



Report No.
PD-57-2026

File No.

Directed to: Mayor Joe Preston and Members of City Council

Meeting Date:
September 14, 2026

Department: Planning & Building Services

Attachment

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Appendix A: Draft Parkland Dedication By-law
Appendix B: Draft Official Plan Amendment

Subject: Proposed Parkland Dedication By-law and required City Official Plan amendments

Recommendation:

THAT: Council receive report PD-57-2026 regarding a proposed Parkland Dedication By-law and associated Official Plan amendments for the City of St. Thomas; and

THAT: Council direct Staff to prepare amendments to the City of St. Thomas Official Plan in accordance with Section 22 of the *Planning Act*, to implement the recommendations of the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the City's Parkland Dedication By-law; and

THAT: Council direct Staff to prepare a by-law governing parkland dedication or cash in lieu of such dedication in accordance with Sections 42, 51.1 and 53 of the *Planning Act*, to be applied to development, redevelopment or the subdivision of lands within the City; and further,

THAT: A public meeting is scheduled, in accordance with Ontario Regulations 543/06 as amended.

Background:

To assist in strategic investment and decision-making for the provision of recreational programs, trails and open space, creation of new parks, improvements to existing parks and overall program delivery, the City of St. Thomas updated its Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2026 (Report PR-06-26 on March 9, 2026, Council agenda) with a long-term view to 2051.

Several recommendations were provided in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update and Staff identified that the advancement and timing of individual initiatives will be considered through the annual budget process, where they can be evaluated alongside competing priorities and within the City's overall financial framework.

To ensure that the City is well positioned to address its parkland needs, and to align its parkland planning with the anticipated growth and intensification that the City anticipates to 2051, updates to the City's Official Plan and the creation of a Parkland Dedication By-law is required to conform to the requirements of the *Planning Act*.

Planning Act

Sections 42, 51.1 and 53 of *Planning Act* provide direction for municipalities for the conveyance of land for parkland purposes, with additional provisions identified in Ontario Regulation 509/20 – Community Benefit Charges and Parkland.

The conveyance of land for parkland purposes is provided in Section 42 of the Planning Act. The general direction is that, "*as a condition of development or redevelopment of land, the council of a local municipality may, by by-law applicable to the whole municipality or to any defined area or areas thereof, require that land in an amount not exceeding, in the case of land proposed for development or redevelopment for commercial or industrial purposes, 2 per cent and in all other cases 5 per cent of the land be conveyed to the municipality for park or other public recreational purposes.*"

While the City has traditionally used the general parkland dedication rates through the land use

planning process, the *Act* also allows the City to use alternative rates if those rates are identified in its land use planning documents and the Parkland Dedication By-law.

Where the City is looking to acquire land for parkland use, the *Act* provides that *"as an alternative to requiring the conveyance provided for in subsection (1), in the case of land proposed for development or redevelopment for residential purposes, the by-law may require that land be conveyed to the municipality for park or other public recreational purposes at a rate of one hectare for each 600 net residential units proposed or at such lesser rate as may be specified in the by-law."*

The *Act* further allows, should the City wish to require payment in lieu of actual parkland, to calculate the value by using a rate of one hectare for each 1,000 net residential units proposed or such lesser rate as may be determined by the municipality.

As provided in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update, the alternative rates for parkland dedication are becoming more important for the City to meet its parkland needs given the increasing density of development and a transition toward more potential infill and intensification projects in the future. While these alternative rates would be an additional tool to meet the City's parkland objectives, these provincial rates would not be advantageous to the City unless proposed development exceeded 30 units per hectare for land dedication or 50 units per hectare for payment in lieu. As such, the framework for parkland dedication will allow the City to apply the standard or alternative dedication rates based on what would be the most appropriate to achieve the City's parkland needs.

Of note is that the *Planning Act* further limits the amount of land that may be conveyed through the alternative methods, or payment provided to the municipality to 10 percent of the land or the value of the land for sites under 5 hectares, or 15 percent of the land or the value of the of the land for sites 5 hectares or greater.

To support the parkland dedication requirements of the *Act*, and the associated By-laws and amendments to support it, *"the local municipality shall prepare and make available to the public a parks plan that examines the need for parkland in the municipality."* As noted in this report, the City of St. Thomas undertook a Parks and Recreation Master Plan update and a Community and Aquatics Centre Feasibility Study to address significant changes in population growth and community needs. At its meeting on Monday, March 9, 2026, St. Thomas City Council approved the final Parks and Recreation Master Plan which fulfills the City's obligation to have an approved park plan as per the legislation and provided several recommendations that are required to be implemented through this process. One such recommendation was for the establishment of a Parkland Dedication By-law, a draft of which can be found in Appendix "A" to this report.

Current Official Plan Policies

Overall policy direction for Parks and Recreation is outlined in Section 7 of the City's Official Plan, with specific policies related to parkland dedication provided in Subsection 7.3.7 through 7.3.10. While subsections 7.3.7 and 7.3.8 speak specifically to the legislative requirement to pass a By-law to implement parkland dedication and provides specific parkland dedication rates to be achieved through the approvals process, there are other general Official Plan policies that should be amended throughout the Plan to properly support the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the implementation of the new Parkland Dedication By-law through the land use planning process.

While a broader Parks and Recreation update will occur through the City's ongoing Official Plan update, Staffs recommended additional amendments to be included through this process would ensure that the parkland dedication process, and associated By-law, conforms to the current Official Plan policies and would reflect the changes that have occurred through to the *Planning Act*.

A draft Official Plan amendment is attached as Appendix "B" to this report and reflects several recommendations that were put forward through the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan updates, and to address other housekeeping matters that needed to be resolved to ensure clarity and consistency of implementation.

Strategic Priority:

Strategic Pillar: Excellence in All We Do - Priority #2: Thoughtful, Strategic, and Sustainable Community Growth

Financial Impact:

While there are no direct significant financial impacts associated with the advancement of the required Official Plan amendments and Parkland Dedication By-law, the implementation of these City tools will have direct financial impacts through the potential acquisition of parkland or payment in lieu of parkland dedication to the City. Further, there is an annual requirement to actively monitor parkland acquisitions and track annual spending and allocation of parkland payment in lieu funds.

Report Approval:

This report has been reviewed and approved by the Director of Parks and Recreation, Director of Planning and Building Services, and Manager of Planning Services.

All reports are reviewed and approved by the City Manager.

