

The City's vision is to build a brighter future where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive. This is to be achieved by providing high-quality public services, stimulating sustainable development and economic growth, preserving and protecting our environment, and cultivating a safe, accessible, and inclusive City for everyone.



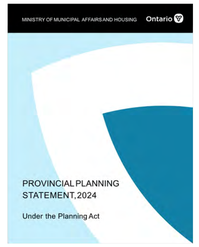
The City's new Official Plan will act as the main city-building tool to guide and manage change, investment, and provide direction about local priorities and community needs throughout the City.

Under Ontario's planning framework, Official Plans guide how land is used, how communities change over time, and how public and private development decisions are made. Official Plans are required to be consistent with provincial policy and conform to legislation. This sets the legal and policy rules for land use planning that apply to the City.

As the City's overarching policy framework that guides how land is used, the new Official Plan will provide direction on how communities grow, how environmental systems are protected, and how infrastructure and development are coordinated over the long term. It balances social, economic, environmental, and cultural objectives while creating a consistent and legally defensible basis for land use planning decisions.

The Province sets the legal rules for land use planning across Ontario and the policies that are to be applied to every municipality.

The Provincial Planning Statement provides policy direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development. As a key part of Ontario's policy-led planning system, the Provincial Planning Statement sets the policy foundation for regulating the development and use of land province-wide, helping achieve the provincial goal of meeting the needs of a fast-growing province while enhancing the quality of life for all Ontarians. The City of St. Thomas Official Plan needs to be consistent with this document.



In addition to the Official Plan, the City of St. Thomas has other plans, strategies and guidelines that plan for the future.

The City has completed several studies to help guide future growth including evaluating future land needs, and developing a parks and recreation master plan, a transportation master plan, a housing and homelessness plan, and urban design guidelines that all help the City plan for its future.



What is the project timeline?

Something this important takes time.

The existing City of St. Thomas Official Plan was approved by the Province in 1980. While several large amendments have been approved since its original approval, and its has been able to manage growth and development across the City over the past several decades, a new Official Plan is needed to respond to current and future conditions and trends.

The Province sets the legislative requirements for completing a comprehensive review and update of an Official Plan. While these rules establish the minimum requirements for a review, the City wants to ensure that it fully engages with the people and businesses that call St. Thomas home today and into the future to ensure that the Official Plan reflects the community's vision to 2051.

To make sure that we get things right, the City will be undertaking a comprehensive engagement strategy over the next one and half to two-years it is anticipated to complete the project.

After the new Official Plan is adopted by Council, it will be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval.

We are in Phase 1 of the process.

The figure shows the overall three-phased strategy to create a new Official Plan for the City. We are currently in Phase 1 and this sets the groundwork for the future policy development and updates that are to come. It is centred around identification and mapping of issues and opportunities, setting a vision, establishing goals and objectives, and creating an overall strategy for the development of the new Official Plan.

Don't worry, the end of Phase 1 won't mean the end of your involvement in the process. The City will be looking for input and feedback as it develops new policies and creates a new Official Plan based on what it heard through Phase 1 and the several background studies, reports, and other City initiatives that are currently ongoing.



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



Your voice and opinions are important to help shape the Official Plan that reflects what the City is today, what it values, and what it could be by 2051.

Over the next year, the City will be hosting different sessions and looking for your input through in-person sessions, online surveys, and through the City's project page on its web site. To stay involved and up-to-date, please visit www.stthomas.ca or submit questions/comments to planning@stthomas.ca.