

BRIGHTER FUTURE

CITY OF ST. THOMAS STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2027



City of St. Thomas Vision

Building a brighter future for St. Thomas, where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive.

City of St. Thomas Mission

We provide high-quality, beneficial public services, stimulate sustainable development and economic growth, and cultivate a safe, accessible, and inclusive City for everyone.

Guiding Values

Trust and Accountability

We demonstrate reliability, follow-through, and transparency and to earning the trust and respect of the people we serve and work with.

Inclusivity and Respect

We value, respect, and include the unique needs, voices, backgrounds, and contributions of the people we serve and work with.

Leading through Collaboration and Teamwork

We are at our best when we actively collaborate and engage with one another, those we serve, and our community, regional, and government partners. We will lead or co-develop decisions and plans that are purposeful, action oriented, and focused on meeting the diverse needs of our communities.

Learning and Innovation

We intentionally create time for learning, critical thinking, and developing our employees' capacity to deliver excellence. We are committed to creativity, curiosity, idea-sharing, and innovation in every facet of our work to ensure effective outcomes.

Safety and Well-being

Well-being and safety are critical enablers for creating a vibrant, resilient, and thriving city. We foster an environment where the security, health, and mental, emotional, and physical well-being of citizens and staff are prioritized.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we meet is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinabek, Attiwoonderonk (Neutral) and Mississauga peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Meētis peoples.

We also recognize that this land is now home to the Munsee-Delaware Nation, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames.

This land was settled through Treaty 2, the McKee Purchase Treaty of 1790, and we, as beneficiaries of the treaty recognize our collective responsibilities to the land and water.

‘Excellence in All We Do’ Strategic Pillar

Priorities, Outcomes, and Goals

Priority #1: Thoughtful, Strategic, and Sustainable Community Growth

Outcomes:

- ♦ City of St. Thomas is a well-planned, integrated, and vibrant city, ready to embrace growth.
- ♦ City of St. Thomas is a safe, secure, and welcoming city for all.
- ♦ Residents are satisfied with the accessibility, quality, and efficiency of the city’s mobility options.

We will:

- Finalize and fully implement the St. Thomas 2046 Official Plan, the integrated plan to guide the city’s future growth and changes in the urban environment that support sustainable, inclusive development, while conserving cultural heritage and protecting the environment.
- Maintain, renew, replace, and expand the city’s infrastructure assets to strengthen St. Thomas, enhance resident safety and security, and provide essential services to support growth.
- Ensure city policies enable thoughtful, age-friendly, sustainable and environmentally responsible growth and development.
- Develop a cohesive, eco-friendly Mobility Plan, inclusive of transit and a network of trails, paths and parks, to support people of all ages and abilities to move safely and efficiently across St. Thomas and between neighbouring areas.

Priority #2: Thriving Economic Development

Outcomes:

- ♦ Residents have access to a range of quality jobs.
- ♦ Residents choose City of St. Thomas, as they age along the continuum.
- ♦ St. Thomas’ economy is diverse and resilient, supporting businesses of all sizes and types to thrive.
- ♦ More residents choose to visit, shop, dine, and live in downtown St. Thomas.

We will:

- Foster a strong and diversified ‘open for business’ economy that attracts and retains a wide range of businesses, industries and developers, promotes entrepreneurship and start-ups, and creates high quality job opportunities.
- Work with partners, employers, and post-secondary institutions to attract, train, retrain, and retain a skilled and sustainable workforce.
- Renew St. Thomas’ downtown core areas, including mixed use development, to create a vibrant, safe, and inclusive destination that people choose to live in, work in, run a business in, engage with, and visit.
- Continue to create new attractions in the city through public art, walking tours, festivals, and other creative and appealing activities.
- Continue to invest in the diversification of the St. Thomas airport and its lands as a support to economic diversification for the region.

Priority #3: Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Communities

Outcomes:

- ♦ Residents have equitable access to the resources and public services they need throughout life's stages.
- ♦ Residents report high levels of belonging and of feeling valued and cared for.
- ♦ Equity-deserving groups and newcomers feel that St. Thomas welcomes and values diverse perspectives, experiences, identities, and contributions.
- ♦ Services are delivered in ways that meet the needs of all residents, including those with disabilities or special requirements.

We will:

- Develop and deliver city services, programs, and infrastructure that are accessible, diverse, and inclusive, meeting resident needs of all ages, abilities, cultures, and identities.
- Work proactively with service partners to ensure residents have equitable access to quality healthcare, childcare, and social services to meet the diverse needs of a growing population.
- Ensure the city fully complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).
- Establish an action plan and mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of progress in meeting the city's goals related to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Actions.
- Welcome, support, and include newcomers to St. Thomas by connecting them to comprehensive newcomer services, supports, programs, and spaces.
- Dismantle obstacles that hinder the full participation of equity-deserving groups and newcomers in our economy, community, and civic engagement processes.

Priority#4: Housing for Everyone

Outcomes:

- ♦ Increased access to quality, affordable housing options along the St. Thomas housing continuum.
- ♦ Residents live in stable, safe, and affordable housing that meets their needs.

We will:

- Working in collaboration with all levels of government, utilize a variety of tools and incentives to expand the availability of a diverse range of rental and ownership housing options, across the affordability continuum, including apartments, social housing, supportive housing, universal design units, and transitional housing.
- Continue to strengthen our partnerships with healthcare and social service providers, police and emergency services, and agencies to collectively address and eliminate homelessness in St. Thomas.
- Partner with community providers to expand affordable, supportive and safe housing units and increase treatment options for individuals with complex needs.
- Engage and empower local communities to actively contribute to formulating and advancing affordable housing and homelessness solutions.
- Continually innovate and improve policies, processes, and planning that support future housing development, access and supply.

Priority #5: Public Safety and Community Well-being

Outcomes:

- ♦ Residents feel safe in St. Thomas.
- ♦ Residents experience a high sense of belonging.
- ♦ Residents have access to the services and resources they need as they age.
- ♦ Residents actively engage in more community events, programs, and activities.

We will:

- Continue to enhance and innovate law enforcement delivery, crime prevention, and emergency services.
- Collaborate with our partners to co-create and promote initiatives that foster public health and access to mental health, addictions, basic needs, and food security services and resources.
- Support wellness and active living by providing a diverse range of safe and clean parks, connected trails, green spaces, playgrounds, sports fields, and recreational and cultural programs and amenities.
- Create and implement strategies to address the well-being, education, employment, and engagement needs of St. Thomas' youth.
- Accelerate implementation of strategies to improve access to long-term care services for seniors, the Elgin St. Thomas Age Friendly Community Plan and the Aylmer-Elgin-St. Thomas Community Safety and Well-Being Plan.
- Invest in a high-quality animal shelter to protect and advance animal well-being.

Priority#6: Environmental Stewardship

Outcomes:

- ♦ The city's people, communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and natural spaces are cared for and protected from climate change risks.
- ♦ St. Thomas is progressing towards becoming a net zero community by 2050.

We will:

- Protect and proactively expand the city's urban forest, green spaces, naturalization initiatives, and biodiversity across the City's rural and urban lands.
- Develop and implement city-wide strategies to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Ensure our infrastructure is ready and resilient in the face of climate risks and emergencies.
- Engage the public in working towards the reduction of St. Thomas greenhouse gas emissions.
- Implement eco-friendly processes and practices across city operations and infrastructure.
- Advance sustainable mobility options related to electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, including accessibility, technology integration, policy development, and education.

‘Prepared and Resilient City’ Strategic Pillar

Priorities, Outcomes, and Goals

Priority#1: Good Governance

Outcomes:

- ♦ Residents are satisfied with the level of engagement and communication with the City of St. Thomas and its officials.
- ♦ A higher percentage of residents participate in elections.
- ♦ Diverse and inclusive representation is present in city decision-making bodies, including Council, advisory boards, and committees.

We will:

- Ensure accountability and transparency in government decision making for the effective and efficient functioning of the city.
- Establish, track, and report measurable performance indicators, using data to inform decision-making and improvement.
- Foster transparent and responsible two-way communication, information sharing, and performance reporting.
- Promote and actively engage citizens in dialogue, regular public consultations, and decision-making forums.
- Engage with residents, partners, and other levels of government to increase awareness and understanding of environmental issues, reduce risks, and achieve the 2050 net-zero goal.
- Improve voter engagement and resident participation in the city’s governance structures.

Priority #2: Passionate and Engaged City Team

Outcomes

- ♦ Employees report high levels of engagement and job satisfaction.
- ♦ Employees report high levels of well-being.

We will:

- Align the city’s organizational structure, including roles, responsibilities and support systems to our strategic plan.
- Continue to attract, retain, and support a diverse team of qualified and committed employees.
- Empower employees to participate in meaningful skill and professional development opportunities.
- Cultivate a workplace culture where all employees feel they belong and are safe, included, valued and supported.
- Foster the conditions that support employees mental, emotional, and physical well-being.
- Adopt more agile ways of collaborative problem solving, decision making, and planning across all departments and teams.

Priority #4: Fiscal Accountability and Continuous Improvement

Outcomes:

- ♦ Financial resources are allocated to the city's strategic priorities.
- ♦ Residents and businesses are satisfied with the services and value they receive from city taxes, rates, and user fees.

We will:

- Lead and manage efficient budgeting processes to support strategic, multi-year decision-making, in alignment with the city's strategic plan, priorities, and goals.
- Invest prudently to fund infrastructure, service, and programming renewal, growth, and long-term sustainability.
- Efficiently steward the city's assets and risk management, with a focus on maximizing asset value.
- Utilize environmental scanning and benchmarking processes to inform and accelerate system-wide performance improvements.

Priority #5: Progressive Technology and Data

Outcomes:

- ♦ Demonstrated process, efficiency, and city management improvements.
- ♦ Decision making, planning, and service delivery are informed by data and evidence.

We will:

- Explore and integrate progressive digital and technological solutions, to enhance and revitalize city services, infrastructure management, emergency response, public safety, and citizen communication and engagement.
- Collect and utilize data to advance city management, urban planning, resource allocation, and financial and risk management.
- Maintain robust cybersecurity processes and measures to protect citizen and government data and the city's technology infrastructure.

Priority#6: Reciprocal Partnerships

Outcomes:

- ♦ Strengthened collaborations between partners to optimize comprehensive and coordinated responses to meet the needs of St. Thomas residents and businesses and address critical issues.
- ♦ Higher levels of resident participation in volunteerism.

We will:

- Enhance local and regional collaboration with healthcare, education, social services, and other community partners to advance joint planning, services delivery, collective advocacy and issue response.
- Strengthen collaborative alliances with provincial and federal government to mobilize resources, align policies, advance large-scale projects and programs, and attract investment for mutual benefit and enhanced community development.
- Promote and support volunteer initiatives that empower community members and partners to participate in enhancing the city's vibrancy and addressing critical challenges.