

# 2025

# Accessibility Plan

## ↘ Introduction & Statement of Commitment

The 2025 Accessibility Plan is a roadmap to creating an accessible and inclusive city for everyone. This Plan is a step toward a longer-term multi-year plan starting in 2026.

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 annual 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 2024 Plan accomplishments and Action Items for 2025. 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 2024 Plan

- The 2024 Accessibility Plan was approved by City Council after consultation with MAAC and City staff and made available in accessible formats upon request.
- Purchase of accessibility software for website compliance was made and website accessibility is continually monitored.
- Ongoing efforts were made to enhance and create accessible community engagement and corporate communications activities.
- A Clearview Magnifier for those with low vision was purchased for use at the St. Thomas Public Library.
- Dyslexia friendly materials were purchased by the St. Thomas Public Library.
- Additional signage was installed at the St. Thomas Public Library for the accessible washrooms and access support for lower bookshelves.
- Improved washroom signage installed at 230 Talbot Street and staff operationally assist clients in navigating to interview rooms as required.

## 2025 Action Items

- This 2025 Plan will be available in accessible formats upon request. Work is ongoing to move toward a multi-year plan starting in 2026 to ensure that accessibility initiatives are planned out in the long term.
- Ongoing accessibility monitoring for website compliance.
- Ongoing efforts to enhance and create accessible community engagement and corporate communications activities.
- A general audit and review of signage and a directory/map at the St. Thomas Public Library will take place.
- 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.
- Signage improvements at the Doug Tarry Sports Complex is ongoing including for accessible picnic tables, washrooms, and the concession menu board.
- St. Thomas Public Library staff to renew Dementia Friendly Communities Support by taking online and in-person training.



## Highlights of the 2024 Plan

- Delineated accessible parking spaces with painted line markings on Talbot Street.
- Created two van accessible parking spaces on Curtis Street adjacent to Westlake Evans Park.
- Ensured that new development designs conform with AODA requirements.
- As part of the 2024 Annual Road Rehabilitation, installed new surface to improve road crossing for all modes of transportation.
- As part of the 2024 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.
- Accessible rubberized surface was installed in a bright colour at the Burwell Park playground.
- Three meter accessible recreational trail links were installed at Cowan Park and Goddeeris Lukys Park and a sidewalk link was installed at the Skate Park to connect to the Talbot Street businesses.
- Accessibility improvements made around the Emslie Field washrooms and changerooms including removal of bushes, addressing cracks in the floor, ordering of new signage, opening of the additional gate during baseball games, and painting of railings for better contrast.
- The City's logo was installed at the 5 foot level on all glass doors in City Hall for people with low vision.
- A secure grab bar was installed at the Joe Thornton Community Centre for sledge hockey players where they transition to their ice-sleds and vice versa.
- Improvements were made to the Doug Tarry Sports Complex, including grinding down of tripping hazards, painting obstructions including garbage containers, fencing, pillars and benches for better contrasting, extending the automatic door timer on the washroom and addressing access to the sink in the accessible washroom.
- Upgrades completed at the 200 Chestnut Street parking lot and entrance including line markings, signage, tactile strips, and signage on the sliding glass doors.
- The accessible button for the washroom at 230 Talbot Street was relocated for improved access.

## 2025 Action Items

- Continue to ensure that new development designs are in conformance with AODA requirements.
- As part of the 2025/2026 Annual Road Rehabilitation, install new surface to improve road crossing for all modes of transportation and improve sidewalks and pedestrian ramps at various intersections.
- As part of the 2025/2026 construction projects, 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.
- Designs for paved accessible trail and accessible parking within Emslie Field in Pinafore Park to better connect the parking area to viewing areas are moving forward in 2025, including the addition of an accessible bump out beside the bleachers.
- Structural assessment at the Emslie Field Grandstand in Pinafore Park.
- The Clerks Department / Customer Service front counter will be renovated to ensure it meets accessibility standards, making it more accommodating for all visitors, including those with mobility challenges. This project aims to improve accessibility, efficiency, and aesthetics, fostering a functional and inclusive environment for both the public and staff.
- Accessibility improvements, including consideration of widening the ramp to the lower level will be incorporated into the Nature Lab design at the St. Thomas Public Library.
- Grab bars to be installed in all washrooms at the St. Thomas Public Library.
- Signage improvements at Memorial Arena will be undertaken 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.
- Contrast colour improvements at Memorial Arena will be undertaken to better identify impediments to paths of travel, including pillars, steps to the broadcaster booth, garbage cans, bench near the elevator, defibrillator box, drinking fountain, stairwells and railings.
- Future budget planning is ongoing for accessibility improvement considerations around Lake Margaret and the kayak launch area.
- Consideration is being made for improvements to the cobblestone walkway and resident patio area, colour delineations, and ramps at emergency exits at 200 Chestnut Street.
- Installation of new accessible doors at the Horton Farmer's Market.



## 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](http://www.stthomas.ca).

For any accessibility inquiries, please reach out to Customer Service:

- e.** [customerservice@stthomas.ca](mailto:customerservice@stthomas.ca)
- t.** 519-631-1680, Press "0"
- f.** 519-633-9019

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