

BRIGHTER FUTURE

City of St. Thomas
Strategic Plan
2024 – 2027

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



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

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR MAYOR AND COUNCIL

On behalf of Council for the City of St. Thomas, I am pleased to present Council's 2024-2027 Strategic Plan, Brighter Future.

Over the past year, we engaged with hundreds of individuals, including residents, youth, community partners, service providers, business owners, developers, and city employees. Through these consultations, we gained invaluable insights into the collective hopes and priorities of our communities. We thank all for your input!

It was evident that while our city is experiencing remarkable growth and development, there is a strong desire to uphold the values that have long defined St. Thomas as a caring and connected community. We learned how important it is for St. Thomas to continue to be a city where people feel safe and have access to stable and affordable housing. People shared how much they value the city's parks, trails, and recreational and cultural amenities and their expectations that we will continue to invest in these assets as we grow. People also spoke passionately about protecting the environment and cultivating a more inclusive and resilient city where current and future generations can flourish.

This strategic plan is a blueprint for collective action and a framework to guide Council and staff in decision making processes and to direct resources to where they will be needed. As we move forward to implement the plan, we do so with optimism and determination, mindful of our responsibility to those we serve and to the city's future generations.

Please join us as we embark on this strategic journey. Together we will build a brighter future for St. Thomas, a city where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive.



Mayor Joe Preston

Photo: From Left to Right

Cllr. Lori Baldwin-Sands
Cllr. Jim Herbert
Cllr. Jeff Kohler
Cllr. Steve Peters
Mayor Joe Preston
Cllr. Steve Wookey
Cllr. Gary Clarke
Cllr. Tara McCaulley
Cllr. Rose Gibson



BRIGHTER FUTURE

CITY OF ST. THOMAS STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION	MISSION
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<p>Building a <i>brighter future</i> where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive.</p>	<p>We provide high-quality public services, stimulate sustainable development and economic growth, preserve and protect our environment, and cultivate a safe, accessible, and inclusive City for everyone.</p>
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VALUES

				
TRUST & ACCOUNTABILITY	INCLUSIVITY & RESPECT	COLLABORATION & TEAMWORK	LEARNING & INNOVATION	SAFETY & WELL-BEING

STRATEGIC PILLAR #1 WE DELIVER 'EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO'

PUBLIC SAFETY AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING	THOUGHTFUL, STRATEGIC, AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GROWTH	THRIVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	EQUITABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	HOUSING FOR EVERYONE	ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
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STRATEGIC PILLAR #2 WE ARE A 'PREPARED AND RESILIENT TEAM'

EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE	PASSIONATE AND ENGAGED CITY TEAM	FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	PROGRESSIVE TECHNOLOGY AND DATA	RECIPROCAL PARTNERSHIPS
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CHARTING OUR COURSE

Brighter Future is the culmination of a ten-month process designed to engage many diverse voices, scan and evaluate our environment, and generate strategic themes and priorities. Under the leadership of City Council and with the support of the city's leadership team, a Strategic Planning Steering Committee, comprised of twelve employees from across the organization, guided an inclusive and thoughtful planning process.

The strategic planning process was rooted in community engagement and due diligence activities, and included:



Community Engagement and Environmental Scanning: Spring 2023 – December 2023

Nearly 800 community members joined the strategic planning conversation. Stakeholders participated through various consultation methods including:

- Online surveys for residents and city staff
- Three community town hall meetings
- Two strategic planning retreats with members of Council and the city's senior leadership team
- Multiple focus groups with community partners, businesses, developers, youth, and employees
- Numerous one-on-one interviews conducted with community leaders and subject matter experts
- Pop-up public surveys at local community events

Data Analysis and Decision-Making: November 2023 – December 2023

The engagement and scanning processes informed the development of the strategic plan by identifying the city's strengths, weaknesses and limitations, opportunities to seize, challenges to overcome, and aspirations for the future. The findings were used to answer critical questions, including:

- What is the collective vision and mission for the City of St. Thomas?
- What values should guide City Council and employees in how they perform their work, collaborate, make decisions, allocate resources, and more?
- What are the most important outcomes that St. Thomas must deliver for the people and communities it serves?
- To achieve those outcomes, what strategic priorities must the City focus on and excel at?
- To be excellent, what capacity does the City need, including human and financial resources, technology, infrastructure, and partnerships?

Strategic Plan Development and Consultation: December 2023 – January 2024

In collaboration with members of Council and the City's leadership team, the Steering Committee developed multiple draft iterations of the strategic plan. In January 2024, the city posted a draft of the strategic plan on the website and invited the public to provide feedback through a survey. Over 250 individuals responded, and their feedback was utilized in finalizing the strategic plan. City Council unanimously approved the final Strategic Plan on February 12, 2024.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

THE STRATEGIC PLAN

CITY OF ST. THOMAS: VISION

Building a *brighter future* where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive.

CITY OF ST. THOMAS: MISSION

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

GUIDING VALUES

Trust and Accountability

We demonstrate reliability, follow-through, and transparency to earn 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.

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 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, innovation, and developing our capacity to deliver excellence.

Safety and Well-being

We provide a safe and secure work environment for all and foster a culture that nurtures the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of our staff and communities.

'EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO'

STRATEGIC PILLAR

The **Strategic Priorities** describe the areas that the City of St. Thomas will focus on to deliver excellence and achieve our vision and mission. Outcome statements highlight the intended results and impact that the City aims to achieve.



Priority #1: Public Safety and Community Well-being



Priority #2: Thoughtful, Strategic, and Sustainable Community Growth



Priority #3: Thriving Economic Development



Priority #4: Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Communities



Priority #5: Housing for Everyone



Priority #6: Environmental Stewardship

'PREPARED AND RESILIENT CITY'

STRATEGIC PILLAR



Priority #1: Effective Governance



Priority #2: Passionate and Engaged City Team



Priority #3: Fiscal Accountability and Continuous Improvement



Priority #4: Progressive Technology and Data



Priority #5: Reciprocal Partnerships

'EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO'

STRATEGIC PILLAR



Priority #1: Public Safety and Community Well-being

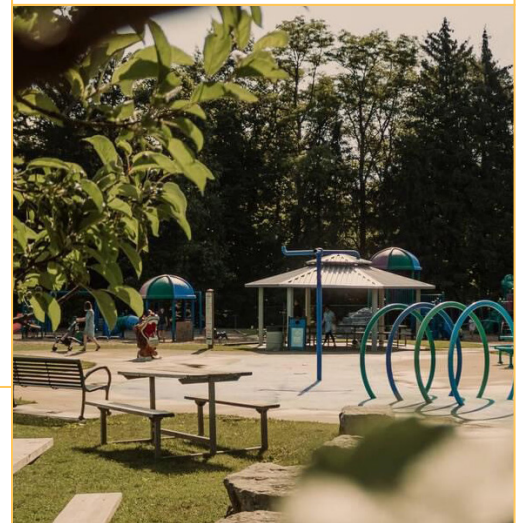
The City will prioritize public safety to ensure residents feel protected from crime and other threats throughout the city, including the downtown area. The City will focus efforts on community well-being by investing in comprehensive solutions to meet the diverse and evolving needs in social services, healthcare, education, and access to recreational and cultural amenities to strengthen neighbourhoods and promote a sense of belonging.

Objectives:

- Continue to enhance and innovate law enforcement delivery, crime prevention, and emergency services.
- Collaborate with our partners to co-create and promote initiatives that improve public health and provide better access to mental health, addictions, basic needs, and food security services and resources.
- Support wellness and active living by providing safe and clean parks, connected trails, green spaces, playgrounds, sports fields, and recreational and cultural programs and amenities.
- Advocate for and collaborate with the provincial government and partners to expand access to affordable childcare options for all St. Thomas families.
- Create and implement strategies to address the well-being, education, employment, and engagement needs of St. Thomas' youth.
- Accelerate implementation of 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.

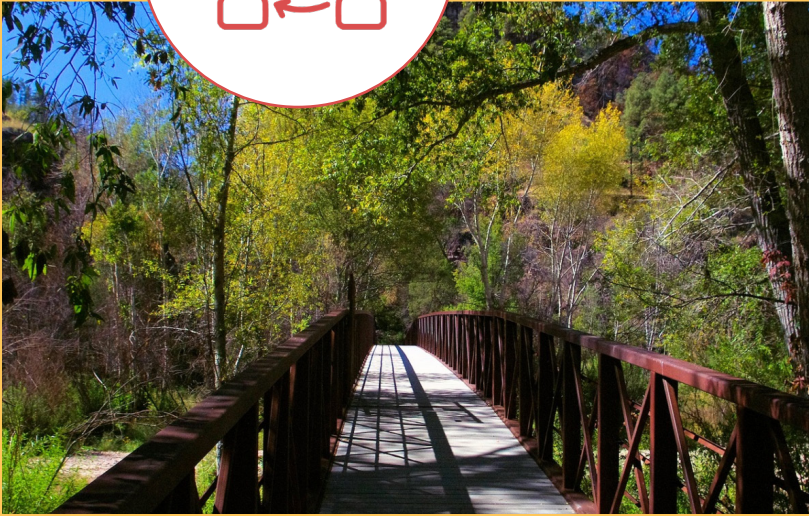
Outcomes:

- ✓ Residents, business owners, and visitors feel safe in St. Thomas.
- ✓ Residents have access to the services and resources they need to improve their quality of life and well-being.
- ✓ Residents actively engage in community events, programs, and activities.





'EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO' STRATEGIC PILLAR



Priority #2: Thoughtful, Strategic, and Sustainable Community Growth

The City will prioritize effective land use planning, strategic infrastructure investment, sustainable development policies, and measures to address social and environmental impacts.

Objectives:

- 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, security, and accessibility, and provide essential services to support growth.
- Ensure city policies enable thoughtful, age-friendly, sustainable, and environmentally responsible growth and development.
- Develop a Mobility Plan, including 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.

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 everyone.
- ✓ Residents are satisfied with the accessibility, quality, and efficiency of the city's mobility options.





Priority #3: Thriving Economic Development

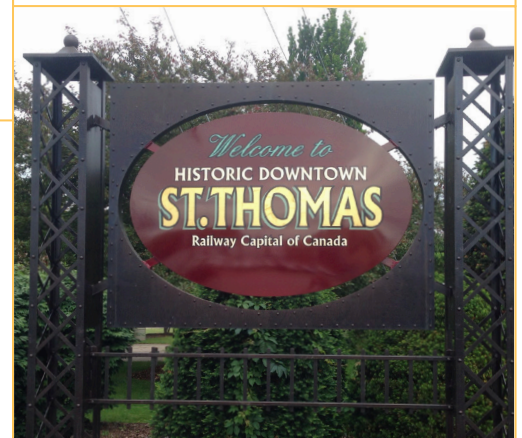
The City will focus efforts and resources to ensure businesses thrive and gain prominence in order to support job creation and quality of life for our communities, residents, and families. From longstanding enterprises to newly established ventures, the City, in partnership with St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation, will foster a diverse business environment where start-ups and digital innovation coexist alongside manufacturing, creative enterprises, and entrepreneurship.

Objectives:

- Foster a strong and diversified 'open for business' economy that welcomes and retains a wide range of businesses, industries, and developers, promotes entrepreneurship and start-ups, and generates high-quality job opportunities.
- Work with partners, employers, and post-secondary institutions to attract, train, and retain a skilled and sustainable workforce.
- Renew downtown St. Thomas, to create a lively, safe, and inclusive destination that people want to live, work, operate a business, participate in, and visit.
- Continue to invest in new city attractions that respond to and meet the cultural, artistic, and recreational needs of the community and promote tourism opportunities.
- Continue to invest in the diversification of the St. Thomas airport and its lands to support economic diversification for the region.

Outcomes:

- ✓ Residents have access to a range of quality jobs.
- ✓ Residents feel St. Thomas is a great city to raise families, build careers, and age through life's stages.
- ✓ St. Thomas' economy is diversified and resilient, supporting businesses of all sizes and types to thrive.
- ✓ More people want to visit, shop, dine, and live in downtown St. Thomas.





'EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO' STRATEGIC PILLAR



Priority #4: Equitable, Accessible, and Inclusive Communities

The City will prioritize efforts to ensure the community is welcoming and inclusive and provides a sense of belonging and equitable opportunities for all individuals to thrive and participate in society. The City will champion equity, diversity, and inclusion, and safeguard the values that characterize St. Thomas as a compassionate and nurturing community that attracts newcomers and immigrants from various backgrounds to live, work, and make meaningful contributions.

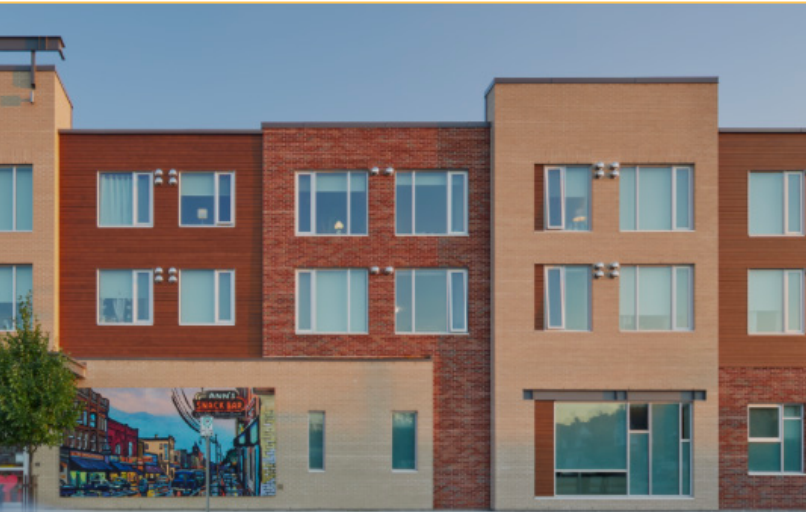
Objectives:

- Develop and deliver city services, programs, and infrastructure that are accessible, diverse, and comprehensive, meeting the needs of residents of all ages, abilities, cultures, and identities.
- Collaborate with service partners to ensure residents have equitable access to quality healthcare, childcare, and social services to meet the varied needs of a growing population.
- Ensure that the city fully complies with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.
- Establish an action plan and mechanisms to monitor and assess progress in meeting the city's goals related to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- Welcome and support newcomers / immigrants to St. Thomas by connecting them to comprehensive newcomer / immigrant services, supports, programs, and spaces.
- Remove obstacles that prevent equity-deserving groups and newcomers / immigrants from fully participating in the city's economy, community, and civic engagement processes.

Outcomes:

- ✓ Residents have equitable access to the resources and public services they need.
- ✓ Residents report high levels of belonging and of feeling valued.
- ✓ Equity-deserving groups and newcomers / immigrants 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.





Priority #5: Housing for Everyone

The City will endeavour to ensure that every individual in our community has access to secure, sustainable, and affordable housing options. To address concerns regarding affordable housing, housing supply, and homelessness, the City will advocate to and collaborate with our local, regional, and upper-level government partners to address these pressing housing challenges and associated social issues.

Objectives:

- Work in collaboration with the housing and real estate sector and all levels of government to expand the availability 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, emergency services, and other agencies to collectively address and eliminate homelessness in St. Thomas.
- Partner with community providers to expand supportive, and safe housing units and increase treatment options for individuals with complex needs.
- Engage and empower local communities to contribute to formulating and advancing affordable housing and homelessness solutions.
- Improve and advance city policies, processes, and planning that support housing development, access, and supply.

Outcomes:

- ✓ Residents have 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.





Priority #6: Environmental Stewardship

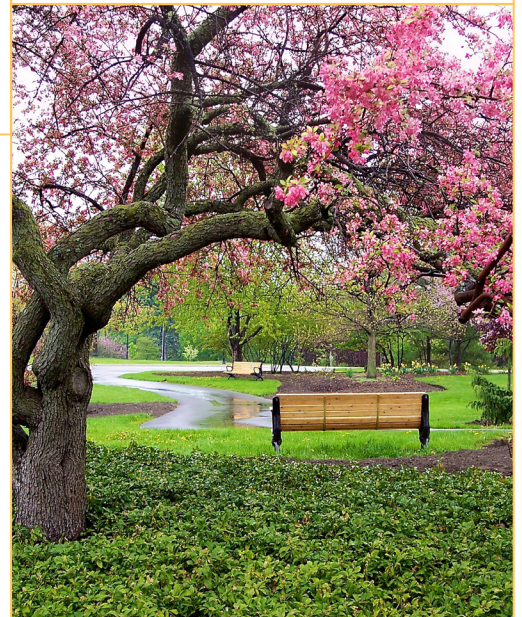
The City will prioritize the protection and stewardship of the environment through support for climate change action, preservation and improvement of city green spaces and natural resources and safeguarding of our ecosystems. City-wide initiatives that mitigate pollution impacts, reduce carbon emissions, and preserve the environment are vital for the well-being of current and future generations.

Objectives:

- Preserve, protect, and expand the city's urban forest, green spaces, naturalization initiatives, and biodiversity on both rural and urban lands.
- Develop and implement city-wide strategies and operational practices to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- Ensure the city's infrastructure is prepared and resilient in the face of climate risks and emergencies.
- Engage the public in efforts to reduce St. Thomas' greenhouse gas emissions.
- Advance sustainable mobility options related to electric vehicle charging stations, including accessibility, technology integration, policy development, and education.

Outcomes:

- ✓ The city's residents, communities, infrastructure, ecosystems and natural spaces are preserved, protected, and cared for.
- ✓ St. Thomas demonstrates progress towards becoming a net zero community by 2050.



'PREPARED AND RESILIENT CITY' STRATEGIC PILLAR

To achieve the strategic priorities and goals outlined in the 'Excellence in All We Do' strategic pillar, the city must continue to build and enhance its organizational capacity and resilience. The strategic priorities describe the areas of critical importance, and associated goals, that the city will focus on over the next four years. Outcome statements articulate the intended results and impact that the city aims to achieve.



Priority #1: Effective Governance

Residents value transparency and accountability in public discourse, planning, and decision-making processes. The City will prioritize increased communication from Council and city staff, as well as providing more opportunities for St. Thomas residents and communities to engage in civic affairs, express diverse opinions, and contribute to shaping the city's future, while also receiving regular updates regarding the results and progress made by the city in achieving its strategic plan.

Objectives:

- Ensure accountability and transparency in government decision-making for the effective and efficient functioning of the city.
- Establish, track, and report measurable performance indicators and results, using data to inform decision-making and improvement.
- Improve voter engagement and resident participation in the city's governance structures.
- Foster transparent, accessible, and responsible two-way communication, information sharing, and performance reporting with the public.
- Encourage and actively engage citizens in dialogue 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.

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.





Priority #2: Passionate and Engaged City Team

Employees play an essential role in translating the strategic plan into tangible actions and positive impact. The City recognizes the significance of employee contributions, and will prioritize investing in their well-being, professional growth, and engagement, and cultivating a supportive and empowering work environment.

Objectives:

- Align the city’s organizational structure, including roles, responsibilities, and support systems, with the 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 safe, included, valued, and supported.
- Foster the workplace conditions that support employee mental, emotional, and physical well-being.
- Adopt more agile collaborative problem solving, decision making, and planning across and between city departments.

Outcomes:

- ✓ City employees report high levels of engagement and job satisfaction.
- ✓ City employees report high levels of well-being.



Priority #3: Fiscal Accountability and Continuous Improvement



Residents appreciate the significance of investing in St. Thomas’ future and expect the city to utilize tax dollars to optimize the value of investments in services, infrastructure, and critical strategic priorities. The City will prioritize efficient and effective investments and practice fiscal accountability while ensuring innovation and continuous improvement as keys to advancing transit and mobility, public services, economic and environmental sustainability, and addressing social challenges within the community.

Objectives:

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

Outcomes:

- ✓ Financial resources are used responsibly and 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.



'PREPARED AND RESILIENT CITY'

STRATEGIC PILLAR



Priority #4: Progressive Technology and Data

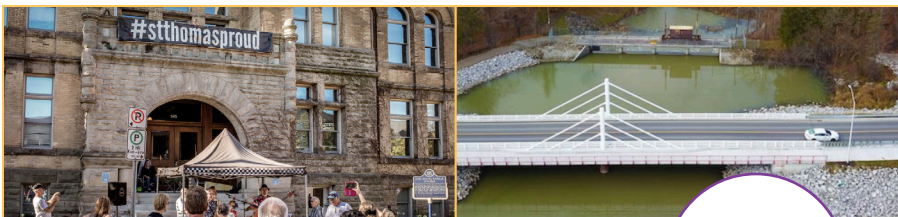
The City will prioritize leveraging and investing in technology and monitoring data to streamline city operations, increase efficiencies, and continually enhance public service delivery. This approach builds the city's capacity to effectively respond to and manage risks and challenges and strengthens the city's ability to provide accessible, safe, responsive, and user-friendly services for residents and businesses.

Objectives:

- 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 and analytics 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.

Outcomes:

- ✓ The city achieves improvements in process and workflow efficiency, service delivery, and resource management.
- ✓ Evidence-informed decision making, planning, and policy making is enhanced.



Priority #5: Reciprocal Partnerships



Acknowledging the need for cooperative efforts to seize opportunities and address challenges, the City will prioritize forging mutually beneficial partnerships with service providers, non-profit organizations, businesses, various levels of government, and the residents and communities of St. Thomas. At times, the City may take the lead in these collaborations, while on other occasions, it will collaborate with partners to support and advocate for collective community issues.

Objectives:

- Enhance local and regional collaboration with healthcare, education, social services, and other community partners to advance joint planning, service delivery, collective advocacy, and issue response.
- Strengthen collaborative alliances with provincial and federal governments 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.

Outcomes:

- ✓ The city's collective capacity to effectively meet the needs of residents and businesses and address critical challenges and opportunities increases.
- ✓ St. Thomas attracts more diverse investment and economic development opportunities.
- ✓ Resident participation in volunteerism and community engagement opportunities increases.

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

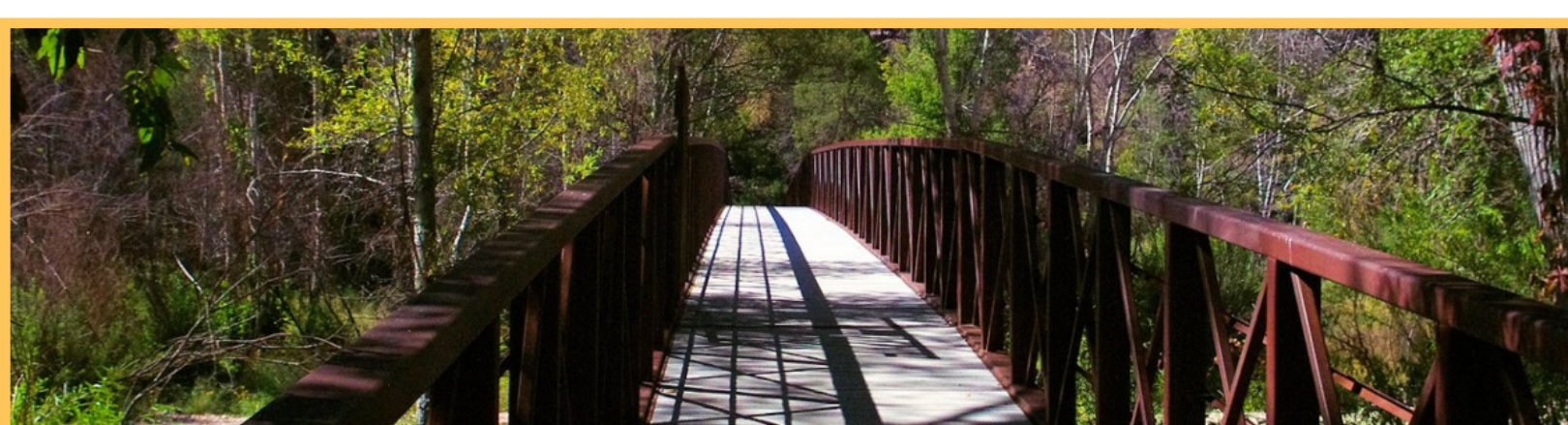
The most vital component of the strategic planning process is implementation; it is essential for realizing our vision, goals, and sustainable success. As we move forward, we will deliver on the following implementation commitments.

- 1** City service areas will translate the strategic priorities and identified objectives into specific action plans, tasks, timelines, responsibilities, and budgets.
- 2** The city will develop a Brighter Future Performance Scorecard to track and measure the city's strategic progress and results. Regular assessment of actual performance against stated outcomes and performance indicators will be conducted.
- 3** The city will create performance improvement programs to address any negative performance variances.
- 4** The city will use performance data to inform and guide decisions and change initiatives, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives.
- 5** To ensure transparency and accountability, the City will regularly share performance scorecard results with residents. The City will also continue to actively seek stakeholder input and feedback on performance to foster a city-wide culture of engagement and continuous improvement.

BRIGHTER FUTURE

Brighter Future is a pledge to the people of St. Thomas and a call to action, charting the course to a promising future. It calls upon City Council, city employees, residents, partners, businesses, service providers, and other levels of government to work together towards:

Building a brighter future where everyone belongs and has opportunities to thrive.





City of St. Thomas

Strategic Plan

2024 – 2027

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