2026-30 Accessibility Plan

Introduction & Statement of Commitment

The 2026-2030 Accessibility Plan aims to create an accessible and inclusive city for everyone. Over the last few years, progress has been made to plan longer-term for accessibility initiatives.

Council is committed to ensure that persons with disabilities share the same rights, freedoms and obligations so that they may live as independently as possible and are able to participate in all that the City of St. Thomas has to offer. The multi-year accessibility plan plays an important role in recognizing the needs of persons with disabilities that reside in St. Thomas.

The City of St. Thomas aims for the following in regard to accessibility objectives:

Objectives

- To promote public awareness and sensitivity to all persons with disabilities.
- To encourage co-operation between all service and interest groups.
- To identify and document relevant issues and concerns.
- To create a community that provides opportunities for barrier-free access to housing, transportation, education, recreation, health care and employment.
- To embrace the concept of universal design to include the needs for disabled citizens and an aging population.
- To ensure that policies and practices are maintained in relationship to the development and redevelopment of services and facilities that have regard to persons with disabilities and aging population statistics.
- To ensure that the City receives the maximum economic benefits from building an accessible City including an increased potential for tourism, retail business and accommodating conventions.

How is this Plan Organized?

This Plan is organized into four main parts. The first part provides the Introduction, Statement of Commitment and Legislative Framework. The second and third parts relate to the Accessibility Standards and highlights the 2025 Plan accomplishments and Action Items for 2026-2030. The final part provides a conclusion.

Legislative Framework

The Accessibility Plan was prepared in consultation with the St. Thomas Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee(MAAC), the City's Leadership Team and staff. There is a continued allocation of dedicated capital funds to remove barriers in municipal buildings and an ongoing review of selected by-laws, policies, programs, practices and services to determine their impact on accessibility.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) became law in 2005. The purpose of this legislation is to identify, remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. The AODA applies to all levels of government, non-profits, and private-sector businesses in Ontario that have one or more employees.

The AODA provides guidelines under the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (O.Reg. 191/11) for the development of an accessible Ontario with mandatory standards of the following:

- Customer Service Standards
- Information and Communication Standards
- Employment Standards
- Transportation Standards
- Design of Public Spaces Standards

St. Thomas Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee

As required by the AODA, the role of the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee (MAAC) is to advise and assist the City of St. Thomas, including the City's agencies, boards and commissions, in developing and facilitating a barrier-free St. Thomas. As required by the Act, a majority of the members must include persons with disabilities. This role includes advising City Council about requirements and implementation of accessibility standards and the preparation of accessibility reports, reviewing Special Events applications, and reviewing site plans and drawings under the Planning Act.

Customer Service, Information & Communication & Employment

Highlights of the 2025 Plan

- The 2025 Accessibility Plan was approved by City Council after consultation with MAAC and City staff and made available in accessible formats upon request.
- Communications staff ensured ongoing accessibility monitoring for website compliance and made changes where necessary to improve accessibility.
- Ongoing efforts were made to enhance and create accessible community engagement and corporate communications activities.
- Ongoing review of accessibility policies, Official Plan and Zoning documents as it relates to land use regulations and definitions supporting barrier-free access (e.g. ramps, parking, signage).
- The St. Thomas Public Library website was migrated to a new host ensuring WCAG 2.1 AA standards compliance.
- Staff at the St. Thomas Public Library completed online and in-person training relating to Dementia Friendly Communities support. Training will be refreshed as needed.

2026-2030 Action Items

- This 2026-2030 Plan will be available in accessible formats upon request.
- Accessibility Plans for the 2026 and 2030 Municipal Elections will be available in accessible formats upon request. Measures will be designed to ensure that elections meet accessibility needs of voters and candidates.
- Ongoing accessibility monitoring for website compliance. The City will ensure that materials posted to a new website and engagement platforms meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.
- Accessibility improvements at the St. Thomas Public Library, including updating the elevator wayfinding directory and testing glare and contrast of light fixtures, consideration of a hearing loop system for auditory support and adding baffles in the Carnegie Room.
- Autism supports at the St. Thomas Public Library will be explored, including finding training for staff, creating sensory kits for customers to use in the library to improve service and as a learning resource and considering a quiet zone within the library with sensory-friendly lighting.
- Accessible technologies will be investigated at the St. Thomas Public Library, such as text to speech reading pens and magnifiers.
- Review accessibility-friendly supports in programs and events at the St. Thomas Public Library, including developing an accessibility checklist for program planning, training staff to incorporate sensory-friendly, mobility-friendly and communication supports into programs, and promoting the availability of assistive devices, sensory kits and alternative participation options (quiet sitting, virtual attendance) in appropriate events.
- Ongoing efforts to enhance and create accessible community engagement and corporate communications activities.

- Build relevant staff capacity through training and learning opportunities for creating inclusive digital content.
- Develop internal materials for staff, including inclusive and plain language guides.
- Develop an accessible event policy and/or procedure to ensure engagement activities are inclusive and accessible.
- Update recreation services promotional materials to improve accessibility.
- A general audit and review of signage and a directory/map at the St. Thomas Public Library is ongoing.
- Ongoing review of accessibility policies, Official Plan and Zoning documents as it relates to land use regulations and definitions supporting barrier-free access (e.g. ramps, parking, signage) by Planning Services staff, including consideration for accessibility policies as part of any future Secondary Plans.
- Signage improvements at the Doug Tarry Sports Complex is ongoing including for accessible picnic tables, washrooms, and the concession menu board.
- Signage improvements at Memorial Arena will is ongoing including marking on the front glass doors, identifying the kitchen in the auditorium, directions to family washrooms and the elevator, and ice-re-surfacer warning signs.
- All staff continue to receive accessible customer service training.

Transportation & Design of Public Spaces

Highlights of the 2025 Plan

- Ensured that new development designs conform with AODA requirements.
- As part of the 2025 Annual Road Rehabilitation, installed new surface to improve road crossing for all modes of transportation.
- As part of the 2025 construction projects, installed new sidewalks to fill in missing links and replaced narrow or poor condition sidewalks, installed tactile warning plates at intersections, installed new pedestrian crosswalks at various locations and installed new multi-use pathways at various locations.
- Paved accessible trail and accessible parking within Emslie Field in Pinafore Park were installed, including the addition of an accessible bump out beside the bleachers.
- Structural assessment at the Emslie Field Grandstand in Pinafore Park was completed.
- Recreational trail connections were made in Pinafore Park from both the Lakeside Pavilion and the Street Railway Pavilion.
- Reconstruction of the Street Railway Pavilion to include a larger concrete pad ensuring that the entire pavilion is accessible was completed.
- Parking signage was upgraded and an additional accessible parking spot was created at St. Thomas Fire Station 1, 305 Wellington Street.
- Contrast colour improvements were made at Memorial Arena to identify impediments to paths of travel, including pillars, garbage cans, benches, defibrillator box, drinking fountain, stairwells and railings.

- Contrast colour delineation was completed at the St. Thomas Public Library demarking the water filling station.
- Grab bars were installed in all public and staff washrooms at the St. Thomas Public Library.
- The Clerks Department / Customer Service front counter was renovated to ensure it meets accessibility standards, making it more accommodating for all visitors, including those with mobility challenges.
- Accessibility improvements were made to the walkway/entrance areas of 200 Chestnut Street and 45 St. Anne's Place.

2026-2030 Action Items

- Continue to ensure that new development designs are in conformance with AODA requirements.
- As part of the annual road construction projects, install new surface to improve road crossing for all modes of transportation, install new sidewalks to fill in missing links and replace narrow or poor condition sidewalks, install tactile warning plates at intersections, and install new pedestrian crosswalks in various locations.
- As construction projects occur, traffic signals will be upgraded to include accessible audible and tactile features.
- Expand active transportation network and connections, including multi-use trails, cycle-tracks and sidewalks.
- Undertake a parking management study to identify recommendations based on a long-term vision for parking with St. Thomas and a goal of making the parking system more effective and efficient for users. This will include accessible parking with a focus on identifying additional accessible stalls to meet or exceed accessible parking requirements in the Zoning By-law.
- Undertake a transit electrification and master servicing plan study to evaluate the current and future state of public transit within St. Thomas and to develop a comprehensive strategy to improve service delivery, expand coverage, and better meet the needs of existing and future riders.
- Ongoing design work for structural and accessibility upgrades for the Emslie Field Grandstand in Pinafore Park.
- Waterworks Park trail improvements include a connection being designed to connect the trail from the washrooms to the trail east of the reservoir and replacing heaving sections of the concrete pathway from the washrooms to the pavilions.
- Recreational trail extensions in Shaw Valley to connect existing trail to misting station and playground and the L&PS trail to extend north from Kains Street and providing access to Project Tiny Hope.
- Any approved playground equipment replacements will be accessible with a rubberized surface.
- Accessibility improvements at St. Thomas Fire Station 1, 305 Wellington Street including illuminated exit route signage, paint markings along the front driveway to note the path of travel for device users being brought into the building, yellow striping on the dispatch area ramp and clearer signage, including at the intercom and numbering of garage doors.
- Accessibility improvements at the Joe Thornton Community Centre, including the

installation of accessible tilted mirrors in the Doug Tarry room washrooms, installation of directional signage for washrooms, repairing of broken floor tiles and repainting stair contrasting.
- Purchase of assists that fit on wheelchair wheels to enable participation in leisure skates.
- Purchase of accessible table seating in the main floor concession area at the Joe Thornton Community Centre.
- St. Thomas Public Library Nature Lab project to be completed, which includes widening the ramp to the lower level and the replacement of the automatic door opener on the lower level.
- Accessibility improvements, including installation of a cane detection rail under the stairs with a head space hazard, assessment of the main floor entrance ramp, consideration of replacing fixed tables with adjustable-height tables, and consideration of chairs on wheels at the St. Thomas Public Library.
- Future budget planning is ongoing for accessibility improvement considerations around Lake Margaret and the kayak launch area.
- Installation of new accessible doors at the Horton Farmer's Market.
- Installation of an accessible kiosk at the City Hall front entrance, including an accessible ramp and lift.
- Continue to renovate departments within City Hall to increase accessibility.
- Incorporate accessible features into the design and construction of a new childcare centre.
- Continue to make public housing units accessible to meet the needs of tenants.
- Install accessible ramps and walkways at First Avenue Housing (Kiwanis).

Continuous Improvement and Conclusion

The City of St. Thomas' long term vision is to ensure that St. Thomas will be a caring and responsive community known for its accessibility. With the commitment of City Council, staff, the Municipal Accessibility Advisory Committee and community partners, barrier removal continues to be a priority in St. Thomas.

Contact Information

Information about accessibility, including policies is available on the City of St. Thomas' website at www.stthomas.ca. For any accessibility inquiries, please reach out to Customer Service:

e. customerservice@stthomas.ca
t. 519-631-1680, Press "0"
f. 519-633-9019

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