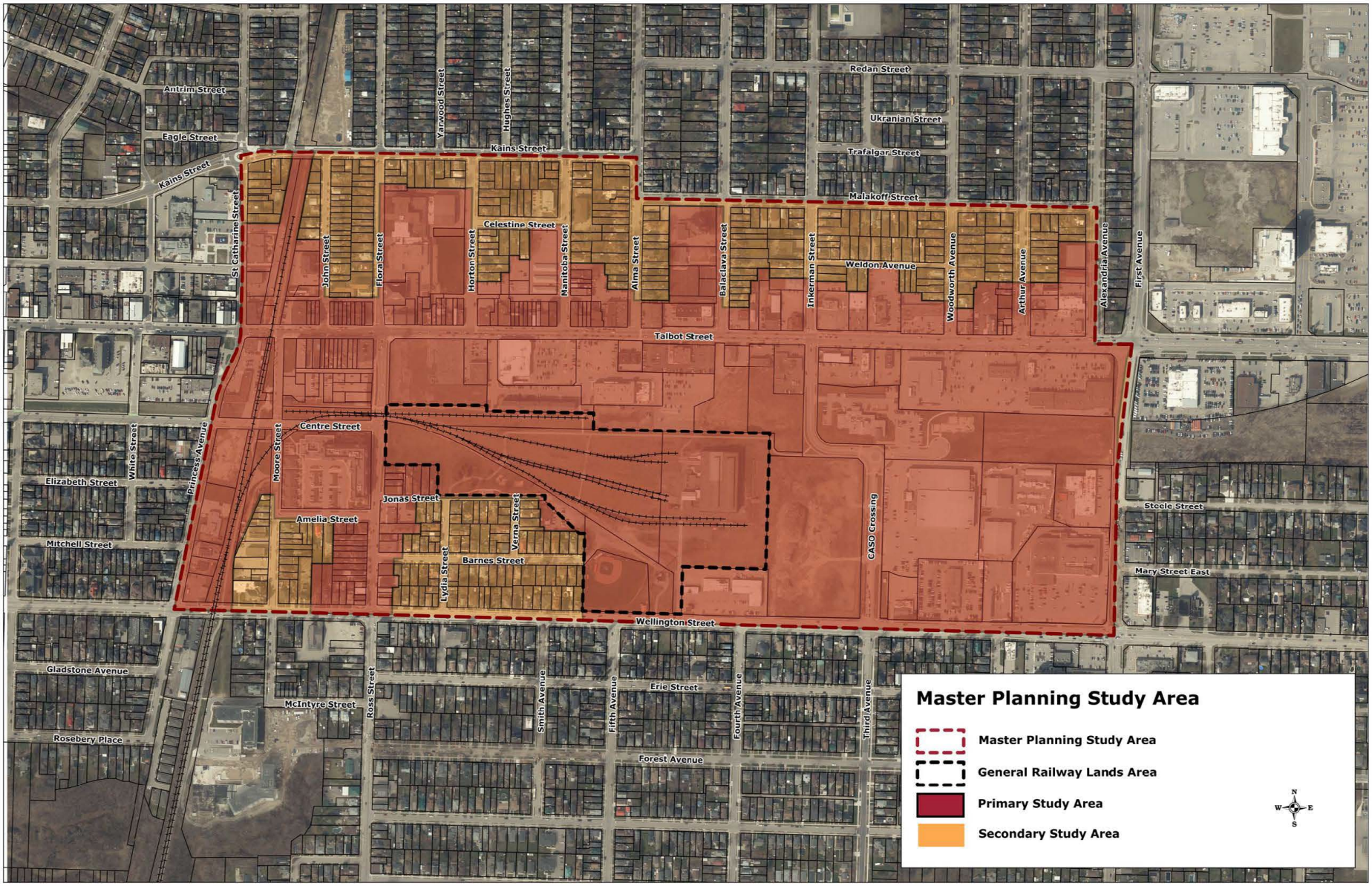
Railway Lands Area Master Plan

Phase 1: Context

Summary –
Existing Conditions
Future Plans
Considerations & Influencing Factors

June 2026


Antrim Street
Eagle Street
Kains Street
Kains Street
Yarwood Street
Hughes Street
Redan Street
Ukranian Street
Trafalgar Street
Malakoff Street
St Catharine Street
John Street
Flora Street
Celestine Street
Horton Street
Manitoba Street
Alma Street
Balaclava Street
Inkerman Street
Weldon Avenue
Woodworth Avenue
Arthur Avenue
Alexandria Avenue
First Avenue
Talbot Street
White Street
Princess Avenue
Centre Street
Moore Street
Elizabeth Street
Jonas Street
Amelia Street
Verna Street
Lydia Street
Barnes Street
CASO Crossing
Steele Street
Mitchell Street
Mary Street East
Wellington Street
Gladstone Avenue
McIntyre Street
Ross Street
Smith Avenue
Fifth Avenue
Erie Street
Fourth Avenue
Third Avenue
Rosebery Place
Forest Avenue
Master Planning Study Area
Master Planning Study Area
General Railway Lands Area
Primary Study Area
Secondary Study Area
N
W
E
S

Primary Study Area - General Railway Lands








Primary Study Area – Talbot St





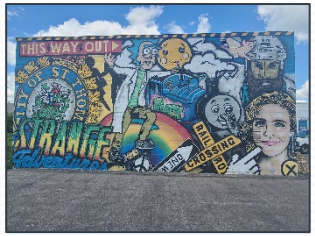



Primary Study Area – Other









Secondary Study Area








Existing Conditions / Future Plans

Community Profile: Study Area Snapshot (Estimates)

Study Area Size = ~85 hectares (210 acres)

Population & Housing

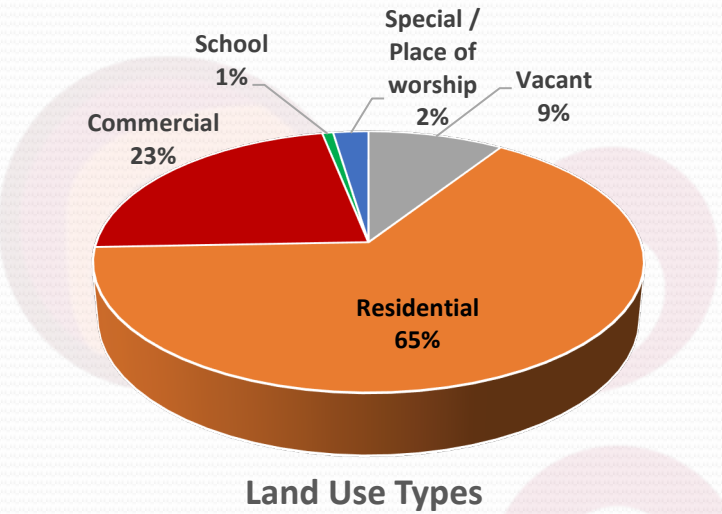
- Properties with Residential = ~420
- Average household size = 2.3 persons per unit (2021 census)
- Dwelling units by type = single detached, duplex, triplex, semi-detached, apartment

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

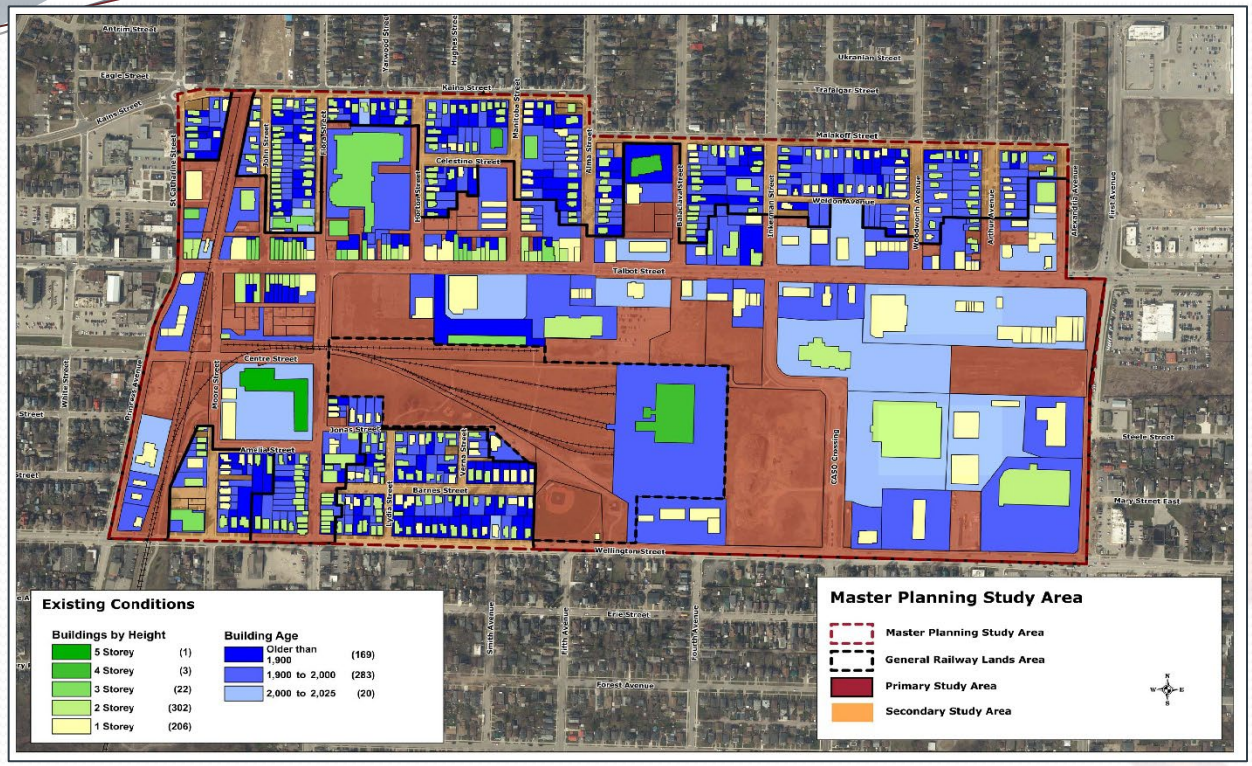
Land Use

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



Land Use Types

Existing Conditions / Future Plans



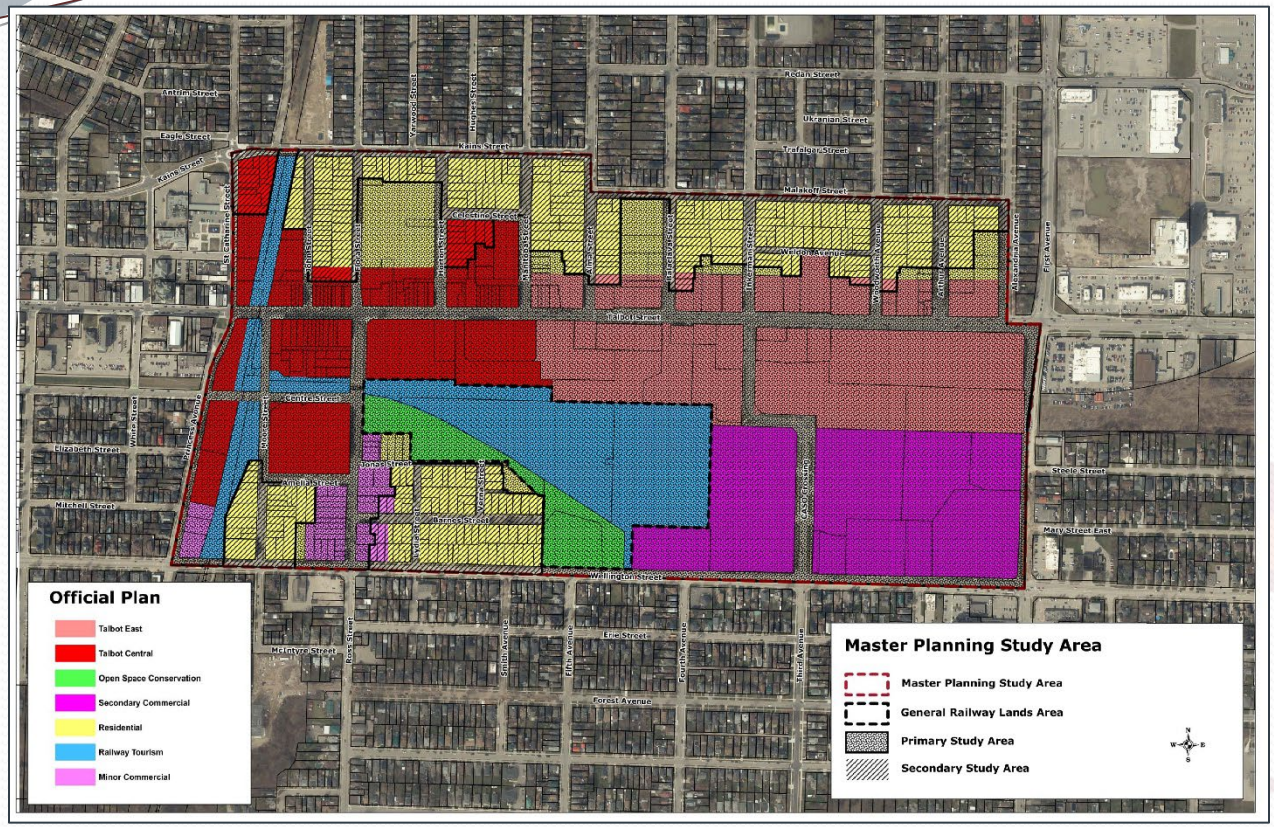
Built Form

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

Official Plan Policies (portion)

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)

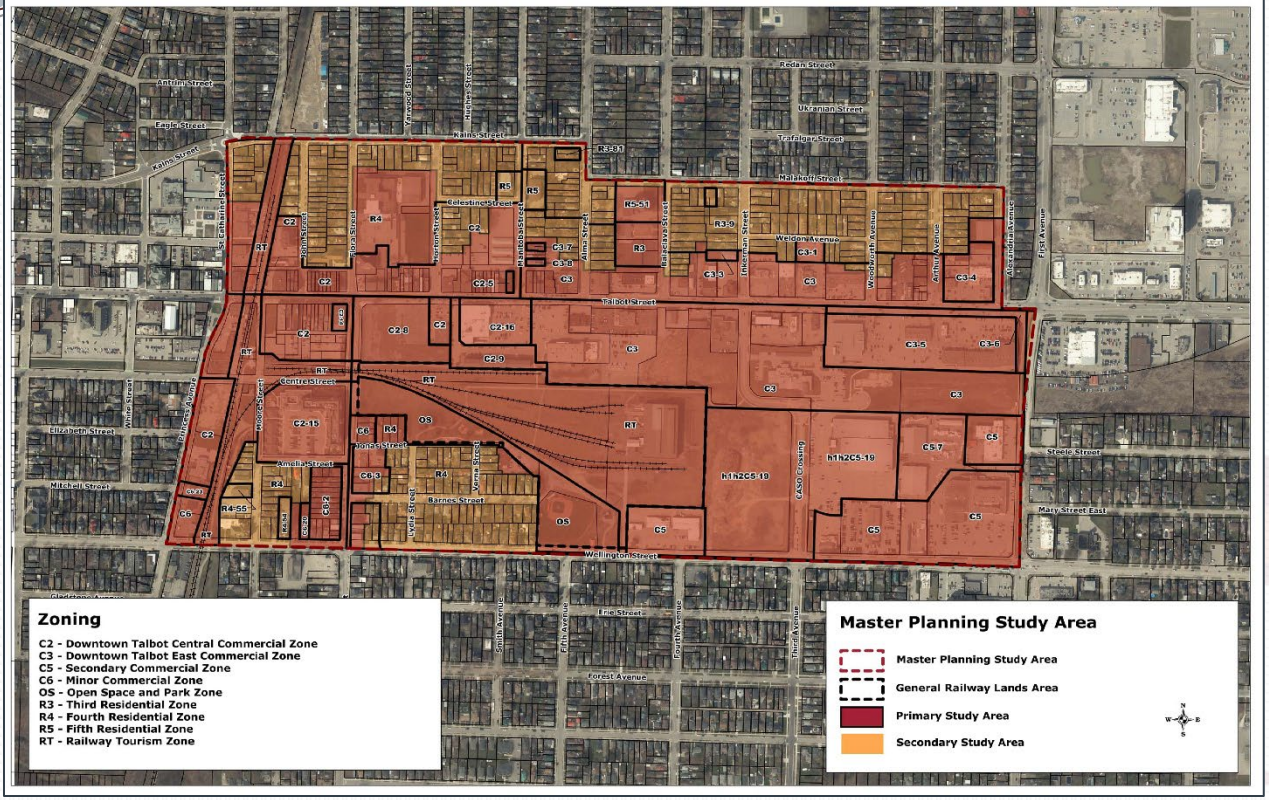
Existing Conditions / Future Plans
Official Plan



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)
- …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. 300m^2 comm. floor area(lot), 2300m^2(zone)

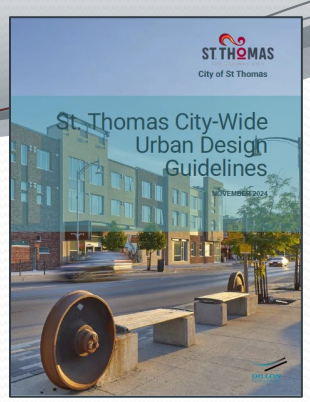
R3 – all dwelling types up to 4 units, most home types, daycare, private school, church - 11m max. building height (15m for church)

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

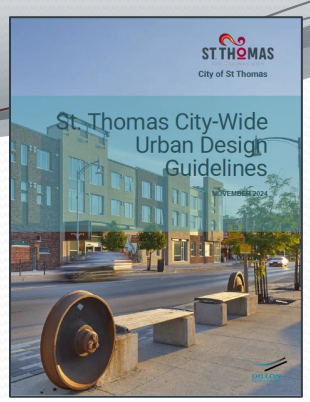
Existing Conditions / Future Plans
Urban Design Guidelines



- 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.

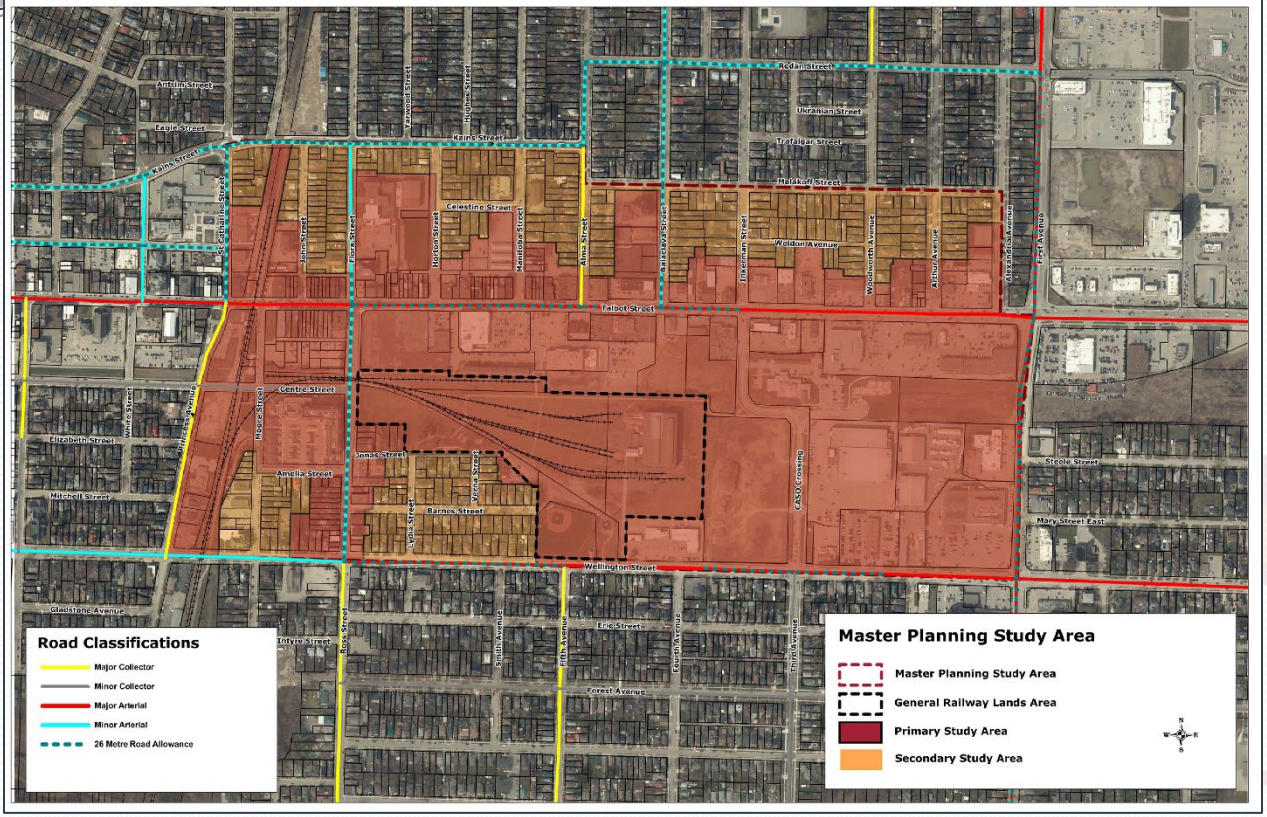
2.7 Destination Landmarks – Includes CASO Station, Elgin County Railway Museum

- 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, Ste. Catharine
- Major Collector–Alma, Princess
- 26m road allowance-First, Talbot, Ross, Wellington

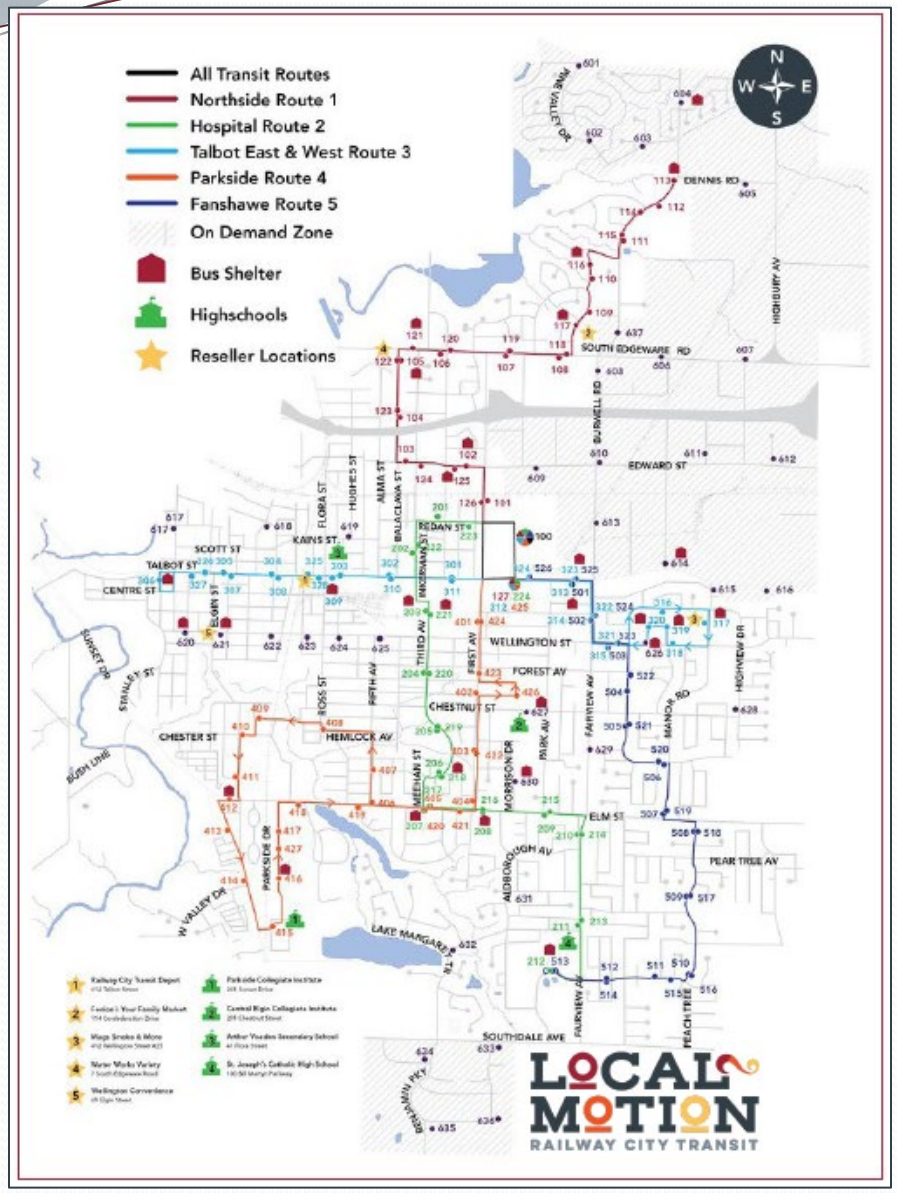
Future Plans

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

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- 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

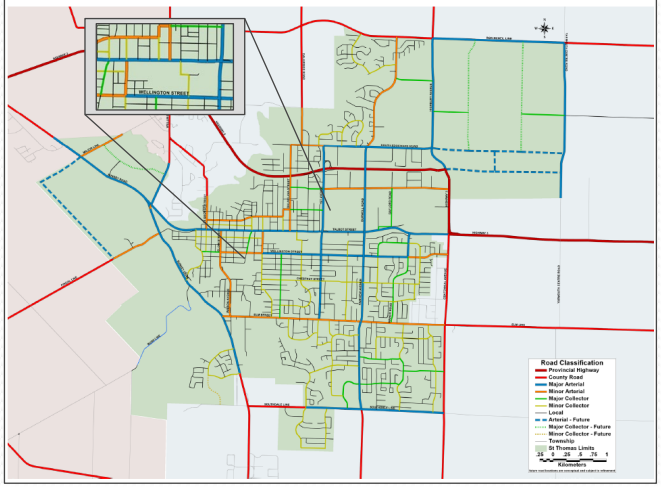


FIGURE ES.1 INTERIM FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT NETWORK

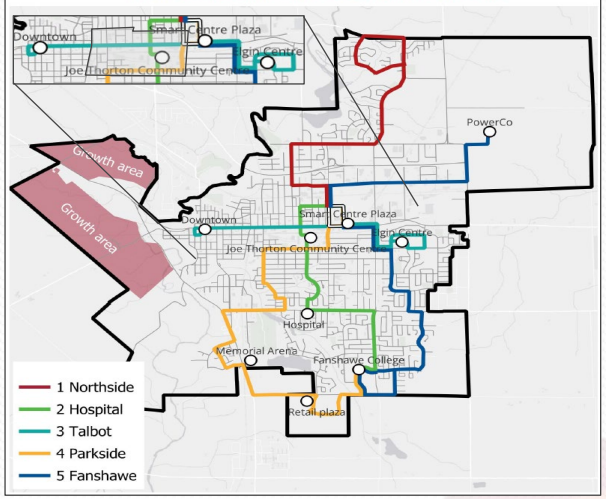


FIGURE ES.3 RECOMMENDED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

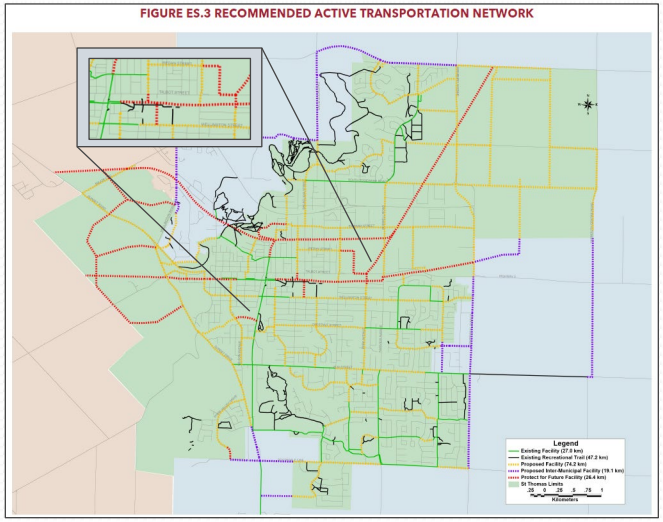
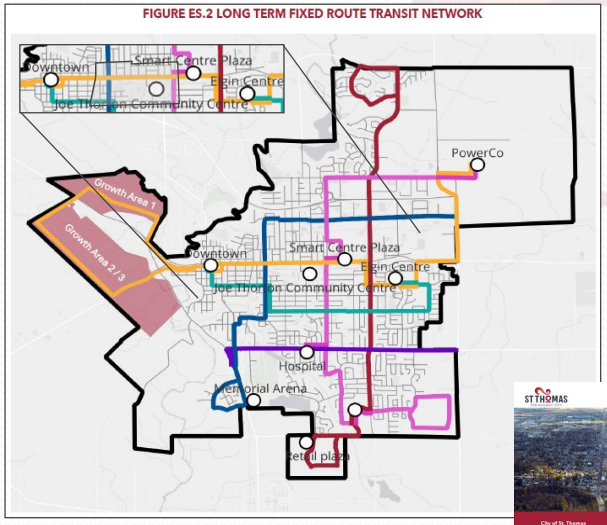


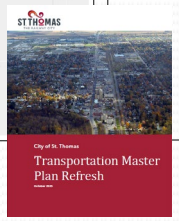
FIGURE ES.2 LONG TERM FIXED ROUTE TRANSIT NETWORK

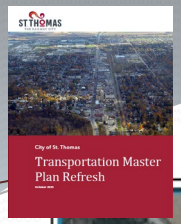


Transportation Master Plan

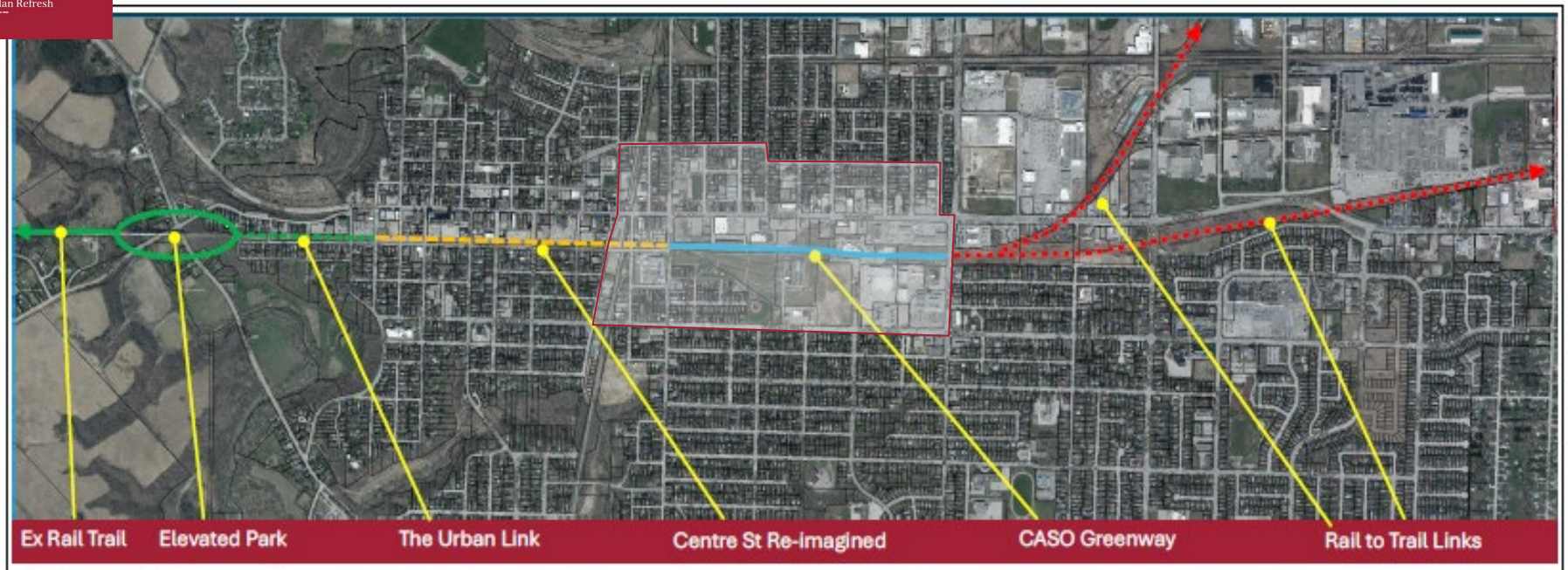
Study Area Highlights:

- 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







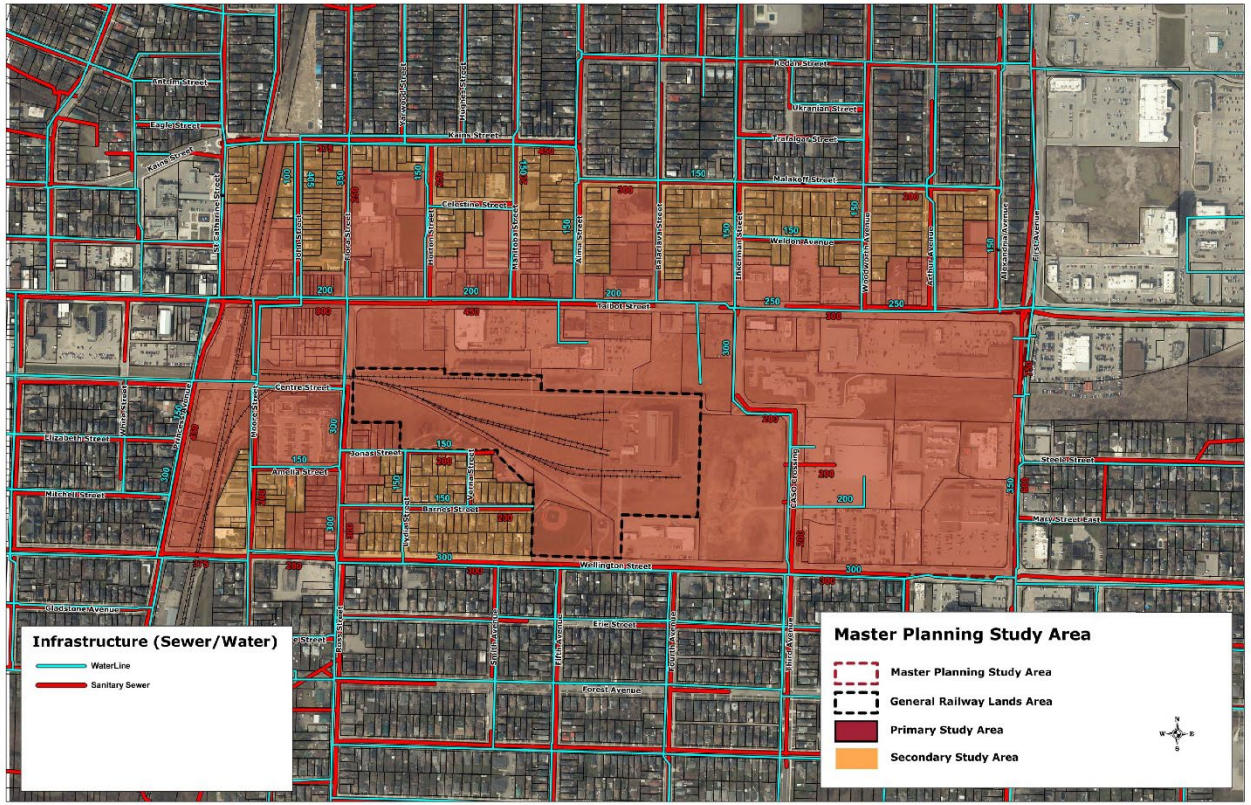









Existing Conditions / Future Plans



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

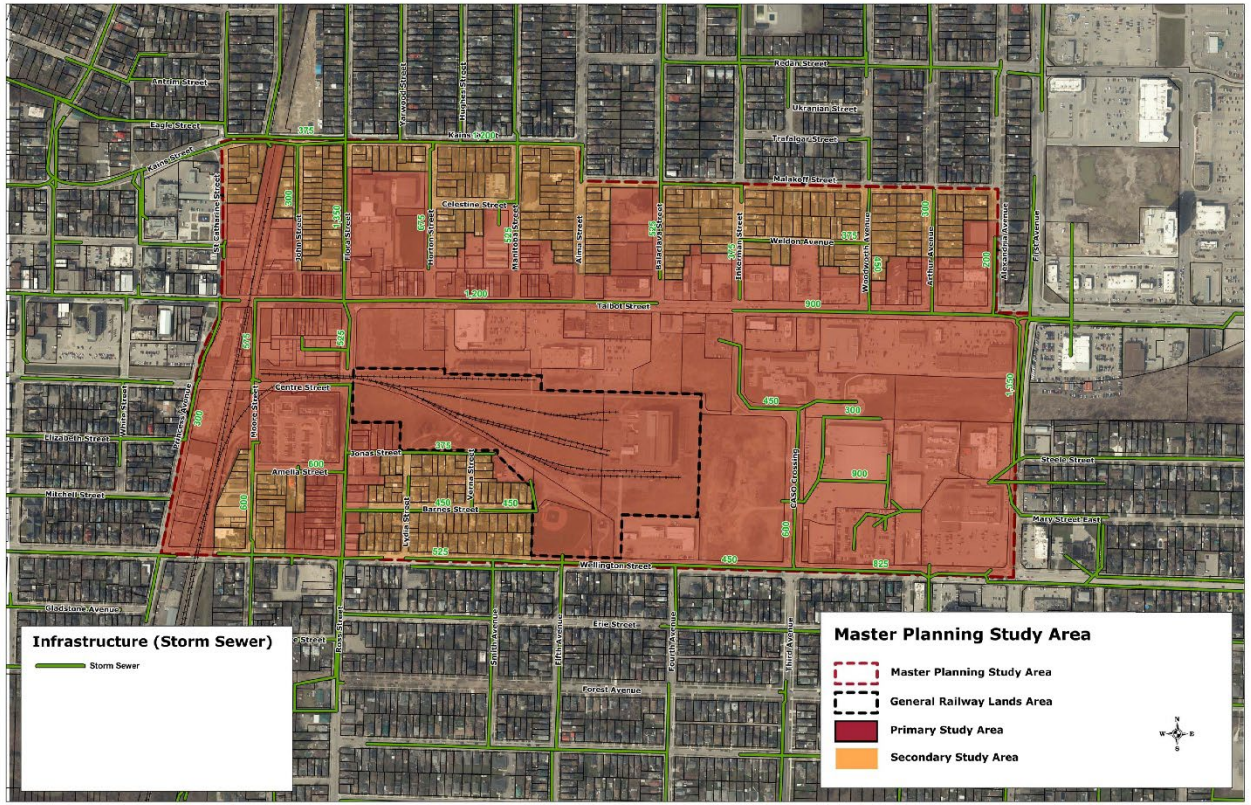
Future Plans

- 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

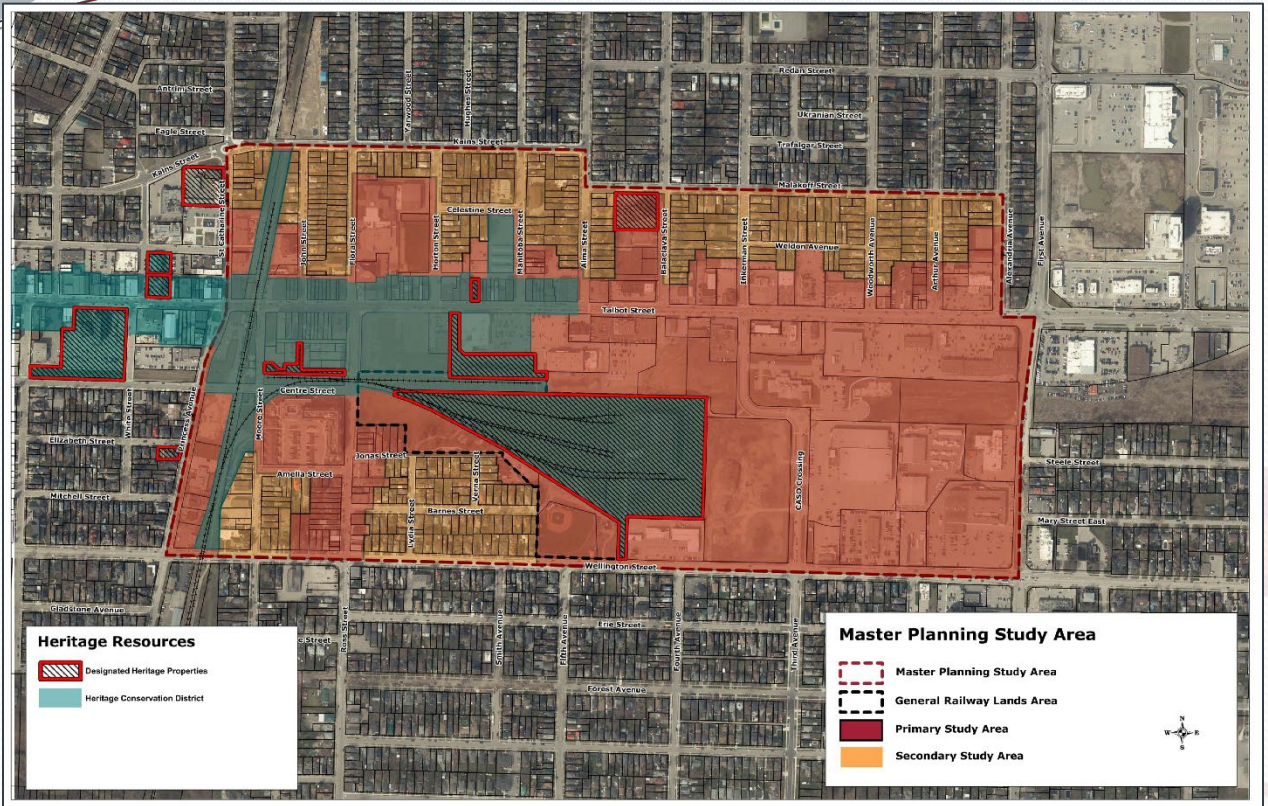
Future Plans

- Stormwater Management Master Plan (2026)
- Undertake storm modeling (Railway Lands Study)

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- To ensure that sanitary sewers, storm sewers and watermains 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

- 5 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

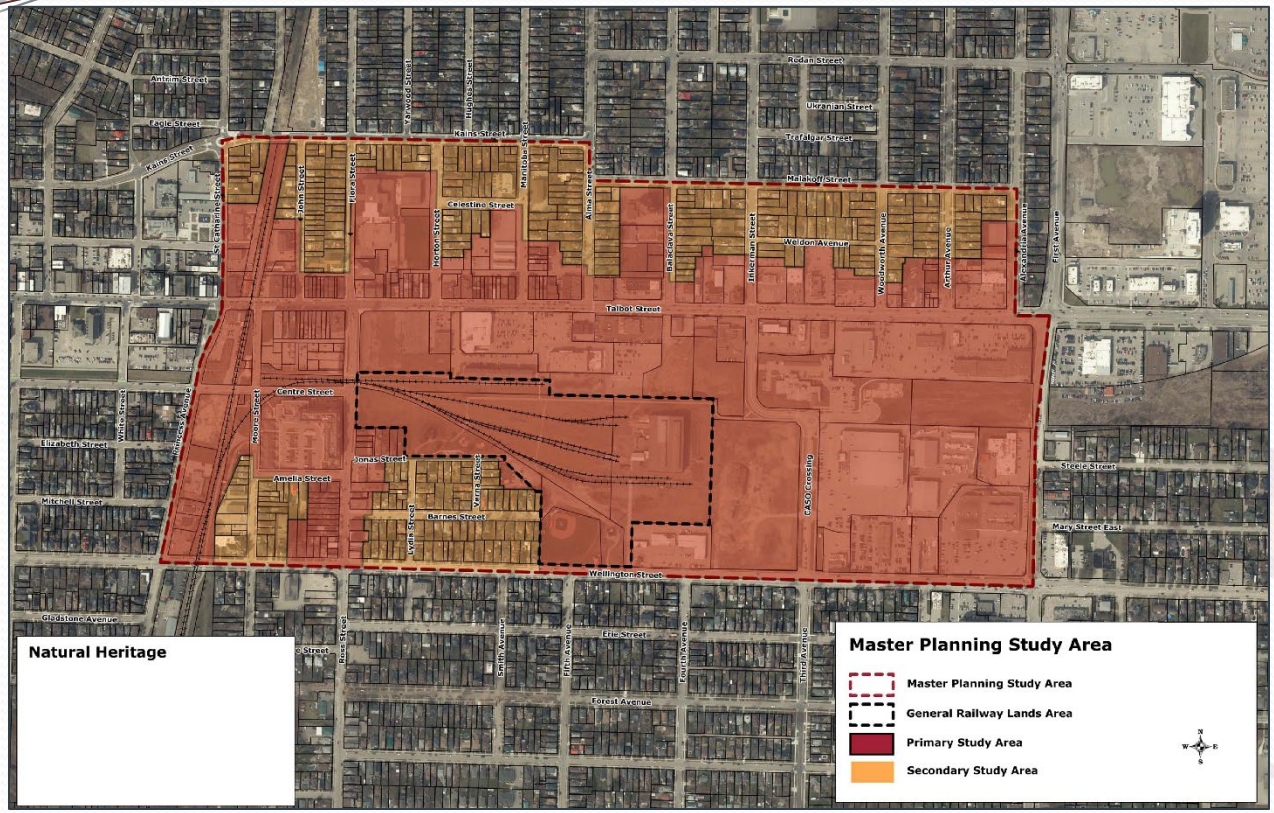
Future Plans

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

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- …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 know significant natural heritage features within the Study Area, identified on Schedule E or designated on Schedule A of the Official Plan

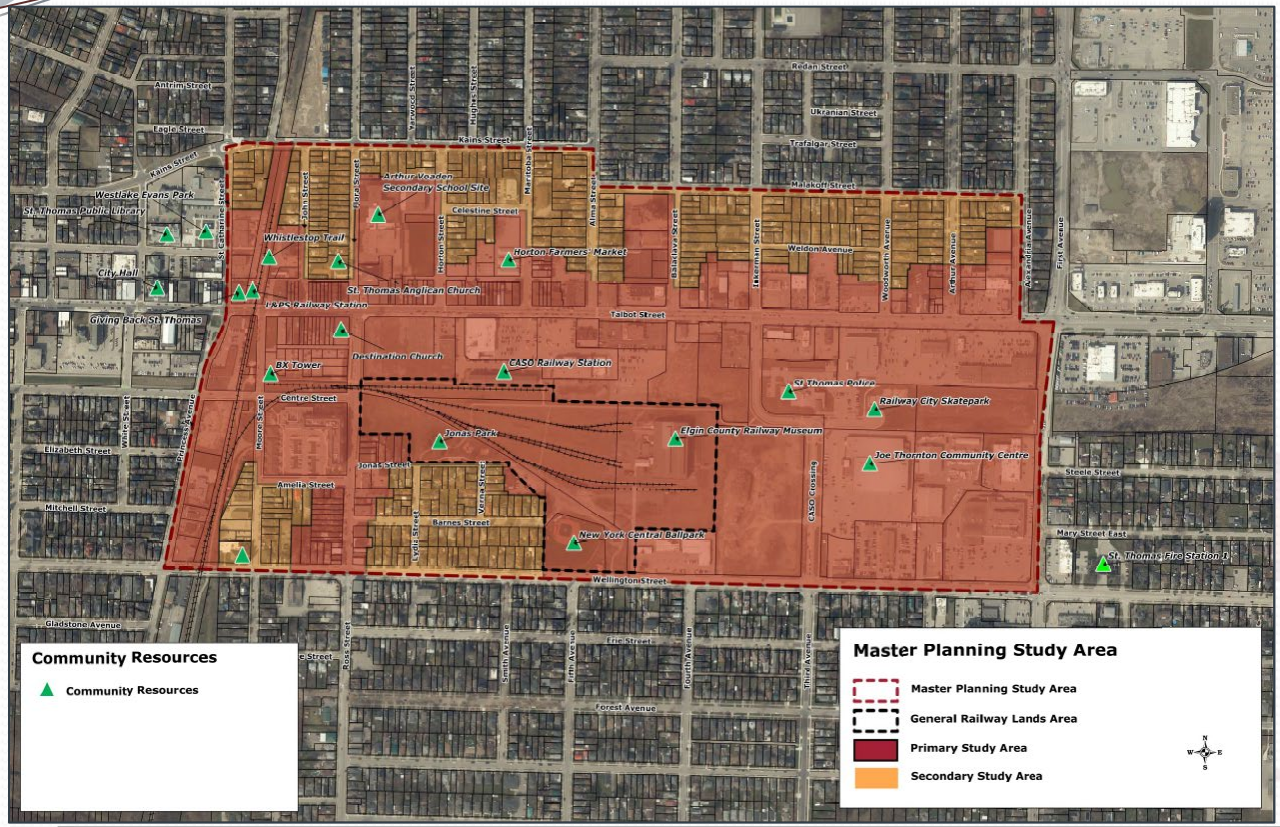
Future Plans

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

Official Plan Policies (portion)

- 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)

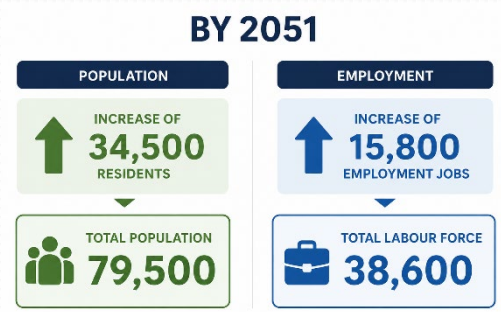
Official Plan Policies (portion)

- 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

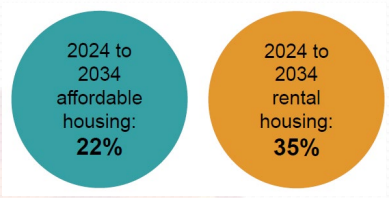
- Drivers and disruptors of change and growth: global economic outlook, evolving macro-economic trends post COVID/changing nature of work, national/provincial economic outlook, immigration changes, manufacturing/EV Battery Plant, migration flow, commuting, labour force trends
- 2% annual growth rate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



- 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

New Official Plan

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



Provincial Direction

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

Ontario

Brownfields

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



Rail-line /Corridor

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



Connectivity

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



Parking

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



Built Form

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



Railway Museum

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

