



Keeping Track

City of St. Thomas Council Highlights

January 13, 2026 | Issue 31



AMENDMENTS TO SITE PLAN CONTROL BY-LAWS - FOLLOW UP REPORT

Council received Report PD-01-2026 and reviewed proposed updates to the Site Plan Control By-law and the Site Plan Control Committee Rules to reflect recent changes to the Planning Act and improve implementation. Small residential developments (3-10 units) will generally be exempt from site plan approval, except when located near wetlands, waterways, or active rail lines, where approval remains to ensure land use compatibility. This change is being presented for Council's consideration before the by-laws are brought forward for a decision on February 2, 2026.

A LOOK INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. Community Planning Permit By-law (Elm-Wilson-Victor Area)
2. Amendments to Site Plan Control By-laws - Follow Up Report
3. Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments to Implement the Transportation Master Plan - Follow Up Report
4. Reaching Home - Canada's Homelessness Strategy - Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund Service Agreement



ESTABLISHMENT OF A TREE TRUST CHAPTER IN ST. THOMAS FOR PRIVATELY OWNED MATURE TREES

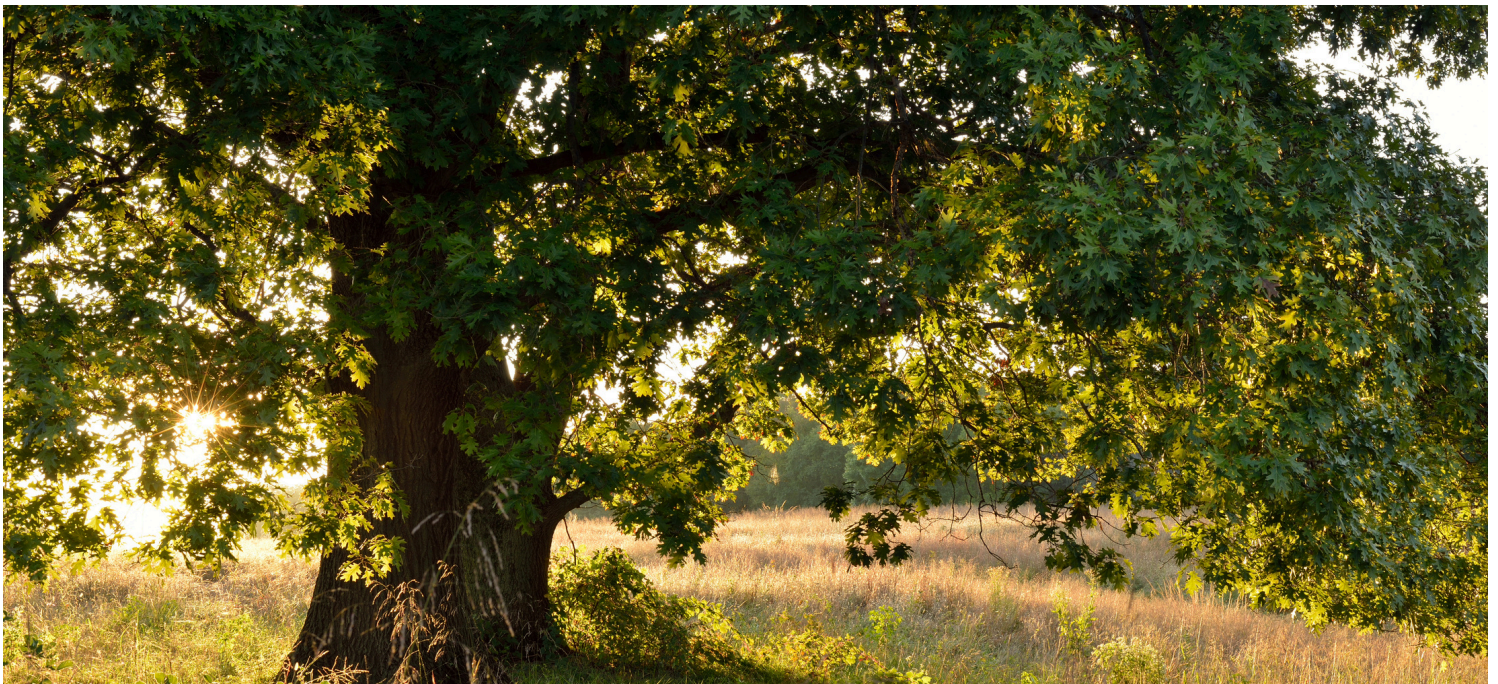
Council received Report PRF-01-26 and reviewed a proposed partnership with Tree Trust, a province-wide program delivered by the Elora Centre for Environmental Excellence that supports the care of mature trees on private property.

Tree Trust connects homeowners with approved arborists and charitable funding to help preserve significant trees that provide important canopy, environmental, and community benefits.

Under the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, the City of St. Thomas would administer a local Tree Trust chapter, focused on community outreach and education. All arborist work is funded through donations and applies only to privately owned trees, with no financial impact or added responsibilities for the City's forestry operations.

The program also includes public education initiatives and the planting of two saplings for every tree receiving care, supporting the City's broader environmental stewardship and canopy goals.

Staff will host a Wild Wisdom event in early 2026 to launch community awareness and demonstrate St. Thomas' participation in Tree Trust. The MOU renews annually and includes provisions allowing either party to terminate the agreement with written notice.





REACHING HOME - CANADA'S HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY - HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION INNOVATION FUND SERVICE AGREEMENT

Council received Report SESS-01-26 regarding the federal commitment of \$362,116 for the creation of a new youth homelessness prevention program. St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services (STESS), in partnership with the YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin, is expanding efforts to reduce homelessness through the federal Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund (HRIF), part of Canada's Reaching Home Strategy. After a successful first 12-month pilot focused on preventing chronic homelessness, a second project has launched to address youth homelessness, aiming for Functional Zero by 2027.

The project adds two full time positions to the YWCA's youth housing case management team, which will primarily work out of the INN and in outreach services. These two new positions are providing diversion, rapid housing navigation, and system support across child welfare, justice, education, health, and cultural supports. Using a Housing First approach, the initiative seeks to increase move-ins, accelerate housing outcomes, and test interventions to reduce youth homelessness. By strengthening coordinated access and leveraging flexible funding, the project supports long-term, sustainable solutions, aligning with community and government goals to achieve Functional Zero homelessness in St. Thomas-Elgin.



COMMUNITY PLANNING PERMIT BY-LAW (ELM-WILSON-VICTOR AREA)



Council received Report CMO-02-26 regarding a new Community Planning Permit By-law (Elm-Wilson-Victor Area). The final HAF Action Plan is to establish a Community Planning Permit System. The CPP process for the Elm St-Wilson Ave-Victor Dr area has the potential for significant residential housing as part of a brownfield clean-up and redevelopment that could be assisted by a City-led CPP By-law in place. A public information centre is scheduled for January 28th at Memorial Arena and a public meeting for the new CPP By-law will be held on February 9th in Council Chambers.



OFFICIAL PLAN AND ZONING BY-LAW AMENDMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN - FOLLOW UP REPORT

Council received report PD-02-2026 and have considered Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments needed to implement the City's 2025 Transportation Master Plan, which was endorsed in the October 14th, 2025 meeting. The proposed amendments update mapping, references, timelines, and terminology, including replacing "road widening" with "corridor widening" to reflect future needs such as active transportation infrastructure.

Zoning changes would adjust building setbacks on certain streets to protect space for future corridor widenings. This allows the City to secure required right-of-way through site plan approvals, at no cost to taxpayers.

A public meeting was held on November 10, 2025, where staff addressed questions related to setbacks, property access, and the definition of minor arterial.

Staff recommend approval for the proposed amendments, noting the amendments align with the Provincial Planning Statement, the City's Official Plan, and sound land use planning principles.



UPCOMING FLAG RAISINGS & PROCLAMATIONS

5
FEB

Optimist Day
⌚ 10:30AM 📍 CITY HALL

Make your mark in the community with a proclamation, flag-raising, or by lighting up the iconic Jumbo monument! The Proclamation, Flag-Raising, and Jumbo Lighting Request Form can be found on the City's website or is available at the City Clerk's office in City Hall. Requests should be submitted as far in advance as possible to ensure they can be placed on a Council agenda. Request forms can be submitted in electronic or hard copy format.



FUTURE MEETINGS

- Monday, February 2, 2026 at 5 p.m.
- Monday, February 9, 2026 at 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 5 p.m.

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info@stthomas.ca



519.631.1680 'O'



545 Talbot Street, St.
Thomas



@cityofstthomasontario



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@cityofstthomasontario

