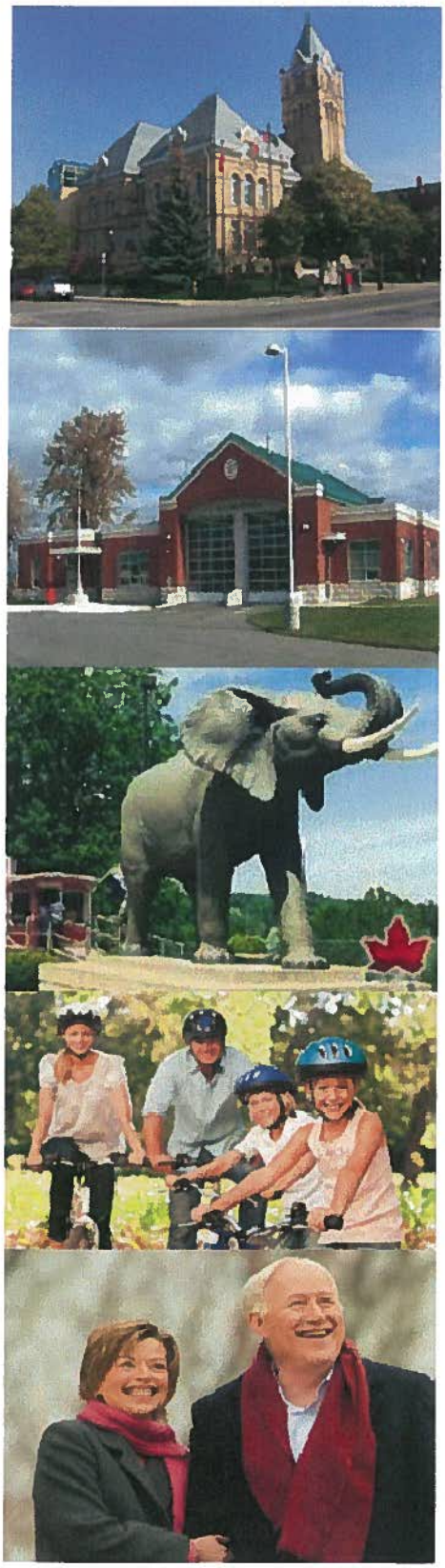

OUR COMMUNITY
OUR FUTURE
OUR ST. THOMAS

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

May 2013

May 2013

This plan has been developed by DPRA Canada in consultation with the City of St. Thomas, Elgin - St. Thomas Public Health, Staff, Council and Residents.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AMO	Association of Municipalities of Ontario
AODA	Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
CIP	Capital Investment Plan
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
FCM	Federation of Canadian Municipalities
GTF	Gas Tax Fund
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GMF	Green Municipal Fund
ICSP	Integrated Community Sustainability Plan
MFA	Municipal Funding Agreement
PPS	Provincial Policy Statement

1.0 Introduction

The Community Strategic Planning Process

The City of St. Thomas initiated a process to develop a Community Strategic Plan, which looks to the future with a view to enhance the ability of the City to achieve long-term sustainability. The development of *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* incorporates all necessary municipal strategic plan components while meeting the needs of an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP).

The final Community Strategic Plan will function as a traditional strategic plan while acting as an ICSP for the City of St. Thomas.

This project, supported by funding provided by the City of St. Thomas and Elgin-St. Thomas Public Health, is based on examining the long-term sustainability and management of the City's societal, cultural, economic and environmental assets.

What is a Community Strategic Plan?

A Community Strategic Plan is a collaborative and inclusive community planning tool that identifies the desired future for the community: what it looks like, how it functions, and how to achieve the vision for the future.

The outcomes of *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* include the establishment of a collective vision and a plan over the next 10 years that creates a path to achieve long-term sustainability and management of the City's societal, cultural, economic and environmental assets.

Municipalities across Canada are developing Municipal Sustainable Community Plans as a framework or a mechanism to implement actions that will lead them in a sustainable direction over the long-term. Sustainable development recognizes a balance between the natural environment, economic and social development, and culture.

Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas has been developed to meet the requirement of a Municipal Sustainable Community Plan that could be used for future Green Municipal Fund (GMF) applications through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

WHY DEVELOP THE PLAN?

The City of St. Thomas recognized that every municipality was encouraged to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) as part of the Government of Canada's New Deal with Cities and Communities. The Gas Tax Funds are available through FCM to support reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and cleaner water and air. In addition to meeting the spirit of the Federal Gas Tax Agreement and the requirements of the Municipal Green Fund (Federation of Canadian Municipalities), an ICSP represents 'a new way of doing business' for most municipalities – a community-based approach to planning the future that brings together the social, cultural, economic and environmental strategies in an integrated way. It provides a one-window approach to understanding the municipality's vision for the future, and the road map for getting there.

According to the requirements of the Municipal funding agreement (MFA), The City of St. Thomas understands the importance of developing an ICSP in order to transfer the federal gas tax revenue and the significant benefits this provides to municipalities. The overall goal of an ICSP is to serve as a guiding document for municipalities to select unique and community-specific projects that could be completed using the gas tax funds. These projects are presented in a comprehensive and complete Capital Investment Plan.

A Capital Investment Plan is defined in the MFA as: *"A document, such as a capital plan, created through a public process, with approval from municipal elected officials, providing a detailed understanding of anticipated investments into tangible capital assets that are considered 'priorities', along with a rationale."*

A Capital Investment Plan (CIP) provides a detailed understanding of the anticipated investments into tangible capital assets. These assets include basic facilities, services, and installations needed for the functioning of the community such as bridges, roads, water and wastewater systems. A Capital Investment Plan:

- provides a model to facilitate long-term capital planning (5-year or 10-year capital budget);
- provides financing for future infrastructure; and
- helps municipalities formalize their priority setting and decision-making processes.

The allocation of Gas Tax Funds from 2010 to 2014 for the City of St. Thomas was based on population data provided by the 2006 Census[1]. As a result, the City of St. Thomas, with a population of 36,110 in 2006, will receive an allocation of **$2,215,348.50** each year (2010-2014). This is calculated on a $61.37 allocation per person.

[1] Association of Municipalities of Ontario. (n.d.). Federal Gas Tax Funds. Available [Online]: http://www.amo.on.ca/Content/NavigationMenu/SustainableMunicipalities/FederalGasTax/default.htm. Viewed: November 2011.

There are many benefits to developing the Community Strategic Plan, including:

- to better understand the community needs and expectations (social, economic, environmental, and cultural);
- to develop a renewed sense of purpose/future direction;
- clarification of short, medium, and long term goals and objectives;
- identification and enhancing the ability to deal with and manage change;
- development of a clear road map for moving forward;
- mitigating potential risk through proactive planning;
- improved decision-making and management effectiveness;
- enhanced communication with staff and the public;
- strengthened coordination of activities between corporate departments; and
- clearly defining responsibility and accountability.

The City and partners recognize that the level of effort and investment by the City of St. Thomas in developing *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* will result in a significant long-term benefit for the community it serves.

A number of initiatives, already undertaken by the City of St. Thomas on this sustainability journey, assisted with building upon the established framework and further developing *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas.*

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The consulting firm DPRA Canada was retained to assist with the development of *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas.*

The process to develop the Plan included:

- **Document Review and Environmental Scan:** Relevant documents were identified and reviewed by the project team. This included background studies, City reports, and past and current initiatives. An Environmental Scan was developed that presented a portrait of the City of St. Thomas and the key sustainability initiatives. A summary of the findings from the scan are presented on the following pages. More detailed findings are presented in the Appendix.

- **Staff and Council Interviews:** A number of interviews were conducted with key staff, council and community stakeholders. Participants provided feedback on key issues and opportunities for the City of St. Thomas. There were 30 interviews completed.

- **Community Launch Event:** A launch event was held at the Elgin Mall that introduced the Strategic Planning process and opportunities to get involved. A community survey was distributed and residents were invited to provide feedback on their community vision.

- **Stakeholder Summit and Community Workshop:** Stakeholders and community residents were invited to participate in a discussion on the Strategic Plan and key sustainability initiatives. Participants discussed key strengths and challenges and what the City and Partners could be doing to achieve the vision of a more sustainable City.

- **Community Survey**: Residents were given the opportunity to provide feedback through a community survey available in hard-copy and online. The survey included the following questions:
  - What do you love best about St. Thomas?
  - What are the most important issues facing the City?
  - What are the changes that you would like to see in the future?
  - What can the City of St. Thomas be doing better?

  There were over 200 surveys completed.

3.0 Environmental Scan Highlights

To assist in developing *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas*, an environmental scan was conducted leading to the development of a community profile and SWOT analysis.

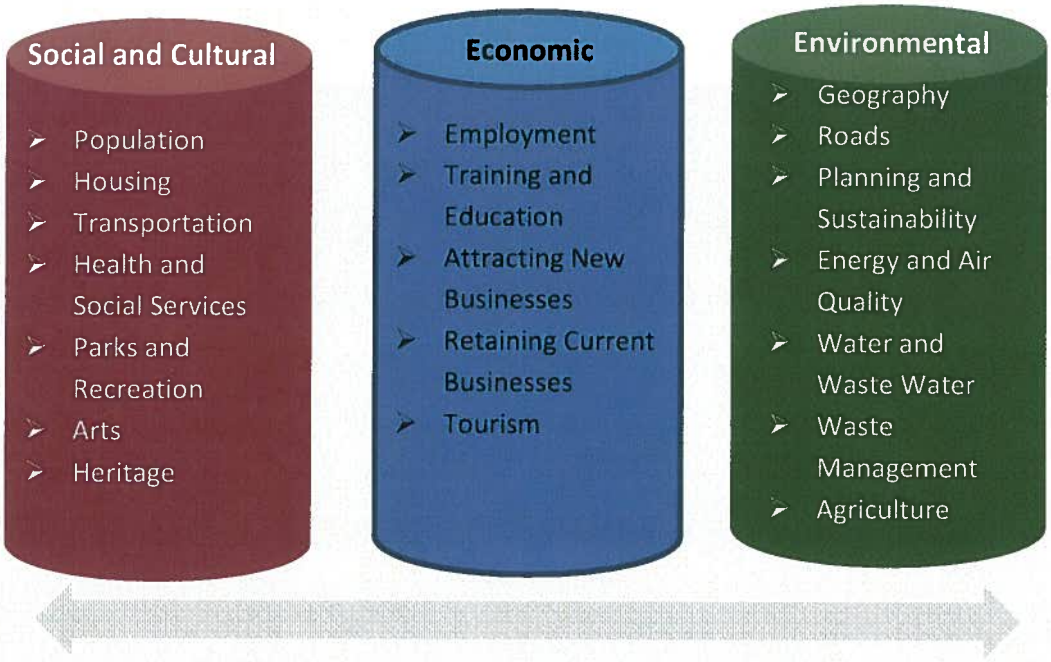
An Environmental Scan is a type of radar/diagnostic tool used to systematically scan the community to determine new, unexpected, major, and minor issues and trends affecting the community as part of the strategic planning project. Environmental scans enable communities to understand internal and external forces, changing environments, and identify issues for the short, medium, and/or long-term.

The role of the environmental scan in the strategic planning process is to conduct a needs/feasibility assessment and a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis with key stakeholders who have a vested interest in the community. In addition, the SWOT analysis assists in identifying the key issues that should be addressed as part of the Strategic Plan.

Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas focuses on balancing the three pillars of sustainability. St. Thomas recognizes the importance of balancing social and cultural, economic, and environmental actions to achieve sustainability across the City.

Sustainability is achieved when each of the three pillars are equally evaluated and balanced actions are created.

A more detailed community portrait is included in the Appendix, and it provides the key findings from the Environmental Scan. The Appendix includes a summary of the findings presented for each pillar of sustainability.



SWOT Analysis

Throughout the engagement process, community members provided input on community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

- **S**trengths identify characteristics of the City that give it an advantage over others.
- **W**eaknesses (or Limitations) are characteristics that place the City at a disadvantage relative to others.
- **O**pportunities are the external factors that could be utilized or capitalized upon to achieve the Vision.
- **T**hreats (or Challenges) are the external elements that could cause trouble for the City in achieving the Vision.

A summary of the feedback received is presented below.

Strengths

- Dedicated community groups
- Large pool of volunteers
- Supportive council and staff
- Natural environment and urban forestry
- Trails and green spaces
- Culture and heritage
- Quality of fife, and friendly character
- Small–town feel
- Access to services and amenities
- Programs for youth and seniors
- Proximity to services in London

Weaknesses or Limitations

- Proximity to London – bedroom community
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Vacant buildings
- Homelessness, crime, and substance abuse
- Public transportation
- Marketing and promotion
- Lack of long-term planning – common vision
- Support for arts and culture
- Available and affordable homes
- Lack of identity;low community pride
- Negative reputation/perception

Opportunities

- Collaboration with community groups
- New branding/ look for the City
- People ready and willing to work
- Fanshawe College, Hydro One
- Rail history
- Tourism, recreation and leisure
- Agriculture and local food
- Accessibility to transportation routes
- Available land for development
- Active transportation and walkable communities
- Low property taxes, development charges, water and wastewater charges
- Algoma College

Threats

- Aging population and impact on municipal services demand
- Loss of youth and young families
- Poverty and low-income levels
- Increased crime and mental health issues
- Cost of funding the City's deteriorating infrastructure
- Dated downtown core
- Loss of volunteers and dedicated community groups
- Provincial and Federal downloading – budget impacts
- Increased demands / pressures for municipal financial support
- Costs of emergency services
- Impact of a declining tax base

4.0 Strategic Plan Framework

Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas has been developed based on what has been heard through the community engagement activities and the findings from the background research.

Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas is comprised of a vision, goals, objectives, actions and an implementation strategy.

Vision

General statement that presents a timeless inspirational view for the ideal future of the City.

Mission

A statement of the purpose of an organization. The mission provides the framework or context within which an organization functions.

Goals

Qualitative statements that highlight key issues raised during the sustainable community planning process, add depth to the vision statement, and chart the direction for the Plan.

Objectives

More specific statements of the general goals, and describe how the goals will be achieved. Each goal has multiple objectives.

Actions

Specific tasks that need to be taken to achieve the objective.

Implementation

Steps necessary to ensure that the proposed actions are implemented by the City and partners, and that progress is measured.

Our Mission and Vision

A Mission statement has been developed to support the Strategic Plan. This statement is designed to concretely and accurately communicate and define the purpose of the corporation.

The Vision is a general statement that presents a timeless inspirational view for the ideal future of the City and supports the Mission Statement.

During the community engagement and outreach activities, participants provided feedback on their ideal future of the City of St. Thomas and key words and phrases that they would like to be reflected in the Vision and Mission in *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas*. The following figure presents some of the identified key words:

Our Mission

To *create an exceptional City by delivering financially responsible and sustainable municipal services and support for our residents, businesses and visitors.*

Our Vision

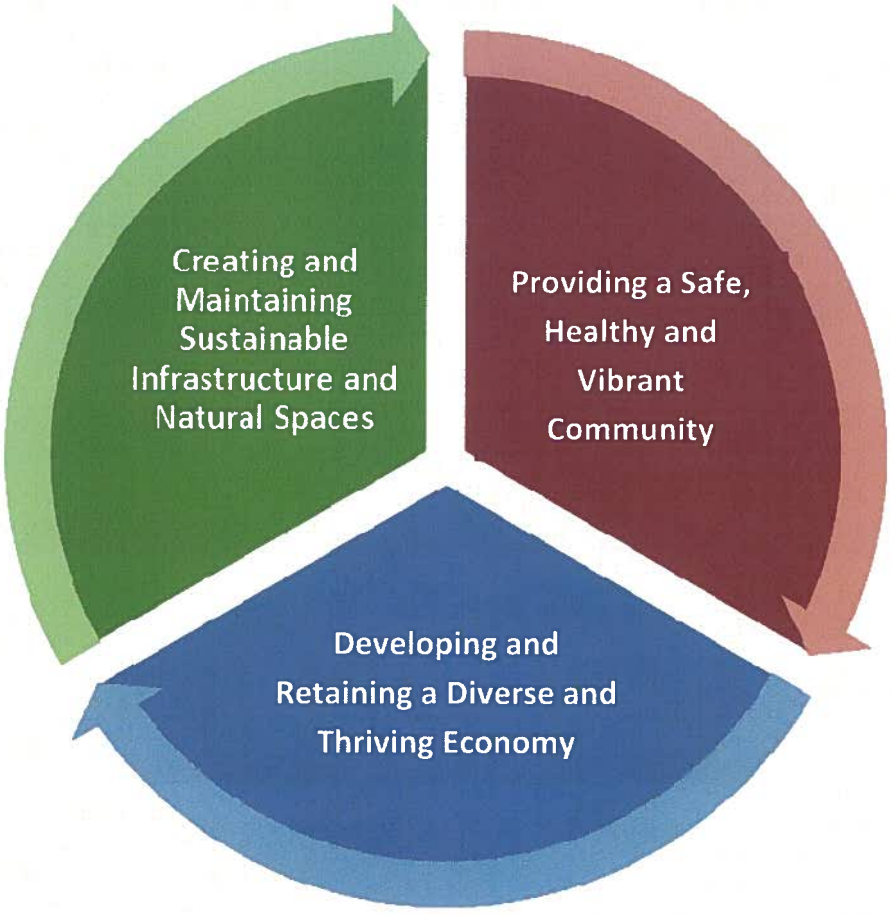
To be a resilient and progressive community fostering inspiring opportunities for all.

5.0 Action Plans

To determine the strategic directions, the results of the community engagements activities, key interviews and research were integrated. Three key themes emerged from this data. This section presents an overview of the findings and the proposed goals, objectives, and actions required to achieve the Vision.

Three goals have been identified as:

Goal 1: Providing a Safe, Healthy and Vibrant Community
Goal 2: Developing and Retaining a Diverse and Thriving Economy
Goal 3: Creating and Maintaining Sustainable Infrastructure and Natural Spaces



Goal 1: Providing a Safe, Healthy and Vibrant Community

- **Objective 1.1:** Develop, support and promote recreational and leisure programs and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community
- **Objective 1.2:** Develop and promote healthy options to get around the City
- **Objective 1.3:** Continue to support and encourage active volunteers
- **Objective 1.4:** Continue to support the provision of health and social services for the residents of St. Thomas when financially feasible
- **Objective 1.5:** Promoting arts and culture programs and services
- **Objective 1.6:** Creating pride and promoting the history and heritage of the City
- **Objective 1.7:** Ensuring the delivery of municipal services to meet the needs of the residents

Goal 2: Developing and Retaining a Diverse and Thriving Economy

- **Objective 2.1:** Promoting and showcasing St. Thomas as a City to live, work, play and invest
- **Objective 2.2:** Continuing to provide support to local businesses to strengthen the economy of St. Thomas
- **Objective 2.3:** Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas
- **Objective 2.4:** Revitalizing the downtown core

Goal 3: Creating and Maintaining Sustainable Infrastructure and Natural Spaces

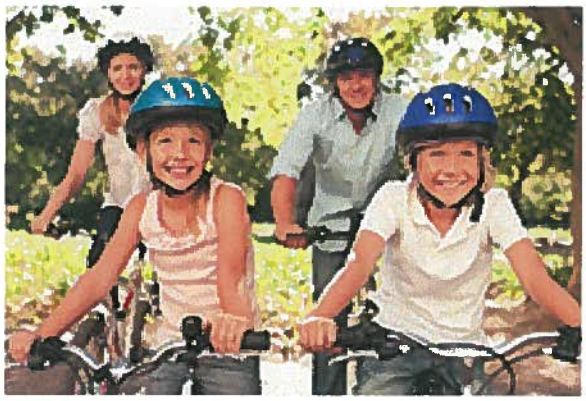
- **Objective 3.1:** Promoting and conserving natural spaces
- **Objective 3.2:** Ensuring clean air and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- **Objective 3.3:** Striving for excellence in sustainability practices
- **Objective 3.4:** Planning and the development of infrastructure for the safety of the community
- **Objective 3.5:** Practicing and promoting sustainable land use planning and practices

Goal 1: Providing a Safe, Healthy and Vibrant Community

The City of St. Thomas is a safe and close-knit community of 37,905 people (2011 Census), located in the heart of Elgin County. The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital provides the community with top-of-the-line health care for residents and tourists alike; and, a proposed hospital redevelopment will further expand the quality and quantity of services provided.

At present, there are several ongoing strategic initiatives, projects, and programs directed towards increasing the overall health and safety of residents in St. Thomas. For example, the Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership and the Healthy Communities Project promote a local culture for healthy living and community well-being for the residents of St. Thomas and Elgin County.

In addition, the City of St. Thomas has released several reports for community health and sustainability. In 2011, the Health Communities report was published and was directed at increasing community health promotion and sport. In 2009, the City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment No. 66 provided the city and residents with an overview of and recommendations for the Urban Area Expansion Study – Recreation and Leisure Infrastructure Requirements.



St. Thomas offers a variety of housing options for residents (including affordable housing) that will help maintain a high quality of life, as well as a vibrant local economy for the City of St. Thomas – essential component of a healthy and sustainable community. Residents recognize the importance of promoting local agriculture and foods/markets. Redevelopment and intensification (and associated housing options) in the city centre are two of the many ways to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Active transportation is an essential component of enhancing the safety and overall health of a community. The City of St. Thomas Recreation, Leisure and Parks Master Plan identified walking for leisure as one of the leading modes of activity among residents. St. Thomas is also planning for a new/improved road cycling network across six city streets.

Residents of Elgin and St. Thomas are currently being encouraged to share their thoughts on cycling, walking, skateboarding, rollerblading, and other forms of activity through an online survey. This is an opportunity for residents to share their ideas on how Elgin St. Thomas Public Health might improve conditions for hiking, on-road and off-road cycling, walking and other forms of active transportation.

Pinafore Park offers residents a unique spot for recreation and pleasure. It includes century old pavilions nestled among towering trees and provides the ideal setting for family picnics, hiking and cross-country skiing, tennis courts and baseball stadium, Emslie Field. The Park includes a wildlife sanctuary, a small lake, the Rotary Splashpad, accessible playground equipment and the Morris F. Jones Memorial Bandshell.

Waterworks Park was one of the first publicly owned park in St. Thomas, originating in the early 1900s as a small area around the Public Utilities Commission's, (PUC) pumping station and water treatment plant. About twenty-five acres (10 hectares), not needed for waterworks purposes, were retained as a place for recreation for the citizens of the City and the District. Today, the park includes a large playground, a new splash pad,and picturesque nature and ski trails.

As in many small communities in Southern Ontario, arts, culture, and heritage play an important role in the community well-being of St. Thomas. Residents have voiced their pride for St. Thomas' connection to the railroad, as well as other heritage properties and local artisans. A community with vibrant arts, culture, and heritage

demonstrates local pride as a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

The City of St. Thomas has a rich cultural heritage with the railroad. Positioned halfway between Detroit and Buffalo, St. Thomas served as an important railway junction for the original rail corridor in south-western Ontario. Residents and tourists can enjoy the Elgin County Railway Museum and the designated heritage site-Canada Southern Railway Station that is centrally located in the City's downtown core.

Also of significance is the City of St. Thomas' cultural heritage and connection to the surrounding agricultural community, including a local food market that that has been exclusively selling products produced within 60 km of St. Thomas for over 130 years.

Numerous other heritage sites/buildings are designated and preserved today in St. Thomas. Strengths and opportunities for the heritage sites come from an online Heritage Properties guide, which allows

residents and tourists to locate and learn about the history/architecture of each individual property/structure.

St. Thomas Public Library has a long-history of serving the residents of St. Thomas. They provide a number of services to the residents and are supported by a strong network of staff and volunteers.

St. Thomas also has many strengths and opportunities for arts programming through the St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre. This non-profit organization offers a variety of educational and art programs for children and adults in the community. Residents and tourists can also enjoy the Centre's permanent and exhibition art displays of local, regional, national and international artists.

St. Thomas has a number of art galleries and artisans shops, which display (and sell) local and regional work by artists and artisans. There is also acommunity playhouse for residents and tourists to visit and enjoy.

An important part of creating a community-based Strategic Plan and providing a safe, healthy, and vibrant community is ensuring that there is open and transparent municipal operations and governance in-place to support required programs and services.

Of specific importance is communication with residents, community groups, neighbouring municipalities and upper tiers of government, which can directly or indirectly contribute to the health and well-being of the City.

A communication strategy, along with the creation of a City of St. Thomas image, can advertise the strengths and opportunities of the City to neighbouring municipalities, attract new residents, and economic development, as well as promote local business development and growth.

Objectives and Actions

The following objectives and actions have been identified:

- **Objective 1.1:** Develop, support and promote recreational and leisure programs and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community
- **Objective 1.2:** Develop and promote healthy options to get around the City
- **Objective 1.3:** Continue to support and encourage active volunteers
- **Objective 1.4:** Continue to support the provision of health and social services for the residents of St. Thomas when financially feasible
- **Objective 1.5:** Promoting arts and culture programs and services
- **Objective 1.6:** Creating pride and promoting the history and heritage of the City
- **Objective 1.7:** Ensuring the delivery of municipal services to meet the needs of the residents

GOAL 1: PROVIDING A SAFE, HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Objective 1.1: Develop, support and promote recreational and leisure programs and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.1.1: Continue to promote recreational and leisure programs and services available	• Develop/update the recreational programs guides and • Continue to utilize the website	**Parks and Recreation**	• Active Elgin • Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership • EDC • Tourism • Talbot Teen Centre • YMCA • Seniors Centre • Library	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.1.2: Work with partners to identify if there are gaps or overlaps in programs and services currently being delivered or future plans for delivery	• Identify partners • Review current programs and services • Identify gaps	**Parks and Recreation**	• Active Elgin • Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership • EDC • Tourism • Talbot Teen Centre • YMCA • Seniors Centre	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.1.3: Conduct a feasibility study and develop a plan to identify and implement the multi-use potential for	• Conduct a feasibility study on the current use of the Centre • Develop a plan	**Parks and Recreation**	• Emergency Management • User Groups – To be identified • Consultant	**Q1-2014**	**Q4-2014**

Objective 1.1: Develop, support and promote recreational and leisure programs and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
Timken Centre	that includes opportunities to utilize the Centre				
1.1.4: Explore funding opportunities, recreational grants and public/private partnerships for the development and maintenance of recreation infrastructure	• Continue to explore available grants • Develop a list of available grants • Explore private/public partnership opportunities	**Parks and Recreation**	• Corporate • Library	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.1.5: Update the outdoor pool to reflect current needs and safety requirements	• Develop a plan to update the pool • Identify funding available • Commence work	**Parks and Recreation**	• Community Service Clubs • Council	**Q1-2013**	**Q2-2014**
1.1.6: Create a new skateboard park to reflect current needs, safety requirements and visitor opportunities	• Develop a plan to establish a new skateboard park • Identify funding available • Commence and complete work	**Parks and Recreation**	• Community Service Clubs	**Q1-2013**	**Q7-2014**

Objective 1.2: Develop and promote healthy options to get around the City					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.2.1: Evaluate current sidewalks to improve safety, connectivity, and accessibility around the City	• Review sidewalks • Identify sidewalks in need of repair • Establish a plan to update sidewalks • Prepare policy	**Environmental Services**	• Accessibility Committee • Parks and Recreation • Planning • Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**
1.2.2: Evaluate the road network to determine road improvement requirements	• Develop a 'roads needs' study	**Environmental Services**	• Finance • County	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**
1.2.3: Evaluate and improve the availability of public transit	• Advocate for improved transit service	**Environmental Services**	• Developers	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**
1.2.4: Continue to implement the recommendations of the Urban Area Expansion Transportation Master	• Continue to consider competitive and sustainable alternatives to	**Environmental Services**	• Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership • Planning • Environmental Services	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**

Objective 1.2: Develop and promote healthy options to get around the City					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
Plan	driving				
1.2.5: Update and implement the Trails Master Plan to promote expansion and connectivity of the trail systems	• Review the Trails Master Plan • Confirm the need to update • Continue to implement required actions	**Parks and Recreation**	• Environmental Services • Planning • Corporate • Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership	**Q1-2014**	**Q4-2014**
1.2.6: Improve Trans Canada Trail experience across the City	• Identify and promote trail use and development • Continue to create multi-use connections across the City	**Parks and Recreation**	• Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership • Planning	**Complete**	
1.2.7: Ensure the integration of walkable communities in new residential developments	• Prepare Official Plan policies • Create a checklist that ensures walkable communities	**Planning**	• Parks and Recreation • Developers • Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership	**Q2-2013**	**Q4-2014**

Objective 1.2: Develop and promote healthy options to get around the City					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.2.8: Continue to develop safe bike routes – sharing the road initiatives supported by required infrastructure improvements		**Environmental Services**	• Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership • Planning • Parks and Recreation	**Q1**	**Q4**

Objective 1.3: Continue to support and encourage active volunteers					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.3.1: Continue to promote and acknowledge strong and supportive volunteers through an annual event	• Identify current volunteers • Continue to develop a database of volunteers • Plan for an annual event	**Corporate**	• Mayor and Council • Volunteer Elgin • All City Departments	**Q4-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.3.2: Develop and promote key messages to share with newcomers to integrate them into	• Meet with immigration partnership staff • Develop information for	**Corporate**	• Immigration Partnerships • All City Departments	**Q2 - 2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 1.3: Continue to support and encourage active volunteers					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
the volunteer community	web site				
1.3.3: Establish and promote volunteer opportunities focused on youth and young unemployed adults	• Develop a list of City activities where volunteers may be involved • Determine the best practice to advertise the opportunities	**Human Resources**	• Talbot Teen Centre • Library • Service Groups • Parks and Recreation		
1.3.4: Develop a Volunteer Engagement Strategy	• Implement an electronic volunteer management system to enhance the recruitment and engagement of volunteers	**Human Resources**	• Community Groups • Committees of Council • Volunteer Elgin • Library • City I.T.		

Objective 1.4: Continue to support the provision of health and social services for the residents of St. Thomas when financially feasible					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.4.1: Continue to work with partners, developers and other stakeholders in efforts to nurture and encourage safe and affordable housing alternatives	• Lead for Community 10 Year Homelessness Plan • STEOW ongoing member of Community Council for Children and Youth in Elgin (CCCYE) STEOW is lead for local Homelessness Committee	Ontario Works	• Planning • Elgin St. Thomas Housing Corp. • Police Services • Community agencies (IE: CMHA, YWCA, Fresh Start, Salvation Army, Inn out of the Cold, etc)	**10 yr Plan – 2012 Other Work is ongoing**	**10 yr Plan - Q4 2013 Other work is ongoing**
1.4.2: Investigate ways to integrate health and social services to improve linkages and collaborative efforts	• Lead for Community 10 Year Children & Youth Plan • STEOW ongoing member of Community Council for Children and Youth in Elgin (CCCYE) STEOW is lead for local Homelessness Committee	Ontario Works	• Valleyview • Public Health, Central Community Health Centre, CCAC, Hospital, Regional Hospital • Canadian Red Cross • Community agencies (IE: CMHA, YWCA, Fresh Start, Salvation Army, Inn out of the Cold, etc)	**10 yr Plan – 2013 Other Work is ongoing**	**10 yr Plan - Q4 2014 Other work is ongoing**
1.4.3: Plan for a range	• Review Official Plan	**Planning**	• Ontario Works	**Q2-2013**	**Q2-2014**

Objective 1.4: Continue to support the provision of health and social services for the residents of St. Thomas when financially feasible					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
of housing that provides options for people at all stages of life	policies				
1.4.4: Develop a seniors' strategy	• Conduct the necessary engagement to identify their needs and desires • Establish a Seniors Advisory Committee	**Corporate**	• Developers • Ontario Works • Planning • Valleyview • Library • Parks and Recreation • Seniors' Centre • Council	**Q3-2013**	**Q4-2014**
1.4.5: Conduct a 'value for money' assessment of emergency services through an analysis of effectiveness, efficiency and economy of each service (police, fire and land ambulance)	• Review the operating budgets • Meet with the County regarding EMS service • Undertake comparative analysis with other municipalities	**Corporate**	• Fire • Other agencies identified in the study • Finance Department • County of Elgin • Finance • Police • County – Land Ambulance	**Q1-2014**	**Q3-2014**

Objective 1.5: Promoting arts and culture programs and services					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.5.1: Identify opportunities to develop and blend cultural services, programs, initiatives and projects that link St. Thomas as it continues to grow and develop	• Complete the Cultural Mapping project	**Planning**	• Library • Parks and Recreation • EDC • Tourism	**Q2-2013**	**Q4-2013**
1.5.2: Continue to develop and implement the Cultural Plan	• Provide support to Arts-Culture (low cost places to promote, cottage industry – arts and Crafts, open-space to showcase)	**Planning**	• Library • Parks and Recreation • EDC • Tourism	**Q2-2014**	**Q2-2015**
1.5.3: Encourage the development of more arts and cultural programs by exploring	• Initiate Cultural Plan	**Planning**	• Library • Parks and Recreation • EDC • Tourism	**Q2-2014**	**Q2-2015**

Objective 1.5: Promoting arts and culture programs and services					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
opportunities for funding, including grants, sponsoring of programs, and resources available					
1.5.4: Create a Public Art and Public Space Policy that recognizes, promotes and facilitates the development of a vibrant city		**Parks and Recreation**	• Library • St. Thomas Elgin Public Art Centre • Private Donors	**Q3-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.5.5: Continue to leverage and identify opportunities to establish a year-round farmer's market/artisan fair	• Present strategic objective to Market Board	**Farmers Market Board**	• Market Vendors • City Clerk's Department	**Q2-2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 1.6: Creating pride and promoting the history and heritage of the City

Action	Steps	Lead	Partners	Project Initiation	Project Completion
1.6.1: Assess the merits of developing a heritage strategy that examines both built heritage and cultural heritage	• Present strategic objective to the Heritage Committee	**Heritage Committee**	• Planning • Library • City Clerk's Department	**Q2-2013**	**Ongoing**
1.6.2: Develop a Cultural Master Plan	• The plan promotes more cohesive and coordinated cultural services	**Planning**	• Library • Parks and Recreation • EDC • Tourism	**Q2-2014**	**Q2-2015**
1.6.3: Explore opportunities to enhance and promote local events that engage residents and contribute to the sense of community in the City of St. Thomas	• Approve the City's tourism organization • Establish an ad-hoc committee	**Tourism**	• Community event stakeholders • EDC • CAO/Clerk Office • Planning • Parks and Recreation • Council	**Q2-2013**	**Q1-2014**
1.6.4: Continue to explore opportunities to establish partnerships that contribute to the	• Implementation of cultural mapping • Strengthening promotion of festivals and events	**Tourism**	• Planning • CAO/Clerk • Parks and Recreation	**Q2-2013**	**Q1-2014**

Objective 1.6: Creating pride and promoting the history and heritage of the City					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
celebration of culture in the community	in the City's promotion		• Community Stakeholders		

Objective 1.7: Ensuring the delivery of municipal services to meet the needs of the residents					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.7.1: Foster open and transparent municipal operations and governance by developing and implementing new communications strategy	• Identify various media/methods to improve internal and external communications	**Corporate**	• Mayor's Office • Treasury / I.T. • Clerk's Department • MyFM • St. Thomas Times Journal • Rogers TV • St. Thomas Weekly • Fire Department • Emergency Management	**Q3-2013**	**Q2-2014**
1.7.2: Develop a Corporate Strategic Plan inclusive of an Organizational review	• Confirm roles and responsibilities for the effective and efficient delivery of City services	**Corporate**	• City Council • All City Departments	**Q2-2014**	**Q2-2015**

Objective 1.7: Ensuring the delivery of municipal services to meet the needs of the residents					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
1.7.3: Continue to promote a progressive Council and Staff by providing a training budget for education and opportunities investment	• Identify training and budget requirements	**Human Resources**	• Corporate		
1.7.4: Monitor and update the Accessibility Plan to ensure compliance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)	• Review existing plans • Have regard for and implement Provincial regulations as required • Staff training as required	**Corporate**	• Accessibility Advisory Committee • Corporate Technical Accessibility Committee • City Council	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**

GOAL 2: DEVELOPING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE AND THRIVING ECONOMY

St. Thomas is centrally located within the Elgin County; it is a 30 minute drive to London (Middlesex County), and a 15 minute drive from Port Stanley/ Lake Erie beaches. Tourism can be a spin-off promoting economic development and growth by attracting new businesses and residents.

From 2007 to present, St. Thomas has experienced high levels of unemployment, an increased demand for social housing, as well as an economic downturn in available jobs and employment opportunities.

Traditionally, economic activity in St. Thomas was characterized by high levels of success in traditional investment efforts resulting in manufacturing and industrial development. This has resulted in a less diversified local economy that has become highly vulnerable by global shocks and declines in specific sectors. St. Thomas is now focused on regaining economic strength through diverse economic development initiatives.

Between 1996 and 2006, St. Thomas and Elgin County has experienced a decline in unemployment rates of 4%. The overall unemployment rate for Elgin County in 2006 was 4.9% while St. Thomas' rate was 6.3%[2].

The City of St. Thomas has both a talented and skilled workforce that is ready and willing to support growth in its economy.

The St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation works closely with existing businesses and works to promote St. Thomas as an ideal location for new businesses. The St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation identified in their Economic Development Strategy (2009) the importance of investment attraction accompanied by a host of new techniques and technologies designed to be catalysts for activity in business retention, creative class development, knowledge sector expansion, youth retention, and skilled labour attraction.

St. Thomas is also looking to create a competitive housing market and providing housing options such as establishing new housing intensification targets and developing an urban area residential expansion plan.

[2] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.

St. Thomas is well positioned to promote itself as an urban/economic centre to attract new business, as well as to support the strong agricultural base, which surrounds the City. New business starts, such as the Hydro One acquisitions and the Algoma University extension programs, exemplify the economic stability and allure of new businesses locating in St. Thomas.

Residents indicated there are strengths and opportunities for partnerships between the City of St. Thomas and the County of Elgin.

Many residents also described the City's location/close proximity to London, and other urban centres, and its accessibility to Major transportation hubs as strengths and opportunities.

Tourism can also be a major economic driver in smaller communities such as St. Thomas. Primarily, tourism is an economic support and promotion tool for local business, such as restaurants, shops and theatre (for example), which can draw both local and visiting patrons.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The following objectives and action have been identified:

- **Objective 2.1:** Promoting and showcasing St. Thomas as a City to live, work, play and invest
- **Objective 2.2:** Continue to provide support to local businesses to strengthen the economy of St. Thomas
- **Objective 2.3:** Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas
- **Objective 2.4:** Revitalizingthe downtown core

GOAL 2: DEVELOPING AND RETAINING A DIVERSE AND THRIVING ECONOMY

Objective 2.1: Promoting and showcasing St. Thomas as a City to live, work, play and invest					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
2.1.1: Review and update a Branding Strategy that identifies how you want to be seen by others	• Establish a committee aimed at developing a new branding strategy	**Corporate**	• EDC • Tourism • City Council	**Q1-2014**	**Q3-2014**
2.1.2: Continue to strengthen the relationship with the County of Elgin to collaborate on shared initiatives	• Schedule Council liaison meetings • Continue to encourage administration to administration dialogue about areas of common interest	**Corporate**	• EDC • Ontario Works • Fire - through the Mutual Aid Agreement - the Fire Department works with every FD in the county on regular basis • Planning • Health Recruitment • Tourism • Finance	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**
2.1.3: Continue to work with local community organizations/groups and identify	• Schedule regular meetings with community partners to develop and implement a	**Corporate**	• EDC • Elgin Business Resource Centre • Home Builders • Community Stakeholders	**Q3-2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.1: Promoting and showcasing St. Thomas as a City to live, work, play and invest					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
collaborative opportunities to showcase St. Thomas as a city to live, work, play and invest	plan aimed at the coordination of strengthening the City Brand		• Downtown Development Board		
2.1.4: Advocate for other levels of government and agencies to meet the Community's needs	• Schedule regular meetings with government officials and related agencies such as Public Health, TVDSB, Conservation Authorities	**Corporate**	• City Council • MP Joe Preston • MPP Jeff Yurek • Provincial Ministries • County of Elgin • Government agencies	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**
2.1.5: Review the Community Improvement Plans for areas requiring updating and renewal	• Identify and review incentives • Identify community improvement areas • Plan for updating and renewal activities • Update Official Plan Policies	**Planning**	• Clerks • EDC • Environmental Services	**Q2-2013**	**Q2-2014**
2.1.6: Develop and implement an		**Finance**	• Ontario Works • Library	**Q3-2013**	**Q1-2014**

Objective 2.1: Promoting and showcasing St. Thomas as a City to live, work, play and invest					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
Information Technology Plan to improve the City's efficiency in service provision			• Civic Department		

Objective 2.2: Continuing to provide support to local businesses to strengthen the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
2.2.1: Conduct a needs assessment to better understand and support the requirements of local businesses and ensure that they have the resources required to remain successful and sustainable	• Conduct a BR & E study • Survey local businesses	• **EDC**	• Downtown Development Board	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
2.2.2: Continue to support local businesses, restaurants, stores, through a shop local	• Explore opportunities to pool resources, available space, support to share	• **Chamber of Commerce** • **Corporate**	• Home Builders • Downtown Development Board • EDC	**Q3 – 2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.2: Continuing to provide support to local businesses to strengthen the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
initiative - promote and encourage a buy-local culture	resources and reduce costs for local businesses • Coordinate a meeting in relation to Objective 2.1.3				
2.2.3: Continue to promote the Elgin Business Resource Centre – promoting the services available and the establishment of new services/programs		• **EDC**		**Year 1**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.3: Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
2.3.1: Continue to review the current initiatives underway for attraction of new businesses by the EDC		**EDC**		**Year 1**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.3: Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
2.3.2: Continue to review and regularly update the Economic Development Strategy (2009) for the City of St. Thomas		**EDC**		**Year 1**	**Ongoing**
2.3.3: Continue to update the community profile (2012) to showcase the benefits of locating in St. Thomas	• Addition of community specific information to the profile	**EDC**		**Year 1**	**Ongoing**
2.3.4: Undertake a city-wide review of surplus lands and structures to facilitate growth and revitalization in the Community	• Develop an inventory of vacant buildings and a strategy to reduce the vacancy rate	**EDC**	• Planning	**Year 1**	**Year 2**
2.3.6: Identify/confirm industrial and commercial land availability, and develop an industrial	• Develop and regularly update an Industrial Building Inventory • Develop a plan for	**EDC**	• Planning	**Year 1**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.3: Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
and commercial land strategy to utilize the available land	servicing available land and industrial space				
2.3.7 Develop an inventory of vacant space downtown and establish a strategy to utilize the space	• Facilitate a meeting of stakeholders to develop an action plan • Plan for revised retail analysis • Undertake a tax assessment review for downtown commercial and industrial buildings to create options that may attract new business development	• **Downtown Development Board (DDB)** • **Corporate**	• EDC • Planning	**Q4 – 2013**	**Ongoing**
2.3.8: Give consideration to the implementation of Brownfield Policies that will provide for the		**Planning**	• EDC • Clerks • Environmental Services	**Q4-2013**	**Q1-2015**

Objective 2.3: Attracting new businesses to grow and diversify the economy of St. Thomas					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
redevelopment/intensification of underutilized lands and buildings					
2.3.9: Partner with others and let them promote the City internationally through their mandates	• Continue to partner with SOMA, OCTA, OACA and OFC	**EDC**		**Year 1**	**Ongoing**
2.3.10: Research and develop a Tourism Profile that would be used as an attraction and marketing tool for increasing tourism sector	• Provide a matrix of tourism options for City Council consideration	**Corporate**	• EDC • Parks and Recreation • County of Elgin • Downtown Development Board	**Q1 – 2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 2.4: Revitalizing the downtown core					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
2.4.1: Create a strategy for revitalizing the downtown core that is financially feasible	• Review the Streetscape Improvement Plan • Create a people friendly downtown that encourages the development of places to sit, visit and shop	**Corporate**	• Library • Municipal Heritage Committee • Urban Design Committee • Environmental Services • City Council	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**
2.4.2: Researching and promoting the grants available to revitalize the downtown core	• Promote the CIP Program • Review funding levels for the CIP Program	**Corporate**	• Provincial Ministries • Federal Funding • City Council • Urban Design Committee • EDC • Clerk's Office	**Ongoing**	**Q2 - 2014**
2.4.3: Create and enforce a property standards by-law to aid in improving structures, facade improvements making store owners more accountable for a new,		**Environmental Services**	• DBB • Municipal Heritage Committee • Conservation District Designation • Planning Department	**Q3**	

Objective 2.4: Revitalizing the downtown core					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
revised and updated look					
2.4.4: Assess the feasibility of establishing a community square/gathering area/piazza in the Downtown area	• Construct L&PS Corridor Project	**Corporate**	• City Council • DDB • Home Builders • Rail Groups • Parks and Recreation • Environmental Services • Dorothy Palmer Estate • Trans Canada Trail	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**

GOAL 3: CREATING AND MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL SPACES

The City of St. Thomas has developed numerous planning and sustainability initiatives to ensure the longevity and strength of the City's infrastructure and built environment. The creation of a new Official Plan provides St. Thomas with the policy recommendations necessary to ensure sustainable growth for both the short and long term planning of the City.

Concentrating on the redevelopment and intensification of the St. Thomas' downtown core will provide numerous community, economic, and environmental benefits.

Through the Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development consultation, previously conducted by the City, infrastructure priorities identified by residents included the following items: food security and community gardens; focus on arts, culture and heritage; transit and transportation, neighbourhood design; and building a long term vision.

Several ongoing sustainable infrastructure and built environment initiatives in St. Thomas have been identified as strengths and opportunities for the City.

These initiatives include:

- transportation/the road network;
- energy and air quality;
- water and waste water;
- waste management; and
- agriculture and local food.

The St. Thomas Municipal Airport is located in close proximity to the City. The airport has the potential to provide regional air services for both current and future businesses, as well as to give tourists and local residents the option to travel by plane.

The St. Thomas airport has the potential to cater to residents of London, ON, communities throughout Elgin County, and other nearby municipalities.

The City of St. Thomas is committed to maintaining, protecting, and enhancing its natural heritage through sustainable development policies and initiatives designed to protect the watercourses, flora, and fauna in the region.

St. Thomas is part of the Carolinian Zone Bioregion and the Lower Kettle Creek Watershed. These two areas are home to

numerous endangered species and species at risk.

Protection of natural heritage through the enhancement of natural heritage corridors (in the surrounding agricultural areas and within the city limits) will be the primary focus areas to address the protection of endangered species, species at risk, and natural spaces.

Community members have also identified other environmental and conservation initiatives, such as erosion prevention, source water protection, wetland creation and protection, natural heritage restoration and municipal drainage management.

The City of St. Thomas' current focus will be on promoting energy conservation, efficiency, and (renewable) generation initiatives and policies through a variety of community planning and design principles.

Focusing on energy can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions/pollution and the effects of climate change, increase air quality, and protect the natural environment.

Recycling (materials/wastes) and adaptive reuse, redevelopment, and community design policies also represent a major planning focus for the City in its efforts to help protect natural spaces and provide a long term sustainable direction for St. Thomas.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

The following objectives and actions have been identified:

- **Objective 3.1:** Promoting and conserving natural spaces
- **Objective 3.2:** Ensuring clean air and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- **Objective 3.3:** Striving for excellence in sustainability practices
- **Objective 3.4:** Planning and the development of infrastructure for the safety of the community
- **Objective 3.5:** Practicing and promoting sustainable land use planning and practices

GOAL 3: CREATING AND MAINTAINING SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL SPACES

Objective 3.1: Promoting and conserving natural spaces					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.1.1: Advocate and promote the protection and enhancement of green spaces	• Develop an inventory of green space • Continue to promote and advocate for green space • Review and update Official Plan Policies	**Parks and Recreation**	• Environmental Services • Planning • Library	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
3.1.2: Create an Environmental Advisory Committee of Council	• Consider the development of an EAC	**Environmental Services**	• Parks and Recreation • KCCA • Friends of the Environment • Field Naturalists	**Q3**	**Q4/Ongoing**
3.1.3: Continue to support Lake Erie Protection and promotion initiatives	• Identify and promote current support provided for Lake Erie Protection initiatives	**Environmental Services**	• Source Water Protection Committee	**Q2/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**

Objective 3.1: Promoting and conserving natural spaces					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.1.4: Continue to support Source Water Protection and promotion initiatives	• Identify and promote current support provided for Source Water Protection	**Environmental Services**	• MCE • KCCA • GRCA • Source water Protection Committee	**Q2/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**
3.1.5: Evaluate and monitor opportunities to participate in Watershed/Sub-Watershed Protection Plans	• Continue to identify and promote opportunities to participate in sub/watershed protection	**Environmental Services Planning**	• Adjacent Municipalities • KCCA • CCCA	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4/Ongoing**
3.1.6: Consider developing and implementing an Environmental Action Plan/Environmental Strategy	• Consider the development of a Strategy that focuses exclusively on the environmental pillars of sustainability	**Environmental Services**	• KCCA • Parks and Recreation • Friends of the Environment • Planning	**Q1 (2014)**	**Q4 (2014)**
3.1.7: Identify, document and evaluate the City's natural capital assets	• Assess the merits of measuring the City's natural capital assets • Identify the need to	**Parks and Recreation**	• Planning	**Q2-2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 3.1: Promoting and conserving natural spaces					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
	acquire additional natural assets • Develop and update an inventory of natural assets				

Objective 3.2: Ensuring clean air and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.2.1: Increase natural landscaping and the urban tree canopy across the City	• Develop an urban tree inventory • Create a plan to increase natural landscaping and urban trees	**Parks and Recreation**	• Planning • KCCA	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
3.2.2: Develop a city tree by-law aimed at protecting urban forests/trees		**Parks and Recreation**	• Planning	**Q1-2013**	**Q4-2014**
3.2.3: Promote renewable energies,		**Environmental Services**	• St. Thomas Energy • OPA	**Q4**	**Q2 (2015)**

Objective 3.2: Ensuring clean air and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
and explore the use of solar energy on municipal properties					
3.2.4: Explore opportunities with energy providers to reduce energy consumption and investigate alternative forms of energy where appropriate		**Environmental Services**	• St. Thomas Energy • OPA	**Q4**	**Q4 (2014)**
3.2.5: Promote and encourage naturalization initiatives across the City		**Parks and Recreation**	• KCCA • Planning • Environmental Services • Library	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**

Objective 3.3: Striving for excellence in sustainability practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.3.1: Promote a green culture within the	• Investigate the merits of a program	**Environmental Services**	• Parks and Recreation	**Q1 (2014)**	**Q4 (2014)**

Objective 3.3: Striving for excellence in sustainability practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
organization and look for opportunities to develop green infrastructure where appropriate	that promotes and actively supports innovative green building and infrastructure				
3.3.2: Plan for and promote energy efficient buildings, renewable energy, water conservation and low emission vehicles		**Environmental Services**	• Parks and Recreation	**Q4**	**Q3 (2014)**
3.3.3: Emphasize reducing and re-using in the City's waste management strategy, while furthering greater waste diversion		**Environmental Services**	• School Boards • TJ / Weekly News • My FM	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Q4 (2014)**
3.3.4: Consider the creation of an Office of Sustainability in order to drive and promote sustainability across	• Incorporate sustainability concepts and practices into all community	**Corporate**	• City Council • All City Departments	**Q2-2014**	**Q3-2014**

Objective 3.3: Striving for excellence in sustainability practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
the corporation	initiatives • Promote sustainable living as a social responsibility within the community				
3.3.5: Develop a Green Purchasing Policy		**Finance**	• All Civic Departments	**2014**	**January 2015 for Council consideration**
3.3.6: Explore the development of a Food Strategy that includes 'buy local and grow local' components	• Continue Community Garden initiatives • Develop a strategy	**Healthy Communities**	• Food Sustainability Committee • Environmental Services • Planning • Parks and Recreation		
3.3.7: Continue to create and promote waste diversion education programs		**Environmental Services**	• School Boards • TJ / Weekly News • My FM	**Q4/Ongoing**	**Q2 (2014)**
3.3.8: Promote practices and projects that will contribute to the reduction of		**Environmental Services**	• Media • Planning • Parks and Recreation	**Q3**	**Ongoing**

Objective 3.3: Striving for excellence in sustainability practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
carbon emission in the environment and the creation of a climate neutral community					

Objective 3.4: Planning and the development of infrastructure for the safety of the community					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.4.1: Development of a Financial Plan that explores opportunities to increase and sustain Capital Funding to address the City's deteriorating municipal infrastructure		**Finance**	• All Civic Departments and Boards	**Q1 2014 (Following the development of a Corporate Asset Mgmt. Plan)**	**Q4 2015 for review and approval by Council in Q1 2015**
3.4.2: Implement actions that ensure the long term safety of the community through CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design)		**Environmental Services**	Police	**Q1 (2014)**	**Q4 (2014)**

Objective 3.4: Planning and the development of infrastructure for the safety of the community					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.4.3: Establish policies and programs that enhance the accessibility and safety of new and existing facilities and infrastructure in compliance with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)		**Environmental Services**	• Fire • Police • Accessibility Committee	**Q3/Ongoing**	**Ongoing**
3.4.4: Enforcement of by-laws to ensure safe streets and buildings		**Environmental Services**	• Planning • Emergency Services • Finance	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**
3.4.5: Maintain and expand infrastructure to support the forecasted population through technology, waste management, roads, emergency services and accessibility	• Ongoing coordination of municipal services and projects including review of 'core' service requirements • Asset Management Planning	**Corporate**	• City Council • All City Departments • Federal Gas Tax	**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**

Objective 3.5: Practicing and promoting sustainable land use planning and practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
3.5.1: Promote community involvement in environmental initiatives		**Parks and Recreation**	• Kettle Creek Conservation Authority (KCCA) • Planning • Environmental Services	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
3.5.2: Support and enhance community planting programs in appropriate locations		**Parks and Recreation**	• KCCA • Horticultural Society • TD/Canada Trust Friends of the Environment • St. Thomas Field Naturalists	**Q1-2013**	**Ongoing**
3.5.3: Continue to encourage and support the efforts of businesses and volunteers by recognizing outstanding environmental contributions	• Include a category in the Honours and Awards recognition	**Corporate**	• City Council/Mayor's Office	**Q3-2013**	**Ongoing**
3.5.4: Create an inventory of potential Brownfield Sites, and if		**Planning Environmental Services**	• Planning	**Q4-2013**	**Q4-2014**

Objective 3.5: Practicing and promoting sustainable land use planning and practices					
Action	**Steps**	**Lead**	**Partners**	**Project Initiation**	**Project Completion**
applicable, develop a remediation plan					
3.5.5: Continue to ensure policies and by-laws for developments that are sensitive to the environment	• Review and update Official Plan Policies	**Planning**	• Emergency Services • Parks and Recreation	**Q3-2013**	**Q3-2014**
3.5.6: If applicable, work with local landowners to rehabilitate Brownfields		**Planning Environmental Services**		**Ongoing**	**Ongoing**

ST. THOMAS • ELGIN
Local Immigration Partnership
Building Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities

St. Thomas May 16, 2013

Mr. Wendell Graves, CAO
Corporation of the City of St. Thomas
P.O. Box 520 City Hall
St. Thomas, Ontario N5R 5V1

City of St. Thomas
Received
MAY 16 2013
City Clerks Dept.

Mr. Graves,

On behalf of the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Partnership initiative, I would like to request to appear as a delegation before the St. Thomas City Council to update the City of St. Thomas on the work that has been completed as well as the upcoming initiatives.

The St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (ST-ELIP) is a collaborative community initiative funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) to strengthen the role of municipalities, local agencies, stakeholders, and service provider organizations in serving and integrating immigrants in the City of St. Thomas and the County of Elgin.

I would like to request an opportunity for us to provide the Mayor and City Council an overview on the project at the meeting taking place on June 3rd, 2013. At the present time, a member of City Council acts as a liaison between the ST-ELIP Council and City Council; however, we would like to explore ways for the City to collaborate with this worthwhile initiative. Some concrete ways to achieve this collaboration is by facilitating networking opportunities between the municipality, its institutions and departments, and the ST-ELIP project team as well as by promoting the activities organized by the ST-ELIP through different communication mediums.

I am convinced that the level of success in this project will be determined by the level of collaboration that takes place across different levels of government and across sectors.

Additionally, our presentation will have direct relations with the delegation from the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Local Planning and Development Board. We would appreciate having delegations that can be heard in conjunction with one another.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any question. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours truly,

S Harris

Shelley Harris
St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership
sh.ywca@bellnet.ca

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

The City of St. Thomas Strategic Plan - *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* combines goals, objectives and actions that work to support an overall vision.

Over the next 10 years, the City will place a strong emphasis on achieving the actions outlined in this Plan. This demonstrates Staff and Council's long-term commitment to sustainability and shaping the City according to the public's input. The actions suggested will be achieved by following the implementation steps presented below.

IMPLEMENTATION: TRANSLATING THE PLAN INTO ACTION

Integrate Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas into the day-to-day operation of the City of St. Thomas

The implementation of *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* is made possible with a governance and accountability structure that allows and supports the Plan in moving forward. Council and Staff will be responsible for assigning and confirming responsibility for coordinating the monitoring and implementation phases of this Plan.

To achieve this end, Council and Staff are committed to:

- acting as internal champions for *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas* and its implementation;
- assigning and confirming actions to the departments, and to develop an implementation team, which includes representatives from all departments and partners;
- directing Staff to consider the implementation of this Plan when developing departmental priorities and preparing departmental budgets;
- establishing collaborative cross-functional teams (departmental staff and community partners) to support the implementation of the Plan where appropriate; and
- assigning the responsibility of compiling information and reporting to Council by way of a semi-annual report card regarding the Strategic Plan's implementation.

Maintain and enhance internal and external partnerships

As the City progresses with the implementation of *Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas,* existing and new internal and external partnerships will need to be developed and/or enhanced. Internal partnerships are defined as those between departments, while external partnerships include community groups, residents, private organizations, as well other municipalities and levels of government. Further, the City will continue to take a leadership role with respect to sustainability and balancing the three pillars – social/cultural, economic and environmental - in part by establishing new partnerships as they are needed.

MONITORING AND REPORTING

Our Community, Our Future, Our St. Thomas is a 'living plan'. This means that it will be regularly monitored and updated to ensure that the Plan is relevant and current. To achieve this, Council and Staff are committed to:

- reviewing and updating the Plan at least every 5 years;
- ensuring that Corporate and Departmental Business Plans and budget submissions reflect the Plan;
- monitoring the implementation of the Plan through the establishment of key performance indicators, timelines and accountabilities for each outlined course of action; and
- preparing and publishing a semi-annual report card to report on the implementation of the Plan.

APPENDIX: COMMUNITY PROFILE

THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PILLAR

The City of St. Thomas is home to 37,905[3] people and is located in south-western Ontario, approximately 30 kilometres south of London, Ontario. The City is home to thriving businesses with strong industrial roots. The City has natural beauty and heritage attractions that locals and tourists enjoy. Through previous community consultation events, residents have reviewed and discussed sustainability initiatives and the requirements for a healthy community.

Findings from previous activities demonstrated that community groups and individuals are presently engaged in a number of programs, projects and initiatives, which help to promote sustainability in St. Thomas.

The City has also developed a number of plans, policies and programs, which support sustainable development; however, there is no overarching vision or plan which captures, prioritizes and coordinates sustainability initiatives and/or objectives. Although sustainability is addressed to some extent in the Official Plan, an overarching document or a broader tool that could address all aspects of the City (social, culture, economic and environmental) is needed to fully address sustainability.

This section includes an overview of the social environment including:

- Population Demographics
- Housing
- Transportation
- Health and Social Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Arts
- Culture
- Heritage

POPULATION

St. Thomas was in a steady state of economic/population growth prior to 2001. From 2001 to2006, St. Thomas experienced its highest levels of economic and population growth. This was largely in part due to the auto manufacturing industry located in St. Thomas (Sterling Trucks and Ford Motor Company).

In 2006, Elgin County had a total population of 85, 351 persons, which showed an overall increase in growth from 2001 of 4.7%[4]. During this time period, the provincial growth average was 6.6%. St. Thomas showed a 2006 total population of 36, 110 persons. The growth rate in St. Thomas between 2001 and 2006 was above the provincial average at 8.6%, whereas Elgin County showed a below average growth rate of 1.9%. In 2011, St. Thomas had a total population of 37,905 with an overall increase of 5.0% from 2006. Correspondingly, Elgin County experienced a 2.5% increase in population between 2006 to 2011[5].

[3] Statistics Canada. 2012. *St. Thomas, Ontario (Code 3534021) and Elgin, Ontario (Code 3534)*(table). *Census Profile*. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released February 8, 2012

[4] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.

[5] Statistics Canada. 2012. *St. Thomas, Ontario (Code 3534021) and Elgin, Ontario (Code 3534)*(table). *Census Profile*. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released February 8, 2012. http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E

By 2026, St. Thomas is projected to have a population of 49, 063[6].

- Increasing Older Population: Elgin County has been experiencing an increase in aging population. Between 1996 and 2006, the age group 40 to 54 years has increased by 3.1%. Similarly, the age group 55 to 64 years increased 3.2% from 1996 to 2006. By 2026, the population over the age of 65 years is expected to increase by 4%[7].
- Decreasing Younger Population: The age categories 0 to 9 years and 20 to 29 years have shown a decrease in population between the years 1996 to 2006. From 2001 to 2006, the age group 10-19 years also experienced a decrease in population[8].

HOUSING

Having a full range of housing options to meet the needs of all residents is a key contributor to maintaining a high quality of life, a vibrant local economy, and a healthy community.

Social Housing

From 2007 to 2009, the number of applicants looking for social housing increased by 73%[9]. A direct linkage can be made here between unemployment rates, increased need for social housing, and the closure of the automotive industry in St Thomas.

Provincial Housing Strategy (PPS)

Ontario's Provincial Policy Statement (2005) issued an important change related to the promotion of residential intensification as means to deal with long term housing demand. St. Thomas has undergone an analysis of residential intensification opportunities and has developed a recommended intensification target[10].

St. Thomas Housing Strategy

In 2001, with the passing of the Social Housing Reform Act, Social Housing was transferred to the City of St. Thomas as the designated Service Manager for the City and Elgin County. This responsibility required the City to administer the social housing portfolio as well as to respond to a range of housing needs. A study was conducted and prepared in two parts: Housing Demand and Supply Analysis, and Housing Strategy. The Housing Strategy in particular was developed to address the issues and gaps raised in the initial report. This report had 43 recommended strategies divided between 11 housing priorities. The priorities include[11]:

- responding to diverse housing needs;
- maintaining and upgrading existing housing;
- increasing the supply of affordable rental housing;
- examining the impact of conversion of renal housing to condominiums;
- providing a range of housing options for seniors;

[6] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report..
[7] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report..
[8] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.
[9] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.
[10] City of St. Thomas. (2008). City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment no. 66 to the City of St. Thomas Official Plan: Appendix XVII Residential Intensification and Redevelopment Capacity Assessment for the Built-up Areas.
[11] Lapointe Consulting Inc. (2004). St. Thomas and Elgin County Housing Strategy: Final Report.

- meeting the need for emergency and transitional housing;
- addressing the need for larger units in Aylmer;
- the role of rooming houses;
- increasing the supply of supportive housing;
- expanding opportunities for affordable ownership housing; and
- laying the foundation for an ongoing system for promoting affordable housing.

TRANSPORTATION

Public Transit in the City of St. Thomas is delivered by St. Thomas Transit Services and operated by Voyageur Transportation.

The City of St. Thomas' Official Plan (2011) encourages the promotion of public transit and other forms of active/non-car related transportation[12]. Sustainable transit initiatives could include the integration of walkable communities, street design and green corridors, pedestrian friendly streetscapes, accessibility, bicycle and automobile infrastructure and accessible public transit. Implementing these sustainable transit initiatives can begin with their inclusion in Municipal policies such as: the Transportation Master Plan, Transit Plan, Bike Master Plan, Official Plan, Secondary Plans, and Traffic Calming Studies[13].

Walking for leisure ranked as the most popular activity identified in the City of St. Thomas' Recreation, Leisure & Parks Master Plan[14]. Residents indicated the need to improve connectivity across the City with respect to bike and walking trails. Many suggested that increased trails and connections would encourage more people to become active and go outside to enjoy the City.

The City does have a plan for the establishment of a road cycling network that was proposed as part of the preparation of the City's Trails and Master Plan (approved in May 2008). The Plan proposed on-road cycling lane to be provided on the following roads:

- Sunset Drive (west City limit to south City limit)
- Burwell Road (Ron McNeil Line to Talbot)
- Fairview Avenue (Talbot to Southdale Line)
- South Edgeware (Waterworks Park to Highbury)
- Highbury Ave (South Edgeware to Edgeware Line)
- Elm Street (Sunset Drive to Centennial Ave)

The Official Plan indicates that efforts will be made by the City through the development approvals process to facilitate the long-term implementation of a pedestrian/bikeway system that better connects and links the Kettle Creek Valleylands, Mill Creek Valleylands, Lake Margaret, DJ Tarry Complex, Pinafore Park and the neighbourhood parks in the South Block[15].

[12] City of St. Thomas. (2011). New Official Plan: Sustainable & Healthy Community Workshop (presentation). City of St. Thomas.
[13] City of St. Thomas. (2011). New Official Plan: Sustainable & Healthy Community Workshop (presentation). City of St. Thomas.
[14] City of St. Thomas Recreation, Leisure & Parks Master Plan (RLPMP), February 2008.
[15] City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment No. 66 (October 2010)

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

In recognition of the importance of a healthy community to sustainability, Elgin-St. Thomas Public Health has contributed funding under the Healthy Communities Partnership Fund for the development of the ICSP. They recently prepared a *Community Picture* that provides an assessment of the current situation with respect to health and well-being that will be used as a baseline with the end goal of a healthier community[16]. This research identified a number of priority areas, including healthy eating and local food sources, mental health promotion, accessible and affordable sports and recreation opportunities, promotion of physical activity, education on substance and alcohol misuse, and safe communities. Many of these priority areas would be addressed in the ICSP, including key actions integrated in the social and cultural pillars of sustainability.

Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership

Elgin St. Thomas Healthy Communities Partnership is a local community group/advocate for healthy living choices and healthy public policies. Following the Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport Healthy Communities Framework 2011/12, the healthy focus areas for Elgin County and St. Thomas are: Physical Activity, Sports & Recreation, Healthy Eating, Tobacco Use/Exposure, Injury Prevention, Mental Health Promotion, and Substance and Alcohol Misuse[17].

The Healthy Communities Project[18] promotes healthy communities in Elgin County and create a framework for a culture of health and well-being.

- The Role of Transportation: Encourage walking/non-motorized transportation
- Environmental Health and Protection: Air and water quality are the priority; Smart energy, transportation and conservation activities can help create greater environmental health and protection. Green energy / wind energy promotion has been adopted as a focus for the County of Elgin.
- The Benefits of Physical Activity and Social Indicators
- Access to Healthy and Sustainable Food Sources: supporting local agriculture
- Availability of Housing Choices: affordable housing
- Economic Development Initiatives
- Partnerships

In March 2011, Elgin St. Thomas Public Health released the Healthy Communities – Community Picture. Healthy Communities, part of the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport, was established in 2010 and funded by the Healthy Communities Fund. In order to achieve the vision of healthy Ontario communities, the Ministry identified six risk factors for the development of policy and programs[19]:

1. physical activity, sport and recreation
2. healthy eating
3. tobacco use/exposure
4. injury prevention
5. mental health promotion
6. substance and alcohol misuse

[16] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health
[17] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health
[18] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.
[19] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.

In order to support the development of these policy objectives and program initiatives, Healthy Communities launched a funding program in 2010 for the development of 'Community Pictures'. This document aimed to provide an assessment of the current situation regarding the six risk factors and a plan on how to proceed with recommendations.

The report concluded with the following:

Recommended Strategic Policy Goals[20]:

a) Injury Prevention: Increased pedestrian safety and provide barrier-free access by encouraging municipalities to examine their sidewalk maintenance and availability policies;
b) Tobacco Use/Exposure: Advocate for policies regarding smoke-free multi-unit dwellings and minimum set-backs for smoking outside municipal buildings;
c) Healthy Eating: Advocate for policies that improve access and availability of healthy foods in schools, workplaces, and public facilities (including community gardens, supporting local growers) and limit food and beverages high in calories, fat, and sugar and salt; and
d) Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation: Increase the opportunities for people of all ages to use active transportation by reviewing and implementing municipal Master Plan documents and other relevant policies. Active transportation is defined as any form of human-powered transportation, such as walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating or skateboarding.

Recommended Actions[21]:

a) Injury Prevention: Increase awareness and knowledge regarding the impact of distracted driving and strategies to reduce multi-tasking while driving. Implement an education and awareness strategy targeting drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Specifically addressing the need for drivers and cyclists to share the road.
b) Mental Health Promotion: Increase awareness of existing mental health promotion resources for adults and youth in the community; Increase knowledge in people of all ages regarding importance of a healthy body – healthy mind connections.
c) Tobacco Use/Exposure: Increase the availability of peer coaches and mentors to support people attempting to quit smoking; Increase the availability of free or low cost nicotine replacement therapy, brief intervention and in-depth counselling services locally.
d) Substance and Alcohol Misuse: Engage youth, aged 10-24, in adapting and implementing evidence-based programs that address resiliency; Address prescription drug misuse in youth and adults through a multi sector approach with workplaces, physicians, and pharmacies.
e) Healthy Eating: Increase access, availability and awareness of where to find healthy foods in schools, workplaces, the community and public facilities (including community gardens, supporting local growers) and limit food and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt; Enhance food skills training opportunities throughout the County (including basic nutrition and food safety concepts; learning menu planning, food budgeting, grocery shopping and food preparation skills).

Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation: Increase the availability of free or low cost recreational activities for people of all ages with specific focus programming for school aged children after school hours; Increase the awareness of cycling and walking by supporting community events that promote active transportation such as a car-free day, commuter challenge, a walk and shop downtown event etc.

2010 Community Health Status Report

[20] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.
[21] Elgin St. Thomas Public Health. (2011). Healthy Communities Community Picture. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.

Measuring health status is a requirement of the Ontario Public Health Standards. St. Thomas had several successes (in comparison to the Province) outlined in this study including[22]:

- Despite lower income levels in St. Thomas, there were far fewer people below the low-income cut-off compared to the province;
- Residents were considered food secure, and had a smaller proportion of single-parent families;
- Infectious and chronic diseases were lower;
- Rates of reportable diseases, preventable by vaccination, were substantially lower;
- Vaccination coverage rates for childhood and elderly populations were higher;
- Fertility was higher while 'low birth weight' and pre-term births were lower, contributing to a higher growth rate;
- Cancer screening rates are on par with the Province;
- Residents experienced less work and life stress;
- Suicide rate was lower;
- Motor vehicle collisions, overall, were lower; and
- Beaches were infrequently experiencing high bacteria levels and posted swimming advisories.

The challenges (in comparison to the Province) included[23]:

- Leading cause of premature death in St. Thomas and Elgin County was cardiovascular disease;
- Compared to the Province, death from cardiovascular disease was experienced at younger ages;
- Lung disease was the second leading cause of premature death;
- Lower respiratory diseases caused 13% of all deaths;
- Diabetes-related hospitalization was higher locally;
- Injury-related hospitalizations was higher;
- Teen pregnancy rates were higher and did not decrease over time unlike the Province;
- Abortion numbers were lower;
- High rates of morbidity and mortality from chronic diseases may be attributed to socioeconomic factors including education;
- Smoking rates were higher at 30% of the population;
- More than half the population was considered to be overweight or obese;
- Less frequent use of protective equipment such as seatbelts and helmets; and
- More common to be in the vehicle with a driver under the influence of alcohol.

Due to the number of data gaps with information on healthy family dynamics, child oral health, drinking water quality, mental health, child healthy weights, child eating and physical activity, exposure to UV radiation and emergency preparedness, a complete assessment of the City's health status was not measurable.[24]

Elgin County Community Consultations for Quality of Life[25]

In 2010, a Community social report prepared for Elgin County included Community Consultation for Quality of Life. This report identified four priority issues that were identified by residents in Elgin County:

- Transportation

[22] Maaten, S & Zettler, L. (2010). 2010 Community Health Status Report. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.
[23] Maaten, S & Zettler, L. (2010). 2010 Community Health Status Report. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.
[24] Maaten, S & Zettler, L. (2010). 2010 Community Health Status Report. Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.
[25] Community Matters Elgin – St. Thomas. (2010). Community Social Report St. Thomas – Elgin: An Overview of Quality of Life Indicators in St. Thomas – Elgin County.

- Medical and Mental Health
- Youth
- Poverty

Homelessness

According to the Study on Homelessness, there were 278 applicants waiting for social housing in St. Thomas and Elgin County as of March 2009. The data shows that although there was a decline from 2004 to 2007, over 100 new applications were received between 2007 and 2009. Of this list, 12 qualify for Special Priority Placement due to domestic abuse.

There are currently four emergency housing providers in St. Thomas. They include YWCA, Violence Against Women Services Elgin County, Canadian Mental Health Association, and Rehoboth Homes. Together, they have 46 beds. Regarding transitional housing, there are currently four providers in St. Thomas-St. Thomas-Elgin Second Stage Housing, CMHA, YWCA and the St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital-all of which have a combined 57 beds for the homeless[26].

The Inn Out of the Cold is a program designed to provide assistance during the winter months for those who are in need. These needs include the basic physical needs of shelter, food, and warm clothing, and the deeply human needs of compassion, dignity and feelings of self-worth. Inn Out of the Cold is open from 6pm- 8am, 7 days a week, and is located at 135 Wellington Street, St. Thomas.

A Youth Homelessness Strategy is currently being prepared and will present an outlook on homelessness specific to youth across Elgin County.

The Province has also mandated the development of a 10-year homelessness plan by January 2014. Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy indicated that Municipal Service Managers, in consultation with community partners, are required to develop comprehensive, multi-year plans to address local housing and homelessness needs, to be in place by January 1, 2014. Service Managers will be required to report annually to the public on the progress of these plans[27].

There are currently a number of health and social service groups and organizations present in St. Thomas, including:

Central Community Health Centre

In 2005, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) announced funding for 22 new community health centres – one to be located in St. Thomas. In 2010, The Central Community Health Centre was opened. CCHC provides primary health care (for people living in St. Thomas, Central Elgin and Southwold Township) who do not have a nurse practitioner or physician. CCHC also offers programs for health promotion, illness prevention and community development. It is a charitable organization with the purpose of delivering comprehensive primary care, illness prevention, health promotion and community programs and support to individuals and families in St. Thomas, Central Elgin and Southwold Township. Staffing at CCHC include family doctors, a nurse practitioner, a registered nurse, RPN, social workers, a chiropodist, a dietitian, a health promoter and a community outreach worker all working together as a team. The Central CHC is one of four CHCs funded by the South West LHIN.

[26] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.
[27] Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. Overview accessed online at: http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page9191.aspx

Elgin Community Care Access Centre

The Elgin Community Care Access Centre is located in St. Thomas and provides services for residents across Elgin County. They provide at-home-care to ensure that residents have access to the care and the services that they need.

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital

The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, located in St. Thomas, is a 166 bed facility that provides comprehensive 24 hour coverage in Medicine, Surgery, OB, Paediatrics, Anaesthesia, Emergency and Family Medicine. The fully accredited hospital serves the residents of St. Thomas and Elgin County. The hospital is located 30 minutes from downtown London, 40 minutes from the University of Western Ontario, and 15 minutes from the beaches of Port Stanley, in the heart of Southwestern Ontario. [28]

The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital is working towards a proposed $100 million redevelopment project. The redevelopment project includes a 15-bed mental health inpatient unit; a new emergency department; modernized surgical suites and a centralized ambulatory care program. This redevelopment project was identified as critical to the future of the hospital's deliver and services. This project enables the hospital to keep pace with a dynamic and changing health care system; create a state-of-the-art facility that supports the high quality of our health care professionals; and respond to the adult mental health needs of the community.[29]

Valley View Home for the Aged

Valley View is a long-term care nursing home located in St. Thomas that offers personal care 24-hours a day. There are 136 beds in the facility, and the rooms are composed of a variety of private, semi-private and 2 person shared standard/basic rooms in one of five residential areas. In addition to the care provided by staff, there are four specialized programs that the Home operates[30]:

- Adult Day Program – Alzheimer's: Specialized day program for adults with dementia
- Adult Day Program – Young Adults: Program for young adults who require some physical, social or emotional support to remain in the community
- Overnight Program – Overnight respite program for adults and seniors who require some physical, social or emotional support to remain in the community
- Short Stay Beds: 2 publically funded short-stay beds within the long-term care home provided for temporary care, i.e. convalescent, respite (caregiver relief), vacation

Family Involvement Project team

The FIP team is working hard to improve the lives of families and young children in Elgin - St. Thomas. One of their project goals is to hear from parents about their needs, services and what is important to families in St. Thomas across a number of neighbourhoods.

The *St. Thomas Parent Community Survey* (SPCS) for the Family Involvement Project is asking parents, who are 18 years of age or older, living in St. Thomas and who have children 0-12 years old or who are currently pregnant, to volunteer to participate in their survey.

Community Council on Children and Youth in Elgin (CCCYE)

[28] St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. (2011). http://www.stegh.on.ca/default.aspx
[29] St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital: Redefining Our Future. (2011). http://mystegh.ca/
[30] Valley View Home for the Aged. (2011). http://thehealthline.ca/displayservice.aspx?id=11925

The CCCYE was established to respond to the need for coordination of services for children and youth in Elgin County. The Council establishes a positive understanding and relationship between service providers through networking opportunities. Membership to the Council is open to service providers of children, youth and/or families in Elgin County, individuals who are consumers and interested community members.

Parks and Recreation

Elgin County relies on its aesthetic appeal (rural/natural landscape) to draw local residents and tourists alike to the variety of attractions. For example: parks, beaches, rivers, golf courses, hiking trails, and fishing[31].

The St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Department's vision is to inspire and assist community members to live healthy and active lives through parks, open spaces, facilities, programs and services. The department offers many programs through the Timken Centre which houses two ice rinks. Swimming programs are offered at the Jaycees Pool. St. Thomas also has two splash-pads: the Waterworks Splashpad and the Rotary Club Splashpad. In addition, the Parks and Recreation department offers various other activities in their recreation guide that can be found on the City website.[32]

St. Thomas has a large amount of green space, with 35 parks spread over 457 acres of land. The two main parks are Pinafore Park and Waterworks Park. The former draws thousands of visitors each year due to its numerous walking trails and major events, whereas the latter consists of manicured gardens, pavilions, playground and splashpad.[33] The entrance of Pinafore Park was enhanced in 1999 to include a Memory Garden. The Memory Garden acts as a reminder of the past and celebration of the future of St. Thomas. In support of carrying memories, a place is provided to display engraved bronze leaves that acknowledge dedications on Donor, Recognition and Memory Trees. Future plans for the Memory Garden include a waterfall and a stream that will flow into Lake Pinafore.[34]

As a community, the Parks and Recreation Department also manages a Music-in-the-Park Program as well as a Movies-in-the-Park event. The Music-in-the-Park event occurs every Sunday at 7pm between June and August at the Morris F. Jones Bandshell, while the Movie event is held once a year at the end of the summer at the same location. Community events such as these are popular and help bring the community together.[35]

The fundamental objective of any sustainable community is the promotion of human well-being through enhancing both Quality of Life and Quality of Place. The Cultural pillar is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability.

Arts

The St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre is a non-profit organization that encourages and promotes an appreciation for, and support the practice of the visual arts in St. Thomas, Elgin County and

[31] Kettle Creek Conservation Authority. (2008). Lower Kettle Creek Watershed Strategy. Kettle Creek Conservation Authority.
[32] St. Thomas Parks and Rec. (2011). http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=117
[33] St. Thomas Parks. (2011). http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=153
[34] The Memory Garden. (2011). http://www.thememorygarden.org/
[35] St. Thomas Parks. (2011). http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/ActivePage.asp?PageID=153

surrounding area. Since the Art Centre's establishment in 1969, they have established a permanent art collection that consists of over 1000 works, they present 16 exhibitions annually that feature the work of local, regional, national and international artists, and provide ongoing educational programs for both adults and children[36]. The programs offered include:

Education Programs:

- Interactive programming for JK-12
- Creative ways to meet curriculum objectives in: Language, Arts, Science, Social Studies and Visual Arts
- Ideas for related, pre- and post-visit classroom activities
- Field experience to support your learning objectives

Children's Programs:

- Shutterbugs
- Elementary Expressions
- Lets Create
- Painting and Drawing
- March Break Workshops

Adult Programs:

- Mixed Media with Heather Keating
- Zentangle Beginner Workshop
- Zentangle with Colour Workshop
- Faces
- Portrait Photography for Beginners
- Song Writing Workshop with Deni Gauthier
- Eric Atkinson Group of Seven and the English Connection

Elgin Theatre Guild

The Princess Avenue Playhouse, home of the Elgin Theatre Guild is a former church built in 1907 that was converted into a theatre that first opened its curtains in 1967. Throughout the last 45 years, the theatre grew and presented not only live performances, but Murder Mystery dinners, Henry the VIII dinners, International Plowing Match, school visitations, and childrens' acting workshops.

The theatre also abides by a 50% Canadian Content policy since 1986, in support of national pride and quality work. Renovations have recently been completed to preserve the heritage building including improving the roof and stained glass windows, stage curtains, lighting, sound, lobby and parking lot.[37]

St. Thomas Performing Arts

St. Thomas Performing Arts is a community group, which works to bring world-class performers to St. Thomas.

[36] http://www.stepac.ca/home.html
[37] http://www.elgintheatreguild.ca/index.html

St. Thomas Arts

This art company was established in 2011 as a "destination that embraces creativity, community and culture". The mission of the art company is to offer opportunities to experience arts and trades by providing studio space that allows everyone an equal opportunity to create. They drive local culture and community through partnerships, events and programming. Individuals are given the opportunity to meet artists and experience different mediums of creativity first hand at the studio located at 21 Oliver Street in St. Thomas. The art company "embraces the uniqueness of the individuals by giving each member the space, tools and encouragement to find peace through creativity"[38].

HERITAGE

The City of St. Thomas was first settled in 1810 and named after Thomas Talbot, who promoted its development until it was named the seat of the new Elgin County in 1844. Due to the growth rates of the City, the area was incorporated as a village in 1852, a town in 1861 and as a city in 1881. St. Thomas' historical importance is connected to the construction of several railways that passed through the City, exactly halfway between Detroit and Buffalo, making St. Thomas an important railway junction, hence the title 'Railway Capital of Canada'. Today, this heritage is celebrated through the revitalization of the original train station and the Elgin County Railway Museum. The unfortunate portion of St. Thomas' history, relates to the passing of Jumbo, P.T. Barnum's famous elephant, when he was struck by a train in 1885. A life-sized statue of Jumbo, erected in 1985, serves as a memorial.[39]

Elgin County Railway Museum

The Elgin County Railway Museum was created in 1988 as a non-profit charity in order to preserve and restore the railway heritage of the County. Headed by volunteers, the collection includes various pieces of Canada's railway history.[40]

CASO: Canada Southern Railway Station

Built in 1871, CASO's unique architecture and history have made this building a heritage property. The station is described to be a 'horizontal skyscraper' which gives the building a dominating presence in the City's downtown core. The station has plans for revitalization and has a vision for a dynamic, highly visited and beautifully restored building that may well be the beginning of a downtown-wide revitalization program. The aim is to ensure CASO plays a significant role in the identity, branding and tourism of St. Thomas.[41]

Heritage Properties

The City of St. Thomas has compiled an illustrated guide to the Heritage Properties in St. Thomas that includes addresses, a brief history of each building and its architectural highlights. The registry includes 23 buildings and can be found on the City's website. The 23 buildings are composed of a variety of functions such as schools, churches, government buildings and residences.[42]

[38] The art company http://www.artcompany.ca
[39] http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=267&SearchText=history
[40] http://ecrm5700.org/
[41] http://www.railwaycapital.ca/station_plans
[42] https://stthomas.civicweb.net/Documents/DocumentDisplay.aspx?ID=715

WHAT WE HEARD?

The following section presents what we have heard through the interviews, surveys and community engagement events related to the social pillar of sustainability:

STRENGTHS / OPPORTUNITIES	WEAKNESSES / CHALLENGES
• Small town feel • Close-knit community • Friendly neighbourhood • Access to services and amenities • Committed to helping each other • Safe and clean • New leadership, refresh direction • Aging population – retirement community • New recreational programs for youth and seniors • Family involvement project – Grass Routes, Elgin's Children network • St. Thomas home builders • Fanshawe College • Horton Farmers Market • Library • Trail System • Strong community partnerships • Community health services • Board of Health – in St. Thomas • Local hospitals – on-going revitalization • Recreation, arena • Big sporting community – staying in London - not here • Maintaining recreation centre • Cost of living – low property tax • Talented and skilled work force • Social supports – quality services • History/railway city • New programs for youth and seniors • Lots of economic development opportunities: tourism, agriculture, renewable energy • CASO station – Railway city • The urban forest	• Living in the shadow of London • Migration of folks with education for better jobs elsewhere; Youth migration to surrounding municipalities • Poverty/low income level • Homelessness/affordable housing • Low community pride • Crime/safety • Substance abuse • Mental health issues • Aging population • Limited recreational and entertainment options\Taxi – limit, costs of service – quality, visual • Negative reputation/perception • Food – availability of healthy food • Apathy, attitude • Low socio- economic in downtown core – i.e. Meth Clinics • Communication with residents – different tools • Newsletter, real paper • Inadequate public transit system • Lack of alternative means of transportation (bike lanes and sidewalks) • Public area maintenance (weeds/grass cutting) • Interaction between cities, county, business, organizations • Community cohesion • Promotion of tourism • Need to be proud to promote – identify what to promote • Need an identity – saying we are awesome • Marketing video – need uptake and buy-in-apathy • Lack of long-term planning • Support for arts and culture

THE ECONOMIC PILLAR

This section presents an overview of the economy of the City of St. Thomas, including:

- Current situation
- Employment opportunities
- Training and education
- Attracting new businesses
- Tourism

From 2007 to present, St. Thomas has experienced high levels of unemployment, an increased demand for social housing, as well as an economic downturn in available jobs and employment opportunities.

St. Thomas is now focused on regaining economic strength through a diversity of means. Attracting a creative economy/creative rural economy and focusing on developing tourism and social investments are among the top priorities. However, to attract a new population of workers (and/or residents), St. Thomas is looking to create a competitive housing market and providing housing options such as establishing new housing intensification targets and developing an urban area residential expansion plan.

Between 1996 and 2006, St. Thomas and Elgin County has experienced a decline in unemployment rates of 4%. The overall unemployment rate for Elgin County in 2006 was 4.9% while St. Thomas' rate was 6.3%[43]. The unemployment rate in St. Thomas and Elgin County has since increased with the loss of the automotive manufacturing industry. The closure of the automotive industry in St. Thomas and Elgin County not only had a direct impact on their employees, but it also affected supporting industries, and community business within the area.

St. Thomas and the District Chamber of Commerce

The St. Thomas and the District Chamber of Commerce serves the communities of St. Thomas, Central Elgin and Southwold, including Port Stanley, Belmont, Shedden, Fingal, Talbotville, Sparta and Union. There are currently over 700 businesses and organizations registered as Members of the Chamber of Commerce. Their mission is "to serve as the voice of the business community and to work to ensure economic success in central Elgin." As a not-for-profit organization, the Chamber works to create and retain jobs as well as provides avenues for information and communication while maintaining an extensive 'library of data' about the region and members.[44]

St. Thomas Downtown Development Board (DDB)

The DDB is a committee that organizes and maintains the downtown area of St. Thomas. They provide information on events that occur downtown such as the Santa Claus Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony. They also have a full business directory, and to further promote businesses, a 'buy local' program was created along with a 'Downtown Dollars' promotion whereby the DDB provides prizes in their various events in the form of DDB Dollars that can be used as a gift certificate at participating downtown stores. They also use this program to keep track of the shopping trends in the downtown area. [45]

[43] City of St. Thomas. (2009). St. Thomas and Elgin County Study on Homelessness: Final report.
[44] http://www.stthomaschamber.on.ca/
[45] http://www.downtownstthomas.com/

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Currently, St. Thomas is working on developing their economy by providing support through various programs and initiatives. They are working hard to attract new industrial related businesses through incentives such as awards and prizes, by providing accessible information on real estate options as well as sharing information on what companies are already located in St. Thomas. Hydro One is a recent example of the success of this campaign. In August 2011, it was reported that Hydro One announced a relocation and expansion into two separate buildings in St. Thomas, both were over 20,000 square foot facilities. This move provides St. Thomas with 37 to 42 high-quality jobs in what is considered to be a very solid sector. [46]

The following Table[47] lists the top private sector employers in St. Thomas. Timken Canada recently announced that they would be closing the company within the next year.

Employer	Number of Employees	Sector / Description
Formet Industries	1,150	Fully automated frame assembly plant
Presstran Industries	540	Heavy automotive stampings and welded assemblies
Starwood Worldwide Hotels & Resorts Inc.	600	Hotel reservation centre
Masco Canada Ltd., Brass-Craft Division	417	Manufacturer of brass plumbing and industrial fittings
Steelway	175	Designs and manufactures overhead crane systems and steel buildings
Timken Canada LP	170	Manufacture and sale of tapered roller bearings and related products
Takumi Stamping Canada Inc.	150	Automotive stamped parts
Unimotor	130	Fractional horsepower permanent magnet DC motors
GKN Sinter Metals – St. Thomas	147	Powder metal and powder forge components
Forest City Castings	70	
Buckland Customs Brokers	65	Customs brokerage, sufferance warehousing

[46] http://www.somasite.com/index.php/news-from-ontarios-hearland/156-hydro-one-relocates-to-st-thomas-ontario

[47] St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation (2011). Top Employers. Retrieved November 15, 2011 from: http://st-thomas.org/top-ten-employers/

The following Table[48] lists the top public sector employers in St. Thomas.

Employer	Number of Employees
Thames Valley District School Board	8,000
London District Catholic School Board	1,800
St. Thomas-Elgin General Hospital	800
St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital	700
Elgin County	375
City of St. Thomas	370
Community Living Elgin	260

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Fanshawe College

Fanshawe College in St. Thomas offers career training and skills upgrading in undergraduate and post-graduate programs and courses that can lead to various employment opportunities. Fanshawe is one of the largest colleges in Ontario with 5 locations across the Province. The college offers[49]:

- 40 co-op programs
- Over 100 articulation agreements with postsecondary institutions around the world
- Excellent services for students with physical or learning needs
- 110-plus programs, including graduate and degree programs
- 14,000 full-time students
- Over 3,500 apprentices
- 1,200 international students from 60 countries
- 40,000 part-time Continuing Education courses registrations
- 106,000-plus alumni living and working around the world
- A full range of lifelong learning opportunities through Continuing Education and Corporate Training services

Algoma University at St. Thomas

Algoma University recently announced the opening of a university programming campus to St. Thomas and the surrounding area. The Algoma University at St. Thomas Program will give residents an opportunity to get the first two years of a university education at home without incurring the additional cost of student housing. This is a unique program and is currently the only school in Canada that offers this programming option.

Employment Services Elgin

With the establishment of the FUTURES program under the Ontario Government, funding for Youth Employment Counselling Centre's was provided. The Elgin/St. Thomas Youth Employment Counselling

[48] St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation (2011). Top Employers. Retrieved November 15, 2011 from: http://st-thomas.org/top-ten-employers/
[49] http://www.fanshawec.ca/about-us

Centre (YECC) began operation in 1986 at the local YMCA. Since then, the Centre has moved six times before reaching its current location in 1988. The Talbot Teen Centre is a program delivered by the Elgin/St. Thomas Youth Employment Counseling Centre. The need for a community teen centre came about as a result of a country-wide consultation hosted by the United Way in 2001. The "Elgin in 5 years" visioning process, plus two follow-up sessions with Secondary School youth, reinforced the need to establish a Teen Centre in Elgin County. The Talbot Teen Centre opened its doors in May 2005.

ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES

The City of St. Thomas is currently working hard to attract new businesses, particularly in the industrial and manufacturing sector. The St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation has developed several programs and initiatives to facilitate the economic growth of the City. Naming the overall initiative 'Faster, Stronger, Better', alongside a promotional video to explain the various opportunities, St. Thomas is working hard to achieve prosperity into the future. The programs are listed below.

The St. Thomas Municipal Airport has grown and is able to provide all services to corporate customers, private pilots, military and public service aircrafts. There are one main runway with six additional smaller runways, fuel services, charters, maintenance and repair facilities, flight school, and license training as Canada Customs and Immigration Services. The St. Thomas Municipal Airport also hosts the Great Lakes Airshow – a popular two-day event showing classic and modern day aircrafts from across North America.[50]

Top Gear

Top Gear is a fast track to set-up communication and provide answers to any questions organizations may have when looking at moving or expanding into St. Thomas. The four-step process includes: Welcome to St. Thomas; Pre-Consultation Meeting; Building Permit Application; and Building Permit Issued (in as little as 5 days).[51]

St. Thomas Industrial Revolutionaries (STIR)

STIR is an initiative that was led by a group of private sector business leaders and the community at large. The name was selected specifically to celebrate the idea that, as St. Thomas is a manufacturing city, making things better is a high purpose – which led to the vision: "To become the best manufacturing community in North America". By welcoming all industrial revolutionaries from around the world, in addition to the number of skilled workers that exist in St. Thomas, the City has positioned themselves to be an attractive contender for new business.[52]

International Opportunities

In November 2011, Mayor Heather Jackson, along with other representatives from southwestern Ontario communities, took a 10 day trip to Japan to market and promote the region as a prime location for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The trip also provided opportunities to meet with executives from manufacturing companies that already have a strong industrial presence in St. Thomas. There were various learning opportunities on this trip, one of which involved a better understanding of how working with neighbouring municipalities and achieving goals at a regional level, helps provide more opportunities at the local level.[53]

[50] http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=140&SearchText=airport
[51] http://st-thomas.org/topgear/
[52] http://st-thomas.org/stir/
[53] http://www.canadianinterviews.com/columnists/index.php?ID=972&SECTION=58

The City recently established a Sister City Relationship with Xuyi, China. This relationship will allow the cities to explore an exchange of cultural, educational and economic development opportunities.

The Southwestern Ontario Marketing Alliance (SOMA) is a partnership of southwestern Ontario communities. SOMA works with all levels of government and the private sector to promote the advantages of locating within the region. SOMA and its partners offer a number of services to companies looking to grow within the region. Some of these services include:

- Confidential site selection assistance;
- Economic development services; and
- Development and sale of industrial land.

Tourism

A Tourism Development Strategy and Marketing Plan was created for Elgin and St. Thomas in 2009. The document was developed in order to provide strategic direction for the Elgin/St. Thomas tourism industry and outlines creative marketing activities over a 5-year period. The Tourism Development Strategy was developed using a comprehensive research and consultation process that helped assess the City's Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats. This led to the creation of the three primary goals[54]:

- Building on Our Strengths: Building on tourism assets and creating primary tourism destinations
- Enhancing Our Potential: Be market ready for investment and growth
- Putting the Tools in Place: Lays the foundation for success in all tourism initiatives

The Tourism Marketing Plan defines the marketing goals, programs and actions that need to be implemented in order to increase tourism. The strategy focused on the following three goals:

- Increase the amount of people that visit;
- Increase the length of time that visitors stay; and
- Increase the amount of money visitors spend.

The above goals are to be implemented using programs such as Primary Lure Attractions, General Tourism Attraction and Partners, including Tourism Services Members and Network Development.[55]

What we Heard?

The following section presents what we have heard through the interviews, surveys and community engagement events.

Strengths / Opportunities	Weaknesses / Challenges
• Location-close proximity to London and other cities • Accessible to major transportation corridors	• Living in the shadow of London • Migration of folks with education for better jobs elsewhere • Unemployment/limited job opportunities

[54] Miller Dickinson Blais. (2009). Elgin/St. Thomas Tourism Development Strategy and Marketing Plan
[55] Miller Dickinson Blais. (2009). Elgin/St. Thomas Tourism Development Strategy and Marketing Plan

Strengths / Opportunities	Weaknesses / Challenges
• Municipal airport • Employment base • Supply of resources – sewer, water • Strong agricultural base in the City and surrounding city • Cost of living – low property tax • Hydro One's new headquarter • Talented and skilled work force • Fanshawe College • Elgin business, commerce, city – good partnerships • Programs – collaboration in summer employment opportunities • Chamber of commerce – strong • Accessible to major transportation corridors • Lots of economic development opportunities: tourism, agriculture, renewable energy, etc. • Available land for development • Vacant buildings for new factories/businesses • Talented and skilled work force	• Limited economic growth • Poverty/low income levels • Homelessness/affordable housing • Deteriorating infrastructure • Dated downtown core • Aging population • 25% more life campaign • Hit bottom – know where we have been – "bank sheet"

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR

This section presents an overview of the environmental pillar including:

- Geography
- The Road Network
- Planning and sustainability initiatives
- Energy and air quality
- Water and wastewater
- Waste management
- Agriculture and local food

GEOGRAPHY

St. Thomas is geographically situated within the Carolinian Zone bioregion. The Carolinian Zone is the deciduous forest region of eastern North America. This region holds great biological diversity of both flora and fauna due to the deciduous forest cover and geography/climate.

Southwestern Ontario is heavily populated/developed as well as having major agricultural activity. There is currently less than 10% remaining of the Carolinian Zone deciduous forest cover. St. Thomas and Elgin County have committed to maintaining their natural heritage through sustainable development measures and nature conservation.

There are 21 animal species at risk recorded in the Lower Kettle Creek Watershed. Similarly, there are 25 plant species at risk in the Lower Kettle Creek Watershed[56]. Additionally, Upper Kettle Creek has a variety of endangered flora and fauna species. Through conservation activities, St. Thomas and Elgin County are looking to increase their natural environment and protect species habitat.

The following environmental priorities have been identified by the community for the Dodd Creek watershed: erosion prevention, source water protection, wetland creation and protection, reforestation, and municipal drain management[57].

Natural Heritage and Natural Heritage Corridors will be a main focus area to address these priorities.

THE ROAD NETWORK

The City of St. Thomas is responsible for the construction and maintenance of 192 kilometres of roads[58]. The City is responsible for planning, design, construction, cleaning, repair, snow removal, traffic control, signals, and pavement markings and signage.

The Official Plan Amendment No. 66 (OPA 66) for the City of St. Thomas designated a number of urban expansion areas that were added to the St. Thomas settlement area through annexations. In support of

[56] Kettle Creek Conservation Authority. (2008). Lower Kettle Creek Watershed Strategy. Kettle Creek Conservation Authority.

[57] Dodd Creek. (n.d.) Lake Erie Binational Public Forum LaMP implementation Project. Ontario Ministry of the Environment.

[58] City of St. Thomas website: Roads and Transportation http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=247.

the OPA 66, the City prepared the Urban Area Expansion Transportation Master Plan (TMP) in December 2008, which included Phases 1 and 2 of the required Class Environmental Assessment for transportation improvements to support the buildout of the expansion areas.

The County of Elgin[59] recognizes the importance of sustainable transportation and identified that the County should:

- Plan for and protect corridors and rights-of-way for transportation, transit and infrastructure facilities to meet current and projected needs.
- Ensure transportation systems are safe, energy efficient, facilitate the movement of people and goods.
- Ensure connectivity within and among transportation systems and modes, including improved connections (where possible) which cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Promote land use patterns, densities and a mix of uses that minimize the length and number of vehicle trips and support the development of viable choices and plans for public transit and other alternative transportation modes.
- Protect airports from incompatible land uses and development.

PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES

In November 2010, the City of St. Thomas held a sustainability workshop for residents to partake and understand the importance of creating a sustainable city. This initiative was being supported by the creation of a new Official Plan in order to create and address policy recommendations surrounding sustainability. The workshop led to the development of the Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development Consultation Report, which not only aided in shaping the Official Plan, but also the establishment of Community Gardens[60]. Achieving this key milestone was integral to providing a foundation and guide for future plans, programs and initiatives for the City of St. Thomas' strategic planning and overall sustainable community development. A number of city programs, plans and initiatives to promote sustainability and healthy communities include[61]:

- Downtown Community Improvement Plan
- Transportation Master Plan
- Trails and Parks Master Plan
- Recreation and Leisure Master Plan
- Economic Development Corporation's Strategic Plan
- Official Plan
- Municipal Asset Management Plan/Program
- Affordable Housing programs
- Valleyland Protection Areas
- Solid Waste Master Plan
- Completed building energy audit with Capital Plan
- Water Pollution Control Plant Master Plan
- Subwatershed planning with urban stormwater management strategies
- Urban Design Study

[59] Transportation, Servicing & Waste Management Research Paper County of Elgin June 2011
[60] Dillon Consulting. (2011). City of St. Thomas Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development Consultation Report
[61] Dillon Consulting. (2011). City of St. Thomas Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development Consultation Report

Community Programs, Plans and Initiatives include[62]:

- Kettle Creek Conservation Area Stewardship Program
- Energy conservation and green energy promotions offered through St. Thomas Energy
- Variety of food security initiatives offered through United Way (and others)
- Variety of health promotion programs and initiatives offered through the Health Unit
- Community gardens; and
- Farmers' Market

The City has already been successful in moving forward on sustainability initiatives and has made significant contributions towards making St. Thomas more sustainable - environmentally, socio-culturally, financially and economically. The City of St. Thomas recognizes that sustainability is more than just an environmental focus. The City has taken initiatives to ensure communities recognize that sustainability is a forward-looking vision and that thinking ahead means that the needs of the residents must be met, without compromising the ability of the City to meet the needs of future generations.

Through the Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development consultation, the City of St. Thomas has already identified and acknowledged the priority areas that will require policies to be developed. They include:

- Food security and community gardens;
- Arts, culture and heritage preservation;
- Transportation and transit;
- Neighbourhood design; and
- The long term vision.

Official Plan

The City of St. Thomas recently developed a new Official Plan with three key elements to this process, which is supported by consultation programs[63].

The first element is the completion of several Background Studies:

- Population, Household & Employment Projections Report
- Affordable Housing Study
- Residential Intensification Report
- Commercial and Industrial Land Use Review
- Land Supply Study
- Infrastructure Master Plan
- Transportation Master Plan
- Mill Creek Subwatershed Study
- Transit Master Plan
- Recreation and Leisure Infrastructure Requirements
- Trails & Parks Analysis
- Planning Justification Report

[62] Dillon Consulting. (2011). City of St. Thomas Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development Consultation Report

[63] Dillon Consulting. (2011). City of St. Thomas Healthy Communities and Sustainable Development Consultation Report

The second element involves OPA 66:

- OPA 66 includes an urban area expansion and new city-wide policies for the Environment, Open Space and Conservation, Affordable Housing and Population, and Household projections. OPA 66 also includes some area-specific policies related to the future development of the urban area expansion lands.

The third and final component is the actual development of the New Official Plan:

- The new Official Plan will include the new policies from OPA 66, as well as additional land use policies (e.g. Residential, Commercial, Industrial etc.), new policies addressing sustainable development (e.g. growth management, food, transit, intensification, etc.)

ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY

The Ascent Group of Companies provides energy to the residents and businesses in St. Thomas. They have recently begun installing Smart Meters across St. Thomas. Smart Meters and Time-of-Use (TOU) rates are a province-wide initiative of the Ontario Government that will allow residents to better manage electricity costs and help Ontario manage its energy needs. They promote many green energy and energy conservation measures, including Refrigerator Round-up and Home Energy Audits.

The City of St. Thomas Official Plan indicates that energy conservation and efficiency should become a main focus in the planning of St. Thomas[64]. Energy conservation and efficiency measure can take many forms including the involvement of staff and community members. Attracting renewable energy production and manufacturing jobs and industries can also be tied to economic growth and sustainability.

There were many energy conservation policies proposed in the Official Plan Amendment No. 66[65], including:

- The practical application of innovative concepts relating to energy conservation shall be encouraged in the City through site planning, building design, renewable energy sources, alternative energy sources, and efficient equipment and operations.
- Development shall encourage energy conservation through appropriate community planning and design principles, a compact and contiguous urban form, infilling and redevelopment within existing developed areas and orderly, phased growth.
- Compact, mixed use and infill developments, which concentrate complementary land uses as a means of conserving energy, shall be encouraged.
- Subdivision designs, which incorporate energy conserving principles, shall be encouraged.
- New development shall be encouraged to incorporate an integrated walkway and bicycle path system within residential areas.
- Energy conservation programs, which enhance energy efficiency both on the part of the City, other agencies, the private sector and the public, shall be encouraged.
- The conservation of building materials through re-use, recycling and renovation shall be encouraged.

[64] City of St. Thomas. (2011). New Official Plan: Sustainable & Healthy Community Workshop (presentation). City of St. Thomas.
[65] City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment No. 66 (October 2010)

WATER AND WASTEWATER

The City of St. Thomas is supplied water from the Elgin Area Water Treatment Plant on Dexter Line east of Port Stanley Ontario.

The City of St. Thomas encourages residents and business owners to conserve water through practising and promoting water conservation measures across the City. The website includes a number of informative fact sheets on water conservation tips or protecting it from pollution. The Fact Sheets on the website include[66]:

- Water Saving Tips for The Kitchen
- Water Efficiency in the Bathroom - Toilets
- Water Efficiency in the Bathroom - Showers
- Water Efficiency in the Laundry and Utility Room
- Water Efficient Plant List
- Fun Facts about Water

Water Conservation policies incorporated in the City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment No. 66 include:

- Property owners and the building industry shall be encouraged to use water efficient fixtures and retrofit buildings during renovation.
- Landscaping firms and property owners shall be encouraged to utilize low water use landscaping alternatives.
- The City shall work with the adjacent municipalities and the Province to develop a water conservation programs including demand and supply management measures.

The St. Thomas Water Pollution Control Plant is a conventional activated sludge plant that treats wastewater (sewage) from the City of St. Thomas and the surrounding area. The wastewater from residential, commercial and industrial areas flow through the sanitary sewer systems and 12 sewage pumping stations and are collected at the Water Pollution Control Plant for treatment. The wastewater is treated and released to Kettle Creek under the strict requirements of the Ministry of the Environment Certificate of Approval.

The City of St. Thomas Storm Sewer System consists of a series of roadway catch basins, manholes, pipes, drainage ditches, storm water treatment units and storm water retention ponds that direct rainwater and runoff into the local creeks. There are over 1,500 storm manholes and 3,500 storm catch basins throughout the City of St. Thomas.

In 1994, the City of St. Thomas was a leader in waste investments and was the first in Ontario to launch a Green Cart Program[67]. The City had an innovative three stream (Green Cart, Blue Box and Waste) curbside collection and waste management program. Today, the three stream waste management program is still intact; however, the City's waste diversion rate has decreased from approximately 60% to only 38%[68].

[66] Water Conservation (St. Thomas): http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=157
[67] City of St. Thomas, Integrated Waste Management Master Plan (DRAFT) April 2011
[68] City of St. Thomas, Integrated Waste Management Master Plan (DRAFT) April 2011

In response to this, the City of St. Thomas is preparing an Integrated Waste Management Master Plan that will guide how the City will manage its garbage, recycling and organics and other diversion programs over the next twenty years.

The process to develop the Waste Management Master Plan included a review of current waste management programs and recommendations for alternative methods of practical and sustainable waste management service delivery with the necessary actions to assist the Municipality to meet the provincial diversion target of 60%.

Waste Management

The overall goal of the Waste Management Master Plan is to "set out the means to ensure secure waste disposal and waste diversion opportunities". The objectives of the Plan include:

- Ensure long-term waste disposal capacity;
- To meet the Provincial waste diversion Zero Waste Principles;
- To address Best Management Practices as set out by Waste Diversion Ontario (WDO) for Blue Box collection as embodied in a Waste Recycling d Strategy; and
- To consider striving to work towards a waste diversion rate of 70%.

The Official Plan Amendment No. 66[69] includes a number of policies related to waste management including:

- Adequate waste management systems shall be provided to accommodate present and future requirements. The size, type, location and design of the system shall be subject to Provincial standards and legislation. At this time, it is anticipated that the current arrangements for the collection and disposal of waste by a privately-owned company under an agreement with the City will continue.
- The City shall continue to invest cooperatively with adjacent municipalities to maintain an approved waste management system.
- The City shall cooperate with the Province of Ontario and area municipalities to achieve an effective long-term solution to waste management including efforts to "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle" solid waste.

Agriculture and Local Food

Ontario is a major contender in the agricultural sector, and 90% of the farms in Ontario are located in southern Ontario.[70] In St. Thomas specifically, according to the Directory of Community Supported Agriculture in Ontario, there are three farms located here: Fairmeadow Farm, McSmiths Organic Farm and Orchard Hill Farm – each of which grow a large variety of produce.[71] Other farms may exist in St. Thomas, although no others came up in the research.

In late 2011, the Sands Plains region, which includes Elgin County, received a $73,000 investment from the Federal Government in order to help diversify the agricultural opportunities for producers. The overall goal is to support regional development, attract investments, stimulate business development and create jobs.[72]

[69] City of St. Thomas Official Plan Amendment No. 66 (October 2010)
[70] http://www.soto.on.ca/history_of_ontario/agriculture_in_ontario.html
[71] http://csafarms.ca/farms%20counties%20A-K.htm
[72] http://www.stthomastimesjournal.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?e=3371775&archive=true

Horton Farmers' Market

The Horton Farmers' Market is a community-driven market since 1878. All of the farmers live within 60 km of the market, promoting local food and local farmers. The market features pavilions and a café and promotes a sustainable environment by asking visitors to bring their own bags, containers and mugs.[73]

WHAT WE HEARD?

The following section presents what we have heard through the interviews, surveys and community engagement events.

STRENGTHS / OPPORTUNITIES	WEAKNESSES / CHALLENGES
• Parks/green space • Safe and clean • Horton Farmers' Market • Trail system • Strong community partnerships • Recreation, and arena • Access to services and amenities • Safe and clean - 5th safest city for driving in all of Ontario • Lots of economic development opportunities: tourism, agriculture, renewable energy, etc.	• Low community pride • Deteriorating infrastructure • Dated downtown core • Public area maintenance (weeds/grass cutting) • Food –availability of healthy food • Promotion of tourism • Low community pride

[73] http://www.city.st-thomas.on.ca/siteengine/activepage.asp?PageID=284