

OFFICIAL PLAN
of the
CITY OF ST. THOMAS
AMENDMENT NO. XXX

PREPARED BY

CITY OF ST. THOMAS
PLANNING & BUILDING SERVICES DEPARTMENT

THE CITY OF ST. THOMAS

BY-LAW NO. _____

The Council of the Corporation of the City of St. Thomas, pursuant to Section 17(22) of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended, hereby enacts as follows:

1. That Official Plan Amendment No. XXX to the City of St. Thomas Official Plan, being the attached Explanatory Text, is hereby adopted.
2. This By-law shall come into force and take effect on the day of the final passing thereof.

Enacted and passed this XXth day of XXXXX, 2026.

Joe Preston, Mayor

Thomas Thayer, City Clerk

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STATEMENT OF COMPONENTS

- PART A - THE PREAMBLE -** does not constitute part of this Amendment.
- PART B - THE AMENDMENT -** the following text and map, designated Schedule “I”, constitutes Amendment No. XXX to the Official Plan of the City of St. Thomas.
- PART C – THE APPENDICES –** do not constitute part of this amendment. The appendices (I to III) contain the supporting documentation for the amendment and the record of public involvement associated with this amendment.

I, Lou Pompilii, Director of Planning & Building Services of the Corporation of the City of St. Thomas, do hereby certify that the following (Part B) is a true copy of Official Plan Amendment No. XXX adopted by the Council of the Corporation of the City of St. Thomas (By-law No. XX-2026).

Lou Pompilii
Director of Planning & Building Services

PART A – PREAMBLE

1. LOCATION

This Amendment applies City-wide.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Amendment is to update the policies of Section 7 (PARKS AND RECREATION) of the Official Plan as they pertain to the recommendations of the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan update – February 2026 and to support the associated implementation of the City of St. Thomas Parkland Dedication By-law with respect to parkland dedication and cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication provisions under the *Planning Act*.

3. BASIS

The basis for Part 1 of this Amendment is as follows:

- 3.1 The City of St. Thomas initiated an update to its Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 2024 to reassess the City's service levels, infrastructure capacity, and strategic direction in response to continued growth and evolving community needs.
- 3.2 A review and update to the City's 2020 Parks and Recreation Master Plan with a concurrent update undertaken related to a Community and Aquatic Centre Feasibility Study was completed and accepted by Council at the March 9, 2026 Council meeting.
- 3.3 Several recommendations were provided in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update to advance the identified City initiatives, to ensure that the City is positioned to address its parkland needs, and to align its parkland planning with the anticipated growth and intensification that the City anticipates to 2051.
- 3.4 The City's Official Plan currently provides outdated parkland dedication rates and general policy direction that is not consistent with current provincial direction or the current and planned initiatives of the City.
- 3.5 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.

- 3.6 Updates to the City's Official Plan are required to conform to the requirements of the *Planning Act* and to implement the recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and subsequent new City of St. Thomas Parkland Dedication By-law.

PART B - THE AMENDMENT

1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

All of this part of the document entitled “Part B - the Amendment” consisting of the following text constitutes Amendment No. XXX to the Official Plan of the City of St. Thomas.

2. DETAILS OF THE AMENDMENT

The Official Plan is amended as follows:

(i) Policies 3.7.1 to 3.7.2 are hereby deleted and replaced as follows:

3.7.1 The City recognizes parks, recreation facilities, trails and public open spaces as essential components of complete communities and essential municipal infrastructure.

3.7.2 The City shall plan for an adequate and equitable supply and distribution of parks and recreation facilities to meet existing and future community needs.

3.7.3 The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan shall guide the acquisition, development and improvement of parks, recreation facilities and trails.

(ii) Policy 4.3.13 is added as follows:

4.3.13 The City's parks, recreation facilities, trails and open spaces shall form an integrated component of the City's land use structure and shall be planned in coordination with residential growth, employment areas, schools, community facilities, transportation infrastructure and the natural heritage system.

(iii) Policies 7.1 to 7.3.10 are hereby deleted and replaced as follows:

7.1 BACKGROUND

7.1.1 Parks and recreation facilities and programs are recognized as an essential component of St. Thomas' quality of life by supporting healthy lifestyles, social connection, community identity and the creation of complete, attractive and sustainable neighbourhoods. The City's parks and recreation facilities provide opportunities for active and passive recreation, community gathering, leisure, play and connection to the natural environment, and function as a major land use that influences the shape of physical development within St. Thomas.

7.1.2 The City shall plan for an integrated system of parks, recreation facilities, trails, natural

areas, public spaces and related facilities that provides equitable access to recreational opportunities for existing and future residents.

- 7.1.3 The provision of parks and recreation facilities shall be coordinated with land use planning, transportation, active transportation, natural heritage, stormwater management, community facilities, schools and other public infrastructure to support the development of complete communities.
- 7.1.4 The City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan shall be used as a key planning document to guide the acquisition, development, improvement and management of parks and recreation facilities, and shall inform the review of development applications and municipal capital planning. This City shall periodically review and update its Parks and Recreation Master Plan to reflect changes in population, demographics, development patterns, recreation trends, community need, facility conditions and available resources.

7.2 GOALS

Council adopts the following goals for parks and recreation in St. Thomas:

- 7.2.1 To provide an equitable, diverse, connected and accessible system of parks, recreation facilities, trails and public spaces that meets the needs of a growing and changing population.
- 7.2.2 To ensure an adequate supply of functional, well-located and accessible parkland and recreation facilities, including a minimum growth-related target of 1.8 hectares of parkland per 1,000 additional residents between 2026 and 2051.
- 7.2.3 To recognize parks and recreation as essential infrastructure and coordinate their planning, acquisition, development and delivery with growth and community needs.
- 7.2.4 To establish a connected network of parks, trails, natural areas and public spaces that supports active transportation, environmental sustainability, climate resilience and community well-being.
- 7.2.5 To promote the efficient and multi-purpose use of public lands and facilities and encourage partnerships with school boards, conservation authorities, community organizations, neighbouring municipalities and other agencies.
- 7.2.6 To plan and operate parks and recreation facilities in a manner that promotes accessibility, public safety, fiscal responsibility and long-term sustainability.

7.3 PARKLAND CLASSIFICATION

- 7.3.1 The City of St. Thomas parkland classification system assists in the identification and definition of the range of characteristics found in municipal parks, such as their size,

form function and/or level of amenity. The classification system also enables a consistent management approach to respond to community needs while providing the community, developers and planners with an understanding of what new or redeveloped parks may include.

The following table identifies the City's parkland classification system as per the City of St. Thomas Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as amended from time to time.

Classification	General Description / Standards	Amenities	Current Provision Level	Provision Target	Target Size
Active Park Types					
Regional Park	Regional Parks are major active recreational parks that serve the entire City and beyond. They are heavily used by large groups of residents and tourists for sports and events. <i>Includes: 1 Password Park, Douglas J. Tarry Sports Complex (ED/REC complex)</i>	May include uses permitted in community parks, with a focus on multiple high-level sports fields.	4.1 hectares per 1,000 population	1.0 hectare per 1,000 population	Variable
Community Park	Community Parks serve multiple neighbourhoods and are designed to a higher standard and support	May include major playgrounds, tennis courts, senior level softball diamonds and soccer fields,			Minimum size of 4ha to 6ha; Preferred size of 8ha to 12ha

	more intensified use than neighbourhood parks. They are rectangular shaped and relatively level and free of obstructions to maximize usable lands and development of facilities. <i>Example:</i> <i>Pinafore Park</i>	washrooms and concession area, picnic facilities, walkways and parking			
Neighbourhood Park	Neighbourhood Parks primarily support children's play activities and are often situated within subdivisions to promote walkability. Some may be coordinated with school sites and have a localized service area. They are rectangularly shaped and relatively level and free of obstructions to maximize	May include playgrounds, tennis courts, outdoor ice rink, junior level softball diamonds and soccer fields, walkways and parking.	1.0 hectares per 1,000 population	0.8 hectares per 1,000 population	Minimum size of 1.5ha to 2ha; preferred size of 3ha to 3.9ha

	usable lands and development of facilities. <i>Example: Applewood Park</i>				
Sub-Neighbourhood Park / Parkette	Sub-Neighbourhood Parks and Parkettes serve a localized population in built-up areas that have restricted access to neighbourhood parks. These parks will be established through a municipal land acquisition program. They should be located in highly visible and accessible locations, typically in gateways or higher density urban areas. <i>Example: Wellington Street School (sub neighbourhood park), Jumbo</i>	May include floral gardens, historic/cultural features; hardscaped areas for events and gatherings, public art, seating areas, related civic uses, etc. Active recreation facilities are limited.			0.1ha to 0.5ha

	<i>Monument (parkette)</i>				
Open Space System					
Open Space	Open space lands are largely undeveloped properties serving passive recreation uses. Areas may include natural heritage, cultural/built heritage or other special purpose areas/facilities. Open space lands may be owned by the City and other public agencies, such as conservation authorities. Site-specific standards are applied based on natural heritage, cultural heritage or other key environmental feature(s) that are unique to the site. <i>Example:</i>	May include facilities such as beach and picnic facilities, boating facilities, walkways, boardwalks and observation decks, bandshell, visitors service centre, natural interpretation exhibits, seasonal campgrounds, parking, etc.	Not available (includes City and non-municipal sites)	No set target (opportunity based)	Variable - based on the site conditions and features

	<i>Burwell Road Woodlot</i>				
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7.3.2 The function, size, location, amenities and service area of parks shall be determined having regard to the applicable park classification, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, surrounding land uses, population served and existing parkland supply.

7.3.3 The City may establish or modify park classifications through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan without requiring an amendment to this Plan, provided that the classification remains consistent with the policies of this Section.

7.4 PARKLAND SUPPLY

7.4.1 The City shall strive to maintain an adequate supply of parkland to meet the recreational needs of existing and future residents through its existing parks and facilities, and through a minimum growth-related parkland provision of 1.8 hectares per 1,000 additional residents between 2026 and 2051.

7.4.2 The 1.8 hectare per 1,000 population target is a growth-related planning objective and shall not be interpreted as establishing a fixed City-wide parkland ratio or limiting the City's ability to acquire additional parkland where a demonstrated need exists.

7.4.4 The City shall monitor parkland supply and distribution as part of its Parks and Recreation Master Plan reviews and other appropriate municipal planning processes, and shall be interpreted as the City's Parks Plan for the purposes of legislative requirements.

7.4.5 Where population growth, development patterns or intensification result in a deficiency in parkland or recreational opportunities, the City may acquire additional lands through:

- a) parkland dedication;
- b) cash-in-lieu of parkland;
- c) municipal acquisition;
- d) land exchanges;
- e) partnerships;
- f) donations;
- g) agreements with public agencies or other organizations; or
- h) other means permitted by law.

7.5 PARKLAND DISTRIBUTION AND ACCESSIBILITY

7.5.1 The City shall seek to provide residents with convenient and equitable access to public parks and recreational opportunities.

- 7.5.2 A 500-metre walking distance shall be used as a general planning consideration when assessing parkland accessibility and identifying areas where additional parkland may be required. The 500-metre walking distance shall be measured based on actual or reasonably anticipated pedestrian routes and shall not necessarily be interpreted as a straight-line radius.
- 7.5.3 In assessing parkland accessibility, consideration shall be given to:
- a) physical barriers;
 - b) major roads;
 - c) railways;
 - d) watercourses;
 - e) natural hazards;
 - f) trail and sidewalk connections;
 - g) pedestrian crossings;
 - h) topography;
 - i) accessibility for persons with disabilities; and
 - j) other factors affecting practical access.
- 7.5.4 The City shall identify areas where existing and planned residents are not adequately served by accessible parkland and shall prioritize such areas for parkland acquisition.
- 7.5.5 Development and redevelopment within areas identified as having parkland deficiencies shall be considered opportunities to secure additional parkland, expand existing parks or improve connections to existing recreational facilities.
- 7.5.6 Council in conjunction with the local School Boards shall encourage the development of joint neighbourhood parks and schools to maximize the use of land and resources.
- 7.6 PARKLAND DEDICATION
- 7.6.1 The City shall use the parkland dedication provisions of the *Planning Act* as a principal mechanism for securing parkland associated with growth and development.
- 7.6.2 The City shall establish and maintain a Parkland Dedication By-law to implement the provisions of the *Planning Act* and this Plan.
- 7.6.3 The Parkland Dedication By-law shall establish detailed procedures for:
- a) determining parkland dedication requirements;
 - b) determining whether land or cash-in-lieu is appropriate;
 - c) calculating parkland dedication;
 - d) evaluating the suitability of proposed parkland;
 - e) determining land value where cash-in-lieu is required;
 - f) recognizing previous parkland dedication;

- g) administering exemptions and reductions;
- h) establishing timing requirements; and
- i) administering cash-in-lieu funds.

7.7 PARKLAND FIRST

- 7.7.1 The City shall adopt a “Parkland First” approach to the acquisition of parkland through development and redevelopment.
- 7.7.2 Where a development generates a parkland dedication requirement and suitable land is available, the City shall prioritize the conveyance of land for public park purposes over cash-in-lieu.
- 7.7.3 Where on-site dedication is not appropriate, the City may require or accept:
- a) off-site parkland;
 - b) expansion of an existing park;
 - c) acquisition of land in an identified parkland priority area;
 - d) a combination of land and cash-in-lieu; or
 - e) cash-in-lieu.
- 7.7.4 The City shall consider the following when determining the preferred method of satisfying a parkland dedication requirement:
- a) existing parkland supply;
 - b) parkland deficiencies;
 - c) population growth;
 - d) location of the development;
 - e) accessibility to existing parks;
 - f) the size and configuration of the proposed parkland;
 - g) opportunities to expand existing parks;
 - h) the ability to establish a functional park;
 - i) opportunities to connect parks and trails;
 - j) the requirements of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and
 - k) other relevant municipal planning objectives.
- 7.7.5 Cash-in-lieu shall not be regarded as the default alternative to land dedication where suitable land is required to address an identified parkland deficiency.

7.8 STANDARD PARKLAND DEDICATION RATE

- 7.8.1 For residential development and redevelopment, the City may require the conveyance of land for park or other public recreational purposes at a rate of up to 5 percent of the land proposed for development or redevelopment, in accordance with the *Planning Act*.

- 7.8.2 For eligible non-residential development and redevelopment, the City may require the conveyance of land for park or other public recreational purposes at a rate of up to 2 percent of the land proposed for development or redevelopment, where permitted by the *Planning Act*.
- 7.8.3 For mixed-use development, the City may apply the applicable parkland dedication provisions to the residential and non-residential components of the development or use another calculation methodology permitted by the *Planning Act*.
- 7.8.4 The detailed calculation methodology shall be established through the Parkland Dedication By-law.
- 7.9 ALTERNATIVE PARKLAND DEDICATION RATE
- 7.9.1 Where permitted by the *Planning Act*, the City may use the alternative parkland dedication rate for residential development and redevelopment.
- 7.9.2 The alternative rate for land dedication shall be:
- 1 hectare for every 600 dwelling units proposed.
- 7.9.3 The alternative rate for cash-in-lieu of parkland shall be:
- 1 hectare for every 1,000 dwelling units proposed.
- 7.9.4 The alternative rate shall be subject to all maximum dedication limitations established by the *Planning Act* and applicable regulations.
- 7.9.5 The alternative rate should be considered particularly for development and redevelopment involving higher residential densities, including infill and intensification, where the alternative rate would provide a more appropriate contribution toward the City's growth-related parkland needs.
- 7.9.6 The City shall maintain flexibility to determine whether the standard or alternative rate provides the most appropriate mechanism for securing parkland, subject to the *Planning Act*.
- 7.10 PARKLAND SUITABILITY
- 7.10.1 Land conveyed to the City for park purposes shall be of sufficient size, configuration, location, condition and quality to provide a functional public recreational or park purpose.

7.10.2 The City shall consider the following characteristics when assessing proposed parkland:

- a) size;
- b) shape and configuration;
- c) public accessibility;
- d) frontage on a public street;
- e) topography;
- f) drainage;
- g) soil conditions;
- h) servicing;
- i) environmental conditions;
- j) surrounding land uses;
- k) visibility and safety;
- l) opportunities for recreational programming;
- m) opportunities for connections to other parks and trails; and
- n) long-term maintenance and operational requirements.

7.10.3 The City may refuse to accept lands that are unsuitable for park purposes, including lands that are:

- a) subject to natural hazards;
- b) required for stormwater management;
- c) required for transportation or servicing infrastructure;
- d) contaminated or potentially contaminated;
- e) subject to significant environmental constraints that prevent or materially restrict recreational use;
- f) subject to easements or encumbrances that materially restrict public use;
- g) inaccessible to the public;
- h) irregular or fragmented;
- i) incapable of providing a functional recreational opportunity as per the requirements of the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan; or
- j) otherwise unsuitable for municipal ownership or maintenance.

7.11 NATURAL HERITAGE, NATURAL HAZARDS AND STORMWATER

7.11.1 The City recognizes that natural heritage areas, natural hazard areas, stormwater management facilities and parkland may form components of an integrated open space system but serve different primary planning functions.

7.11.2 Natural heritage features and areas, natural hazard lands, environmental buffers, valleylands, wetlands, woodlands and other protected environmental lands shall not generally be accepted as satisfying a required parkland dedication solely because they serve a separate function for open space or recreational opportunities other than what is to be provided through the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

- 7.11.3 Stormwater management facilities and lands required for stormwater management purposes shall not generally be accepted as satisfying a required parkland dedication.
- 7.11.4 Where natural heritage areas, naturalized areas, stormwater facilities and parkland are located adjacent to or integrated with one another, the City shall encourage appropriate physical and functional connections while maintaining the primary environmental, hazard management and infrastructure functions of those lands.
- 7.11.5 Recreational uses within natural heritage areas shall be limited to those that are compatible with the protection of ecological functions and features.

7.12 PARK SIZE AND CONFIGURATION

- 7.12.1 New municipal parks should be a minimum of 0.5 hectares in size.
- 7.12.2 New parkland should be configured to maximize its functional area and recreational utility.
- 7.12.3 The City may accept a park smaller than 0.5 hectares where the land:
- a) expands an existing park;
 - b) forms part of a larger planned park;
 - c) provides a strategic connection between parks or trails;
 - d) addresses a parkland deficiency within an intensification area;
 - e) functions as a parkette or specialized public space; or
 - f) provides another demonstrated municipal park or recreational benefit.
- 7.12.4 The City shall discourage the creation of small, fragmented or residual park parcels that do not provide a meaningful recreational or public-space function.

7.13 PARKS AND DEVELOPMENT

- 7.13.1 The City shall seek to secure and develop parks concurrently with growth and development so that recreational opportunities are available as new communities are established.
- 7.13.2 Plans of subdivision, condominium applications and major development proposals shall demonstrate how proposed parkland will contribute to the City's overall parks and recreation system.
- 7.13.3 In areas experiencing significant growth or intensification, the City may prioritize:
- a) new parkland;
 - b) expansion of existing parks;
 - c) acquisition of strategically located properties;

- d) urban parks and parkettes; and
- e) improvements to pedestrian, cycling and trail connections.

7.14 PARKS, TRAILS AND CONNECTIVITY

7.14.1 The City shall promote a connected network of parks, trails, pathways, natural areas and public spaces.

7.14.2 New development shall, where appropriate, provide connections between parks and:

- a) neighbourhoods;
- b) schools;
- c) recreation facilities;
- d) commercial areas;
- e) transit;
- f) active transportation routes; and
- g) natural heritage areas.

7.14.3 The planning and development of parks and trails shall be coordinated with the City's transportation and active transportation systems.

7.15 NATURAL HERITAGE AND PARKS

7.15.1 The City shall encourage appropriate integration and connectivity between parks and the natural heritage system while recognizing their different primary functions.

7.15.2 Recreational uses within or adjacent to natural heritage features shall be planned and designed to maintain ecological functions and comply with applicable natural heritage and hazard policies.

7.16 RECREATION FACILITIES

7.16.1 The City shall provide a range of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities that respond to changing population, demographic and community needs.

7.16.2 The location and development of major recreation facilities shall consider:

- a) population growth and distribution;
- b) existing facility supply and capacity;
- c) accessibility;
- d) active transportation and transit;
- e) opportunities for co-location;
- f) partnerships; and
- g) long-term capital and operating requirements.

7.16.3 Where appropriate, the City shall encourage the co-location of recreation facilities with parks, schools, libraries, community facilities and other public services.

7.17 ACCESSIBILITY, INCLUSION AND SUSTAINABILITY

7.17.1 The City shall seek to ensure that parks, trails and recreation facilities are accessible and inclusive for residents of all ages and abilities.

7.17.2 The planning and design of parks and recreation facilities shall consider:

- a) universal accessibility;
- b) pedestrian and cycling access;
- c) public transit;
- d) safety and visibility;
- e) tree canopy and shade;
- f) sustainable landscaping;
- g) climate resilience; and
- h) long-term maintenance and operational requirements.

7.18 CASH-IN-LIEU

7.18.1 Cash-in-lieu of parkland may be accepted where land dedication would not provide a suitable or functional contribution to the City's parks system or where another parkland opportunity would better address an identified need.

7.18.2 Where practicable and permitted by the *Planning Act*, cash-in-lieu should be directed toward:

- a) acquisition of new parkland;
- b) expansion of existing parks;
- c) development of new parks; or
- d) other eligible park purposes, with priority given to areas generating the need or identified as parkland priorities.

7.26 SURPLUS PARKLAND

7.26.1 The City shall consider the strategic value of municipal parkland before declaring any parkland surplus or disposing of it.

7.26.2 Before disposing of municipal parkland, the City should consider:

- a) existing and future parkland needs;
- b) park accessibility;
- c) recreational value;
- d) potential population growth;

- e) opportunities to relocate recreational functions;
- f) opportunities to consolidate parkland;
- g) environmental and cultural heritage values;
- h) adjacent land uses;
- i) development potential; and
- j) community input.

7.26.3 Where parkland is declared surplus and disposed of, the City should, where permitted by law and municipal policy, prioritize the reinvestment of proceeds into priority parkland acquisition, park development or recreation projects.

(iv) Policy section 10.12 is added as follows:

10.12 PARKLAND DEDICATION

10.12.1 In addition to the policies provided in Section 7 of this Plan, Parkland Dedication shall be implemented through:

- a) the Parkland Dedication By-law;
- b) the Zoning By-law;
- c) plans of subdivision and condominium;
- d) site plan control;
- e) development agreements;
- f) secondary plans;
- g) municipal capital budgets;
- h) Community Benefits Charges, where applicable;
- i) Development Charges, where applicable;
- j) land acquisition programs; and
- k) the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

10.12.2 The City shall ensure that the Parkland Dedication By-law is consistent with this Plan and the *Planning Act*.

10.12.3 The City shall review the Parkland Dedication By-law periodically to ensure that it remains consistent with legislation, the Official Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and changing community needs.

10.12.4 The City shall use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan as a primary reference when reviewing development applications that generate parkland dedication requirements.

3. IMPLEMENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

The implementation and interpretation of this Amendment shall be in accordance with the respective policies of the City of St. Thomas Official Plan.

SCHEDULE I

PART C - THE APPENDICES

Appendix I: Notice of Public Meeting

Appendix II: Minutes of Public Meeting

Appendix III: Planning Reports to Council

APPENDIX I:
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

APPENDIX II:
MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING

APPENDIX III:
STAFF PLANNING REPORTS TO COUNCIL