AGENDA

Special Council

Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 9:00 AM

Town Hall Council Chambers

175 Queen St. E., St. Marys, Ontario

This meeting is live streamed on the Town's YouTube page

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

3. AMENDMENTS AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

THAT the October 21, 2025 special meeting of Council agenda be accepted as presented.

4. INTRODUCTION TO STAFF'S PROPOSED 2026 CAPITAL AND OPERATING BUDGET

Staff's budget is available on the Town's website (www.townofstmarys.com/budget) or at the Municipal Operations Centre

4.1. Chief Administrative Officer Comments

4.2. Interim Treasurer Comments

5. REVIEW OF STAFF'S PROPOSED 2026 CAPITAL PROJECTS

**Staff report provided below as supplementary information for capital project #44

5.1. COR 34-2025 Downtown Beautification Plan

THAT COR 34-2025 Downtown Beautification report be received; and
THAT Council supports Capital Project #44 "Downtown S. Marys Beautification – Phase 1"; and
THAT Council directs staff to update the 10-year capital plan reflecting 10-year Downtown Beautification Plan presented in COR 34-2025.

[COR 34-2025 Downtown Beautification Plan] (Page 5)
[Downtown Beautification Concept] (Page 10)
[Downtown Beautification 10 Year Forecast] (Page 21)

5.2. Capital Budget Pre Approval Consideration

THAT Council approves pre-budget approval for the following items and recommends that the Mayor consider issuing a mayoral decision to implement this pre-budget approval;

- Capital item 7 – blue pad roof maintenance;
- Capital item 8 – replacement of Friendship Centre flat roof;
- Capital item 13 – PRC replace building automation controls software; and
- Capital item 15 – welcome area upgrades; and

THAT Council waives its rights under O. Reg. 530/22 to make a budget amendment or override the Mayor's budget decision as it relates to the possibility of a mayoral decision regarding pre budget approval for the items listed above.

6. REVIEW OF STAFF'S PROPOSED 2026 OPERATING BUDGET

6.1. Administration

6.2. Building and Development

6.3. Community Services

6.4. Culture, Tourism, and Economic Development

6.5. Finance

6.6. Fire

6.7. Human Resources

6.8. Public Works

6.9. Self Funded (water, wastewater, landfill)

6.10. Library

7. SERVICE LEVEL REQUESTS

7.1. ADMIN 48-2025 Supplemental Information Regarding Staffing Changes Included in the 2026 Budget

THAT ADMIN 48-2025 Supplemental Information Regarding Staffing Changes Included in the 2026 Budget report be received for information.

THAT, as identified in ADMIN 48-2025 report, Council recommends that the Mayor consider including the staffing change of a part-time custodian based on a 12 month contract in the Mayor's 2026 budget.

THAT, as identified in ADMIN 48-2025 report, Council recommends that the Mayor consider including the staffing change of an engineering summer co-op in the Mayor's 2026 budget.

ADMIN 48-2025 Supplemental Information Regarding Staffing Changes Included in the 2026 Budget (Page 24) (Page 24)

8. PUBLIC INPUT PERIOD

Public input received by the Clerks Department prior to 4:30pm on the day prior to the meeting will be read aloud during this portion of the agenda.
Submissions will be accepted via email to ckerksoffice@town.stmarys.on.ca or in the drop box at Town Hall, 175 Queen Street East, lower level.

8.1. COR 35-2025 Pre-Budget 2026 Public Engagement

THAT COR 35-2025 Pre-Budget 2026 Public Engagement report be received.

COR 35-2025 Pre-Budget 2026 Public Engagement (Page 30)

9. NEXT STEPS

10. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Mayor may table budget week of November 10-14
November 18, 2025 - 9:00am, Special Council (budget), Council Chambers

11. CONFIRMATORY BY-LAW

THAT By-law 57-2025, being a by-law to confirm the actions of the October 21, 2025 special meeting of Council be approved.

57-2025 Confirming October 21 Special.docx (Page 34)

12. ADJOURNMENT

THAT this special meeting of Council be adjourned at _______pm.

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council
Prepared by:	Kelly Deeks - Johnson, Tourism and Economic Development Manager
Date of Meeting:	21 October 2025

TITLE

COR 34-2025 Downtown Beautification Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The draft 2026 capital budget includes **Capital Project #44 "Downtown St. Marys Beautification – Phase 1"** which provides funding for phase 1 of a multi-year plan to improve the streetscape and beautification elements of the downtown core as part of the BIAs adopted **Downtown Beautification Plan**

The **Downtown Beautification Plan** outlines a multi-year strategy to enhance the streetscape and public spaces in the downtown core, supporting a vibrant commercial environment and improving accessibility, walkability, and visual appeal. The plan builds on a history of capital works and service improvements dating back to 2016. This includes infrastructure upgrades, decorative lighting, expanded parking, accessible pedestrian crossings, and seasonal enhancements.

Key issues addressed include the need for ongoing investment in beautification elements, such as planters, lighting, and seating, while balancing operational costs and service levels. Staff evaluated several options, including maintaining annual flower beds, switching to perennials, expanding the banner program, and upgrading street lighting to LED in response to federal import bans on HPS components.

The recommended approach is a phased implementation of beautification projects, with flexibility to adjust based on budget, grant funding, and community input. Notable efficiencies include greenhouse-started planters for earlier establishment, self-watering urns to reduce maintenance costs, and strategic partnerships with the BIA for seasonal displays and waste management.

Staff's goal is that prioritizing pedestrian-friendly design and inviting public spaces will foster increased foot traffic, benefiting local merchants and the broader community. The plan is designed to stabilize capital funding requests, complement existing service delivery, and align with strategic municipal priorities. All proposed elements are "shovel ready" and can be advanced if additional funding becomes available.

This report is being presented to Council to provide a deeper explanation of the **Downtown Beautification Plan** as Council considers their approval of capital Project #44.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT CORP 34-2025 Downtown Beautification report be received; and

THAT Council supports Capital Project #44 "Downtown S. Marys Beautification – Phase 1"; and

THAT Council directs staff to update the 10-year capital plan reflecting 10-year Downtown Beautification Plan presented in COR 34-2025.

BACKGROUND

Over the last several months, the Town hired a landscape architect to support the BIA as they developed ideas to improve the Downtown aesthetic. The **Downtown Beautification Plan** has recently been accepted and approved by the BIA, with a commitment of $15,000 for funding for 2026.

The draft 2026 capital budget includes **Capital Project #44 "Downtown St. Marys Beautification – Phase 1"** which provides funding for phase 1 of a multi-year plan to improve the streetscape and beautification elements of the downtown core.

This report is being presented to Council to provide a deeper explanation of the **Downtown Beautification Plan** as Council considers their approval of capital Project #44.

To start, below staff have put together, a history of works to date and annual service levels that have been provided as it relates to downtown beautification.

Capital works to date:

2016 – Queen Street underwent reconstruction from Peel St to Thomas St, primarily as part of planned infrastructure upgrades. Council incorporated enhancements aimed at beautifying the downtown area and improving usability, walkability, and accessibility. Construction elements included stamped concrete boulevards, accessible pedestrian crossings, seamless threshold transitions, event power pedestals, curb realignment to increase on-street parking, and epoxy-coated decorative traffic and streetlight posts.

2017 – The Town collaborated with the BIA to share costs for replacing decorative shades on downtown street lighting, resulting in increased illumination and improved nighttime safety for both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Additionally, the Town partnered with the BIA to commission custom shooting stars for seasonal decorative lighting.

2018 – Bike racks and concrete surfaces were installed on the east side of Victoria Bridge and at the St. Marys Library. The Town also completed a gateway landscape feature and parkette installation at Town Hall, with further contributions from the BIA including additional bench seating, a cell phone charging station, and public Wi-Fi access.

2017–2019 – Various bridge structures, including those on Queen St, Water Street, Wellington Street, and Church Street, were reconstructed or rehabilitated according to their respective life cycles. These projects improved pedestrian access and included updated lighting to enhance downtown walkability.

2021 – The downtown banners program was reinstated, with the Town partnering with the BIA to refresh and reinstall banners. Grant funding supported the implementation of a comprehensive wayfinding signage system throughout the Town, benefiting various business sectors, including the downtown core.

2022 – Wellington Street was reconstructed to address necessary infrastructure upgrades. Sidewalk improvements, additional parking spaces, and decorative stamped concrete boulevards complemented prior works on Queen Street.

2023 – Council participated in the provincial "Charge-On" program, leading to the installation of two Level 2 EV vehicle chargers in the Jones Street parking lot. Lighting was added to the trees at Town Hall in the winter season to enhance the winter beautification.

2024 – LED upgrades were made to the illumination systems in both the Jones Street and Elgin Street parking lots. Water Street South, from Queen Street to Elgin Street, was repaved.

2025 – Planned paving for the Jones Street parking lot will include full pulverisation, regrading, and drainage improvements. Town staff worked with the BIA on adding art to four downtown hydro boxes. Staff also engaged GSP to assist with the initiation and coordination of a downtown beautification guide to assist the BIA and Town staff with their efforts moving forward.

2026 – Proposed capital budget - upgrades to the Eric Taylor Trail parking lot aim to create additional overflow parking for the downtown core if required. This initiative will deliver a year-round, hard-surface lot with full illumination within walking distance of the downtown area.

2026 – Proposed Capital budget – reapplication of the epoxy coating to the downtown traffic and streetlight posts. The coating will refresh the appearance and seal the posts from salt to prevent damage.

2026 – 2030 – Street light upgrades – The Town has approximately 50 decorative streetlight fixtures in the downtown core. The federal government has banned imports of all replacement components for HPS lighting solutions. The Town has included funding in the capital budget to start the process of the LED conversions for existing HPS lighting, this is expected to cost approximately $2500 per fixture. Special attention will be paid when consideration of the replacement fixtures in the downtown core, illumination levels and color temperature will have to be considered to maintain the aesthetic feel of downtown.

Downtown Service Levels:

Snow Removal

The downtown core spans about 66' between building facades, the Town's snow removal programs focus on supporting local businesses and daily activity downtown. Sidewalks, travel lanes, and parking are cleared before 6am, and snowbanks are kept below 30" due to limited space. The Public Works department typically conducts 2-3 downtown cleanups per winter, each costing about $5,000 and occurring between 1AM and 5AM to minimize business disruption. Furthermore, the Town administers a snow and ice removal by-law to maintain pedestrian access by overseeing removals of hazardous ice buildups on private buildings that could represent a hazard to the municipal sidewalk access. Removal costs are transferred directly to respective property owners, but no administrative soft cost recovery is included in the program.

Sidewalk Patio and Merchant Displays

Piloted during the COVID pandemic the Town now has a policy in place that allows placement of a patio, bistro tables and merchant displays on the municipal sidewalk. This is administered by Town staff and available to all downtown businesses. The space is provided with no direct cost to the business. The business is required to maintain their space as to the approved guidelines and provide insurance with the Town listed as additional insured.

Beautification

Town staff have worked with the BIA to improve downtown beautification, using large planter urns and hanging baskets. Analysis has showed that annual planting, maintenance, and watering costs approaching $120,000/year. To reduce expenses, Council supported keeping urns and baskets downtown but planned to switch most annual beds to perennials. Annual beds downtown and in places of remembrance remain as do the sidewalk planters.

Each year, the BIA contributes $4,500 to the Town for beautification efforts. After discussing rising costs, the BIA decided to discontinue hanging baskets ($25,000 yearly) and expand the banner program in future years instead, with Public Works handling updates in line with the reduced budget. Town staff will collaborate with the BIA on banner design for the expanded program in 2026.

Winter lights

The Town partnered with the BIA to provide seasonal lighting on Queen St. between Church St. and Water St. The BIA commissioned larger, custom-built shooting star seasonal lights. These displays require installation and removal efforts approximately four times greater than smaller catalog options, which use a quick-connect latch system at a lower height. Due to the increased height and complexity, the Town hires a local contractor to install 12 shooting star displays, with installation and removal typically costing the Town around $2,500. In addition, Public Works has delayed removal of the urns downtown to allow the BIA to enhance the season with decorations for their Merchant Open House. Public Works empties the urns from the summer season and the BIA then adds their décor.

Waste Removals:

The Town provides a high level of waste removal, twice weekly from the convenience containers located on every corner throughout the downtown. This is to discourage litter throughout the core and to keep waste receptacles from overflowing.

REPORT & ANALYSIS

Staff, in partnership with the BIA, engaged landscape architects GSP to develop several conceptual plans and set long-term beautification goals. The **Downtown Beautification Plan** that has been accepted by the BIA is attached to this report and will be further explained to Council as Council deliberates Capital Project #44.

Implementing all elements of the accepted design concept would be very costly for one budget year. To smooth out the cost of the accepted plan, staff created a multi-year plan (see attached). The total ten-year implementation cost is projected at $241,600.

The plan’s elements are independent and can be implemented separately, with some sections spread over multiple years to manage budget impacts. The BIA has been keen to utilize self-watering urns to enhance overall sustainability of our efforts, so these are included in the multi-year plan to phase out the regular urns currently used for annuals.

The proposed 2026 capital budget includes initial funding for a long-term downtown beautification plan. While recent work has focused on infrastructure upgrades, the Town has also made targeted improvements to support downtown businesses. Staff recommend that Council consider these efforts when reviewing future funding requests to ensure fairness for ratepayers.

From an operating perspective, staff are planning to make changes to the downtown urns and the flower boxes for the Victoria Bridge. Staff have received comments about the late establishment of urn planters and Victoria bridge boxes from both members of the BIA and the community. Typically, they are planted in late May and do not fully establish until late July. To address this, staff are consulting with a local vendor to greenhouse start the planters earlier in the season for a more established appearance from the onset. Self-watering urns with internal water bladders have been added to the proposed plan to reduce watering needs by 50%, lowering overall costs.

CONCLUSION

Designing walkable streetscapes and public spaces in the downtown core is considered important for supporting commercial activity. By focusing on pedestrian-friendly features and areas for gathering, the Town aims to improve the appearance of Queen St. and nearby locations while promoting foot traffic that can benefit local businesses. Streetscapes with accessible walkways, landscaping, and seating are intended to create an environment where residents and visitors may spend more time and engage with businesses. Although space constraints exist, planning and creative approaches can help enhance the function and appeal of the public realm, potentially leading to increased economic and social activity in the downtown area.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff have created a long-term plan to stabilize annual capital funding requests (see Attachment 2 – Beautification 10-Year Forecast). The total ten-year implementation cost is projected at $241,600. The proposed works will be included in the annual capital budget review for Council consideration.

The plan covers life cycle replacements and service upgrades; all coordinated with current programs to maintain essential services. If new funding arises, shovel-ready projects may be expedited.

Council will note that in the budget binder the original 2026 budget estimate for Capital Project #44 was $27,500 ($23,000 from the general reserve, $4,500 from the BIA).

However, at the October 6, 2025 BIA meeting the Board made a decision that will increase the scope of the 2026 planned project while also reducing the Tonw's capital reserve contribution. The Board agreed to contribute $15,000 from their reserves for 2026 for the purchase of self-watering planters. This contribution is in addition to their annual $4,500 beautification budgeted contribution.

Given the change in the scope of the 2026 downtown beautification works, the amended total cost is now projected at $36,000. Town funding from the general reserve is now budgeted at $16,500.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The recommendation in this report is supported by:

- The Tourism Marketing Strategy – Investing in infrastructure improvements, such as future accommodation options and downtown enhancement projects.

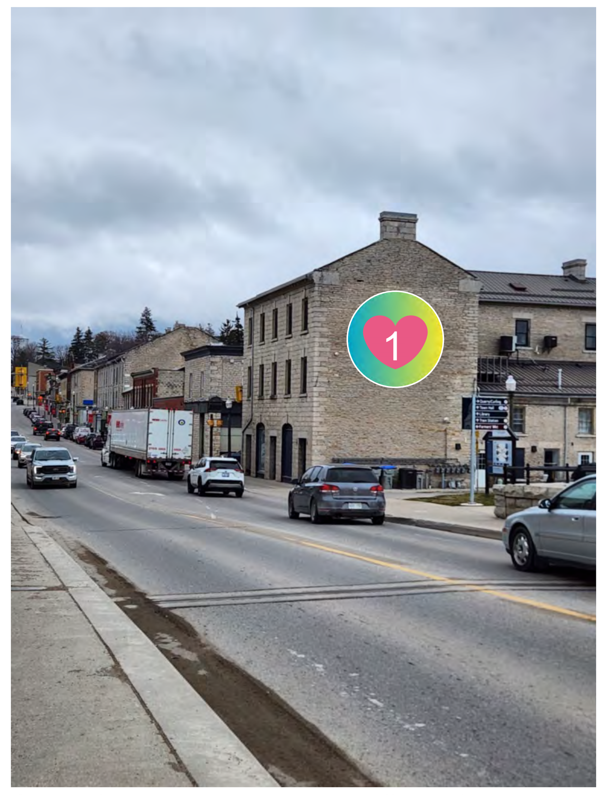
OTHERS CONSULTED

Jed Kelly – Public Works

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment #1 – St. Marys Downtown Beautification Concepts

Attachment #2 – Downtown Beautification 10-year Forecast

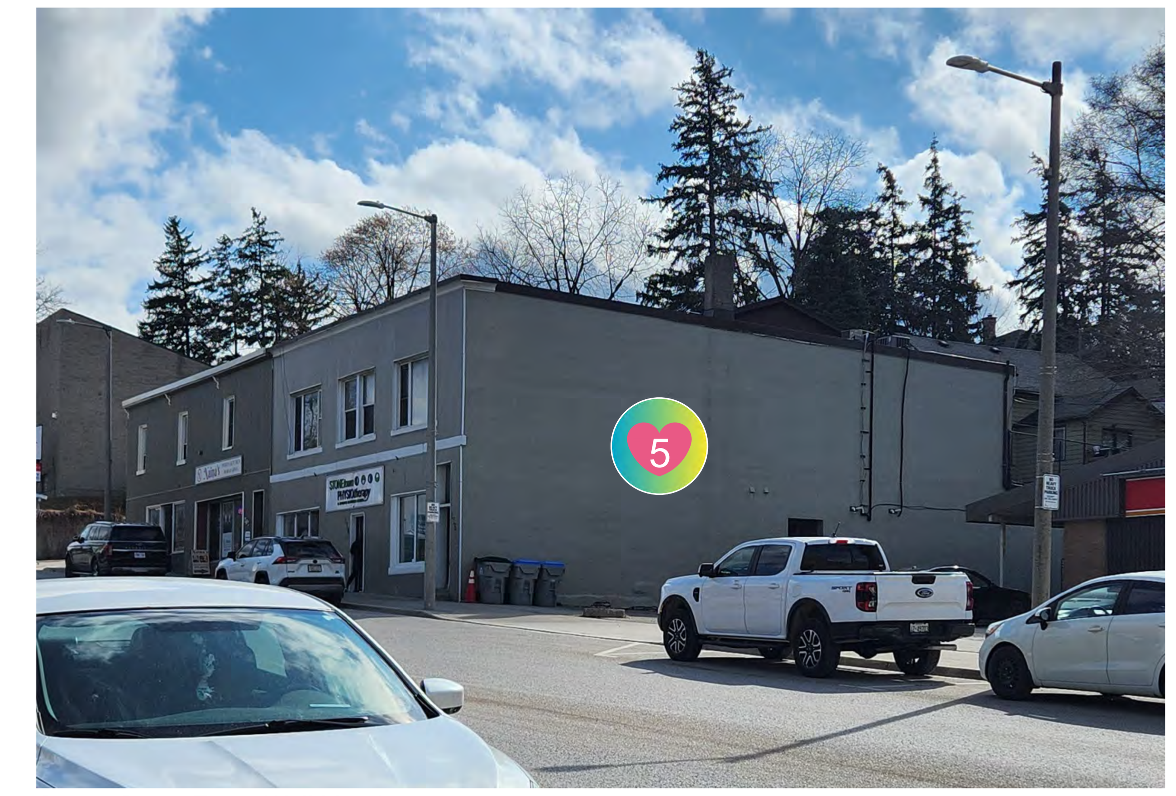


Queen Street East Entrance - Wall Mural

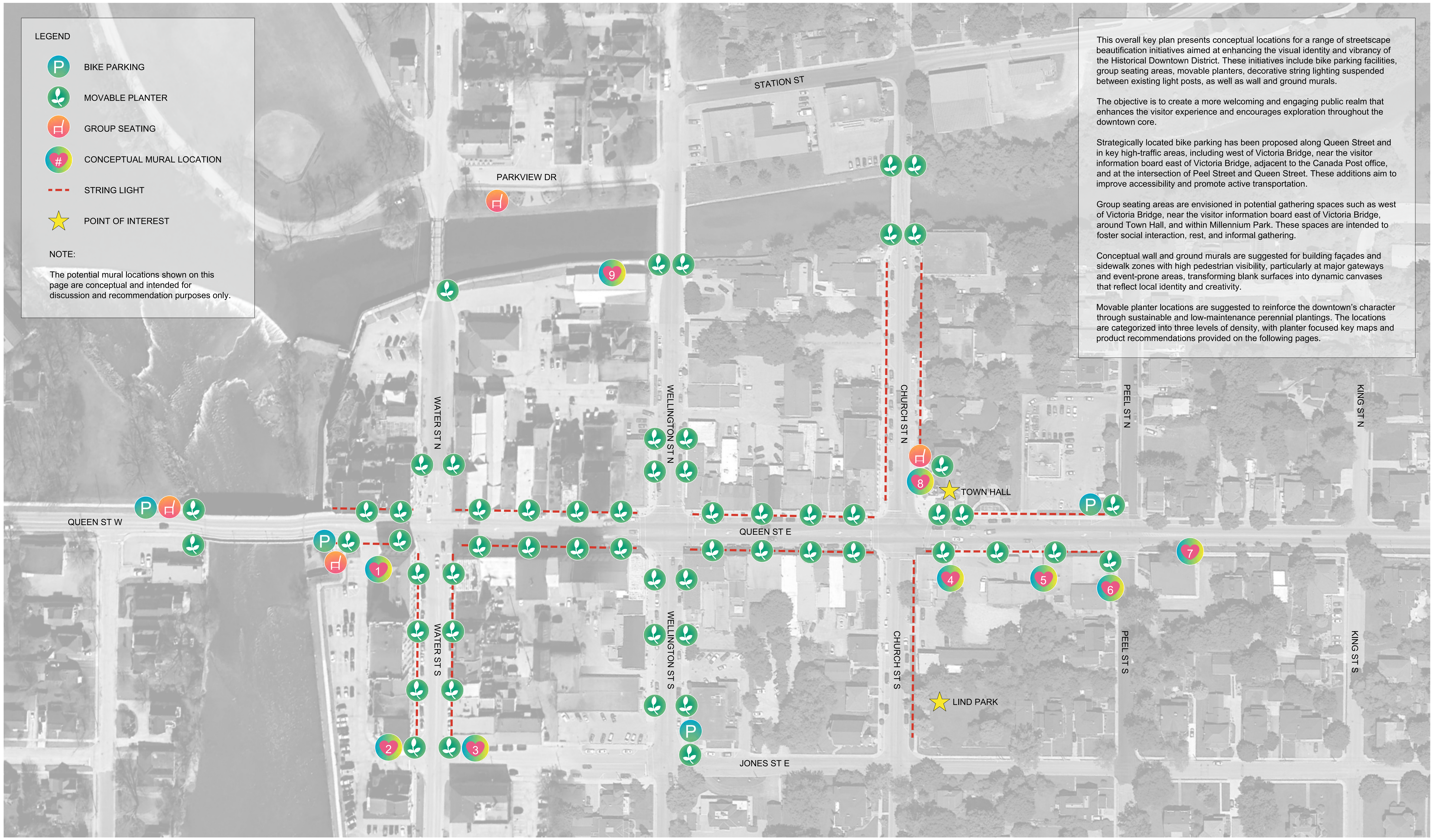
Water Street South Entrance - Wall Mural

Water Street South Entrance - Wall Mural

Queen Street East Entrance - Wall Mural



Queen Street East - Wall Mural



This overall key plan presents conceptual locations for a range of streetscape beautification initiatives aimed at enhancing the visual identity and vibrancy of the Historical Downtown District. These initiatives include bike parking facilities, group seating areas, movable planters, decorative string lighting suspended between existing light posts, as well as wall and ground murals.

The objective is to create a more welcoming and engaging public realm that enhances the visitor experience and encourages exploration throughout the downtown core.

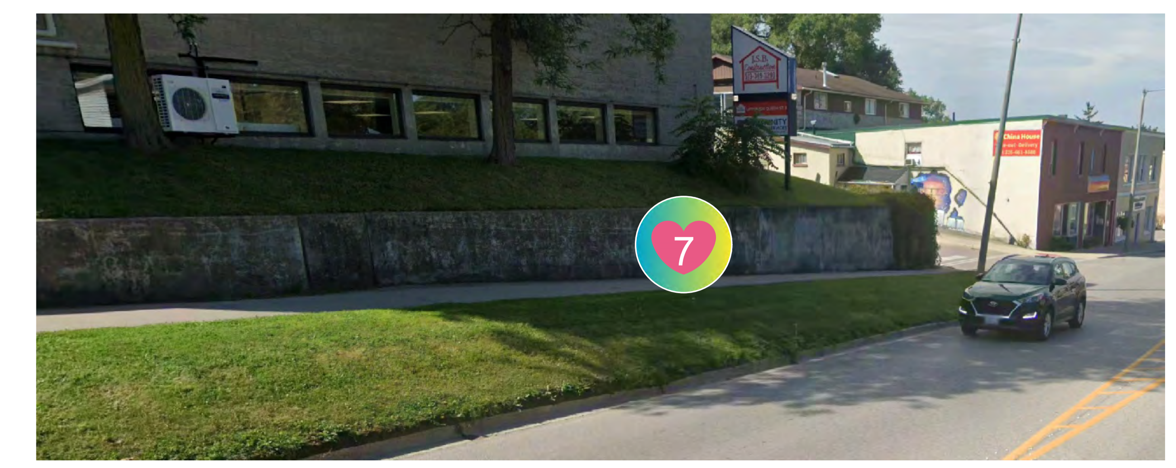
Strategically located bike parking has been proposed along Queen Street and in key high-traffic areas, including west of Victoria Bridge, near the visitor information board east of Victoria Bridge, adjacent to the Canada Post office, and at the intersection of Peel Street and Queen Street. These additions aim to improve accessibility and promote active transportation.

Group seating areas are envisioned in potential gathering spaces such as west of Victoria Bridge, near the visitor information board east of Victoria Bridge, around Town Hall, and within Millennium Park. These spaces are intended to foster social interaction, rest, and informal gathering.

Conceptual wall and ground murals are suggested for building façades and sidewalk zones with high pedestrian visibility, particularly at major gateways and event-prone areas, transforming blank surfaces into dynamic canvases that reflect local identity and creativity.

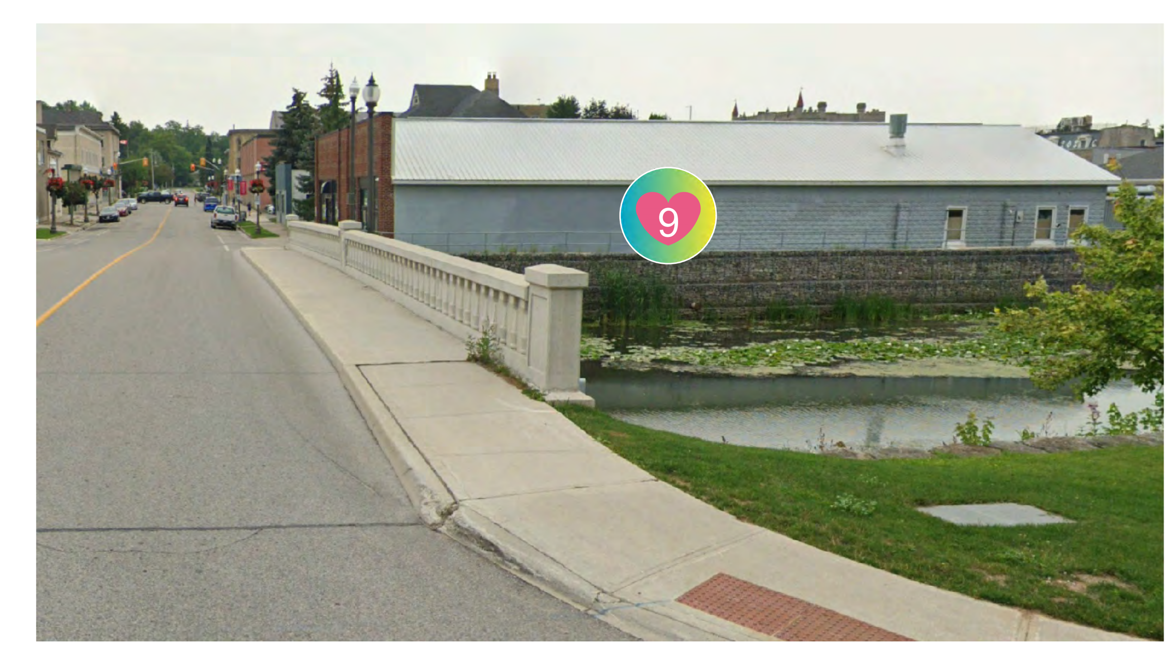
Movable planter locations are suggested to reinforce the downtown's character through sustainable and low-maintenance perennial plantings. The locations are categorized into three levels of density, with planter focused key maps and product recommendations provided on the following pages.

Queen Street East Entrance - Wall Mural



Queen Street East Entrance - Wall Mural

Town Hall Future Gathering Place - Ground Mural



Wellington Street North Entrance - Wall Mural

Overall Key Plan

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St. Marys, Ontario

Project

North Arrow

15 0 10 20 40 1:1,000m

Scale: As Shown

Date	Description	By
2025.07.21	Issued for Final Draft	RH
2025.05.21	Issued for Client Review	RH
2025.05.02	Issued for Client Review	RH

Issued

GSP group

Planter Concept - Enhanced

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St, Marys, Ontario

Project

North Arrow

10 5 0 10 20 30 1:750m

Scale: As Shown

Date	Description	By
2025.07.21	Issued for Final Draft	RH
2025.05.21	Issued for Client Review	RH
2025.05.02	Issued for Client Review	RH

Issued

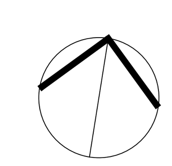
GSP group

Planter Concept - Moderate

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St, Marys, Ontario

Project



North Arrow

Scale: As Shown

Date	Description	By
2025.07.21	Issued for Final Draft	RH
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Issued

GSP group

Date	Description	By
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2025.05.02	Issued for Client Review	RH

Issued

North Arrow

10 5 0 10 20 30 1:750m

Scale: As Shown

Planter Concept - Minimal

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St. Marys, Ontario

Project

GSP group

PLANTER LOCATIONS

- Bridge entrances
- Block corners
- Heritage District entrances
- Other locations of interest:
    - Extra furnishing spaces along sidewalk
    - Group seating areas
    - Bike parking areas
    - Information board/kiosk spots
- Optional self-watering linear planter along bridges

PLANTERS ON BRIDGES

Suppliers such as Planter Unlimited and Green Theory offer various sizes of water reservoirs that can be retrofitted into window boxes, making them compatible with the Town's existing box planters on the bridges.

Supplier: Planter Unlimited

Window box planters come with various lengthes.
In-house water reservoirs available.

https://www.plantersunlimited.com/planters/by-shape/window-boxes/

Modern Fiberglass Window Box

Black Laguna Fiberglass Window Box

PLANTERS WITH SELF-WATERING ACCESSORIES

Supplier: Planter Unlimited

Fiberglass planters come with various forms, sizes and colours. In-house water reservoirs available.

https://www.plantersunlimited.com/all-collections/
https://www.plantersunlimited.com/reservoirs/

Seville Large Fiberglass Terracotta Planter

Rocca Fiberglass Round Planter

Banded Round GFRC Planter

Supplier: Earth Planter

Polyethylene planters come with built-in water reservoirs. Currently used in the Town of Goderich. Ontario sale representative is Classic Displays from Mississauga.

https://earthplanter.com/product-category/commercial-models/

Preferred Option: Urban Vase 41

- Dimensions: 41" Top Outside Dia. x 36" H
- Bottom Dia.: 26"
- Planting Tray Depth: 19"
- Water Capacity: 40 Gallons
- Soil Capacity: 7.2 Cubic Feet

Urban Vase Collections
Planter heights: 36", 25 ¾" or 18"

Rolled Rim Collections
Planter heights: 28", 24" or 20"

Urban Rectangle
Planter heights: 24"

Supplier: Green Theory (Vancouver)

Fully customizable Aluminum products with various sizes and colours. In-house water reservoirs available. Ontario sale representative is ParkStreet Solutions.

https://greentheory.com/collections/metal-collection/
https://greentheory.com/categories/accessories/

Tapered Cylinder

Cylinder

Tapered

Date	Description	By
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2025.05.21	Issued for Client Review	RH
2025.05.02	Issued for Client Review	RH

GSP group

Planters

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St, Marys, Ontario

Project

Scale: As Shown

Issued

TREE PLANTERS WITH SELF-WATERING ACCESSORIES

Tree Planter Supplier: Desert Planters

Polyethylene tree planters come with built-in water reservoirs.

https://www.desertplanters.com/

Option 1 - Medium Size

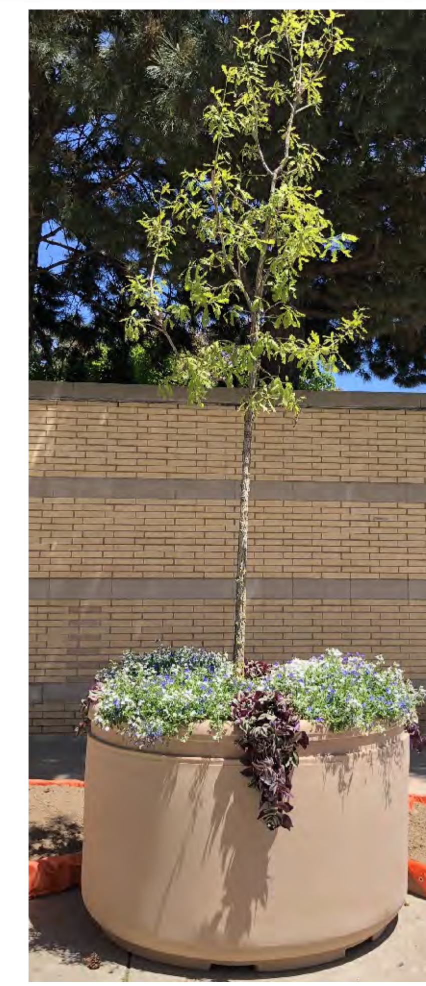
Product:	Horizon 43
Size:	43" dia. top x 42" H
Water Capacity:	28.4 Gallons
Soil Capacity:	0.643 cubic yards

Option 2 - Medium Size

Product:	Terrace 42
Size:	42” dia. top x 42” H
Water Capacity:	58.5 Gallons
Soil Capacity:	0.483 cubic yards

Option 3 - Large Size

Product:	Windsor
Size:	60” dia. top x 40” H
Water Capacity:	250 Gallons
Soil Capacity:	1.58 cubic yards



Tree Planters

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St, Marys, Ontario

Project

Scale: As Shown

Date	Description	By
2025.07.21	Issued for Final Draft	RH
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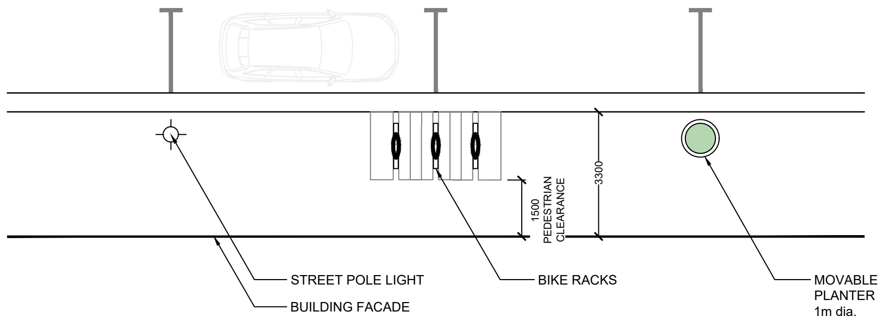
Issued

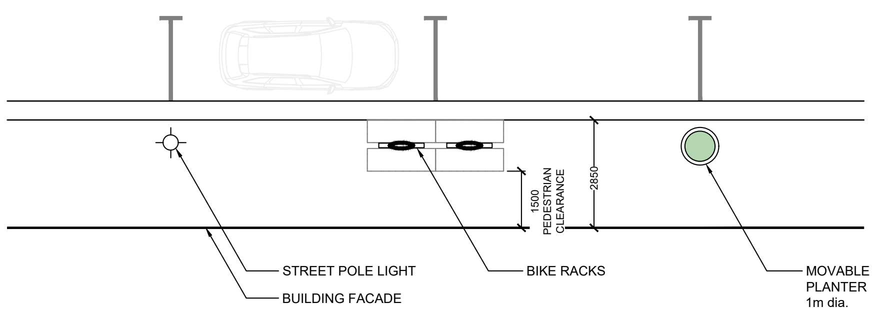
GSP group

LOCATION OPTIONS

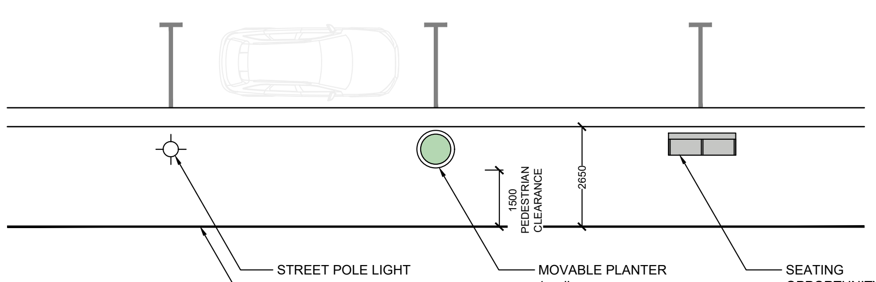
The conceptual furnishing arrangement options are based on dimensions along Queen Street, providing a measurable reference for the Town and BIA to implement according to specific street conditions.



Sidewalk Width Equal or Greater Than 3.3m



Sidewalk Width Between 2.85m to 3.3m



Sidewalk Width Less Than 2.85m

BIKE RACK

Bike Bike Rack by Dero

Custom Logo Rack by Dero

Bikeshaped by Paris Site Furnishings (Ontario)

Custom Halo Rack by Hauser Site Furniture (Ontario)

WASTE RECEPTACLE

Sage Side Door Receptacle by Victor Stanley
Steel, 36 gal

600 Trash Container by Maglin
Steel, 32 gal

TWO-SEATER GAME TABLE

Dice Series Table by Ed's Concrete (Ontario)
Different patterns and game surfaces available on request, which are classed and coated with lithichrome paint.

Bistro Picnic Table by Paris Site Furnishings
Optional game table pattern available.

SEAT WITH PLANTER

Kingston Backed Planter Stool by Green Theory
Comes in a range colours and great for tight locations. Can be placed back to back. Opportunity to provide pops of colour and a sense of fun throughout the downtown.

SEATING

870 Backed Bench by Maglin

870 Backless Bench by Maglin

Valencia Backed Bench by Hauser
Option with centre arm. Backless model not available.

WALL MURALS

Wall murals on suitable building facades at key entrances and feature locations within the Heritage District are recommended to enhance entry features and highlight points of interest, such as future pop-up marketplaces, group seating areas, and gathering spaces.

Wall murals can function as tools for marketing and branding, showcase community history and culture, and create photo (Instagram) moments for visitors.


By Stephanie Boutari


Downtown Goderich


CTV Mural on Queen Street, Toronto


By Stephanie Scott

Murals provide opportunities to engage local and regional artists in community placemaking efforts. The precedent projects featured here were created by artists from Ontario, including Stephanie Boutari, Stephanie Scott, Jon Johnson (BRFC Design), Bareket Kezwer and Liz Emirzian.

By Stephanie Scott

By Jon Johnson (BRFC Design)


'Heart of Our Community' at Stratford by Bareket Kezwer and Liz Emirzian

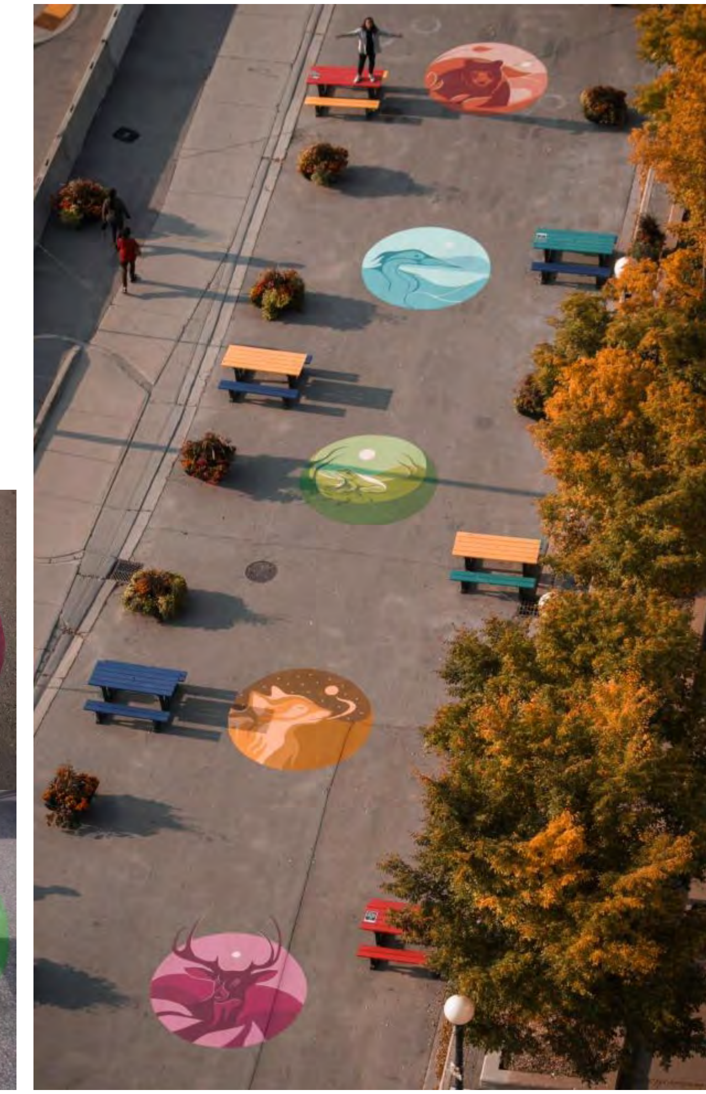
GROUND MURALS

Murals on sidewalks and laneways bring instant vibrancy and character to the streetscape. Similar to wall murals, they serve as an effective tool for community placemaking, local artist engagements, as well as visitor interactions and games.

When applied with appropriate paint materials, these designs can be long-lasting and require minimal maintenance.

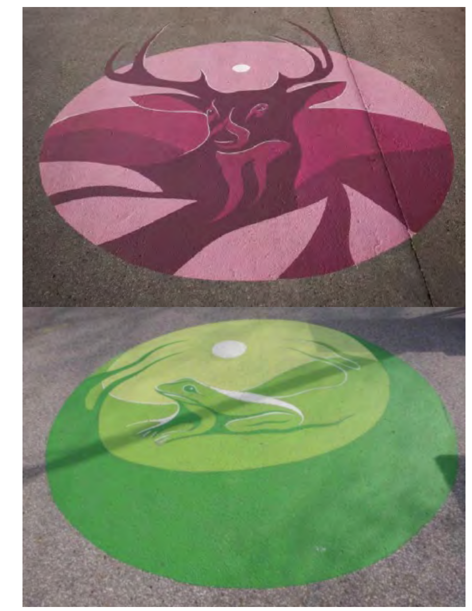
Yonge Street, Midtown Toronto by Morgan Groombridge

Yonge Street, Midtown Toronto by Hemangi



Yonge Street, Midtown Toronto by Shawn Howe

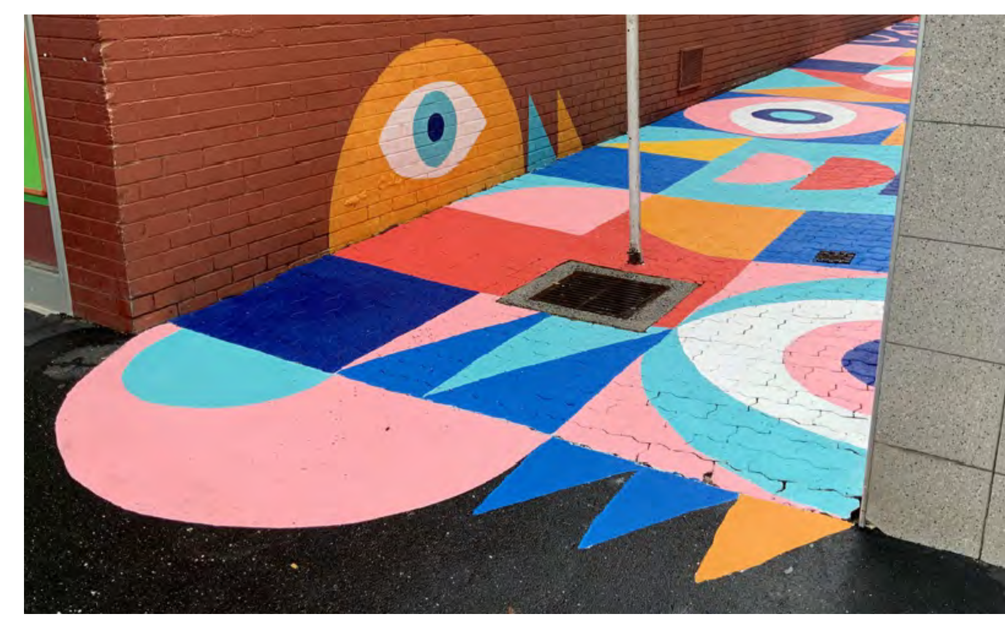
Waterloo Park



Gaukel St by Luke Swinson

Cooksville Downtown Core

Yonge Street, Midtown Toronto by Andrea Rodriguez



Melbourne

STREET BANNERS

A number of municipalities have initiated collaboration programs with local artists, both amateur and professional, to produce rotating banner designs featuring specific annual themes. Precedents shown on this page include designs for Pride celebrations, veterans' memorials, winter holidays, and general displays with community collaborations.

WINTER HOLIDAY

City of Kelowna

City of Kenora
The campaign invites youth artists to design banners that reflect their favourite winter activity and what winter in Kenora means to them.

PRIDE CELEBRATION

City of Waterloo
Pride celebration banner collaboration with local student .

City of Burlington

Town of Ladysmith

GENERAL DISPLAY

City of Richmond
The annual banner contest encourages all community members to submit artworks or photographs inspired by the city and related to specific themes such as Art, Culture and Heritage, The Arts, Active Living, Community, and more.

Richmond, Virginia
This banner design highlights everything happening in the city through a creative A-to-Z approach, featuring examples like 'A' for architecture, 'I' for ice cream, and 'K' for kayaking. Opportunity to highlight destinations, people, places, history, events, activities around and within St Marys.

VETERAN MEMORIAL

Royal Canadian Legion

City of Niagara Falls

Town of Esquimalt

Banners

Title

St. Marys Downtown Beautification
St, Marys, Ontario

Project

Scale: As Shown

Date	Description	By
2025.07.21	Issued for Final Draft	RH
2025.05.21	Issued for Client Review	RH
2025.05.02	Issued for Client Review	RH

Issued

GSP group

PERENNIAL PLANT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following lists of recommended native and non-native plant species is suitable for planters, with a focus on low-maintenance and drought-tolerant varieties.

NATIVE PERENNIAL PLANTS

Botanical Name	Common Name	Drought Tolerant	Sun/Shade	Notes
Ornamental Grasses				
Carex pensylvanica	Pennsylvania Sedge	Moderate	Part Shade to Full Shade	Good for part shade; soft look.
Panicum virgatum	Switchgrass	X	Full Sun	Tall, upright grass; salt-tolerant. Use varieties with shorter heights due to sightlines.
Schizachyrium scoparium	Little Bluestem	X	Full Sun	Great fall color; compact. Use varieties with shorter heights due to sightlines.
Perennials				
Agastache foeniculum	Anise Hyssop	X	Full Sun	Smells amazing; attracts bees.
Aquilegia canadensis	Wild Columbine	Moderate	Part Shade to Full Shade	Early blooms; red/yellow flowers.
Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Milkweed	X	Full Sun	Stunning orange flowers.
Coreopsis lanceolata	Lanceleaf Coreopsis	X	Full Sun	Early summer blooms; low care.
Echinacea purpurea	Purple Coneflower	X	Full Sun	Pollinator favorite.
Geum triflorum	Prairie Smoke	X	Full Sun	Early pink blooms, beautiful fluffy seed heads.
Liatris spicata	Blazing Star	X	Full Sun	Tall purple spikes, pollinator favorite.
Monarda punctata	Spotted Bee Balm	X	Full Sun	Whorled pink/purple blooms, very heat-tolerant.
Penstemon hirsutus	Hairy Beardtongue	X	Full Sun to Part Shade	Low clump, purple blooms.
Rudbeckia hirta	Black-eyed Susan	X	Full Sun	Long bloom, cheerful yellow.
Symphyotrichum Aster novae-angliae	New England Aster	Moderate	Full Sun to Part Shade	Fall bloomer, rich purple flowers. Use varieties with shorter heights due to sightlines.
Symphyotrichum Aster oblongifolium	Aromatic Aster	X	Full Sun	Late fall flowers, aromatic leaves.
Zizia aurea	Golden Alexanders	Moderate	Full Sun to Part Shade	Early bright yellow umbels, adaptable.

NON-NATIVE PERENNIAL PLANTS

Botanical Name	Common Name	Drought Tolerant	Sun/Shade	Notes
Ornamental Grasses				
Hakonechloa macra	Japanese Forest Grass		Part Shade to Shade	Elegant cascading texture, slow growing. Needs moist soil — not ideal for dry streetscape unless irrigated.
Molinia caerulea	Moor Grass	Moderate	Full Sun to Part Shade	Graceful form, tolerates average soil. Needs consistent moisture when young.
Perennials				
Coreopsis verticillata	Threadleaf Coreopsis	X	Full Sun	Fine foliage, yellow flowers, dry soil lover.
Gaillardia spp.	Blanket Flower	X	Full Sun	Colorful, long-blooming, short-lived perennial. Great for sunny, dry planters.
Hemerocallis spp.	Daylily	Moderate	Full Sun to Part Shade	Very low maintenance, durable, many colors. Spreads slowly by clump.
Heuchera spp.	Coral Bells	X	Part Shade to Full Shade	Great foliage color, airy blooms, tidy in planters.
Hosta spp.	Hosta		Shade to Part Shade	Bold leaves, low maintenance in moist shade. Needs regular water in heat.
Iberis sempervirens	Evergreen Candytuft	X	Full Sun to Part Shade	Low growing, white spring flowers, evergreen leaves.
Nepeta x faassenii	Catmint	X	Full Sun	Grey-green foliage, purple flowers, blooms for months.
Penstemon digitalis 'Husker Red'	Beardtongue	X	Full Sun	Burgundy leaves, white flowers.
Perovskia atriplicifolia	Russian Sage	X	Full Sun	Airy tall lavender flowers, super drought hardy.
Salvia nemorosa	Woodland Sage	X	Full Sun	Spiky purple flowers, long bloom season, resilient.
Sedum 'Autumn Joy'	Autumn Stonecrop	X	Full Sun	Succulent leaves, pink to copper blooms, very tough.

Downtown Beautification Program - 10 Year Forecast

Item #	COSTS	Description / Justification (if necessary)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
1	*Downtown seasonal garbage receptical replacement Program (Qty 4 per Year) (Commercial District)*	*The current downtown garbage receptacles are outdated and cause confusion by displaying separate sections for recycling and garbage, despite only accomodating a single garbage bag inside. This design does not support actual recycling and contributes to public misunderstanding. The receptacles at the Cenotaph are standard park bins, which do not align with the desired heritage aesthetic for the district.*	*$11,500*		*$11,500*	*$6,000*					
2	*Downtown 6 Self Watering tree Planters (Qty 6 Per Year) (break down into separate lines / by location)*	*A pilot program that is being managed by staff to test a large scale tree in a planter for the downtown. The removal of trees to enhance the accessibility of the downtown has created the sentiment that there is no natural beauty or shade. Many other communities in Ontario have successfully grown a good size tree in a planter. This is something the Public Works team is going to try.*	*$7,000*					*$7,000*			*$7,000*
3	*Self Watering Urn / Planter Replacements (phased approach - Approximately 60 eventual roll out)*	*Replacing existing downtown planters with self-watering pots will reduce annual operating costs, improve sustainability, and enhance the downtown experience. This initiative supports the Town's long-term vision for a clean, attractive, and economically vibrant downtown. This initiative is supported with shared funding from the St. Marys BIA.*	*$15,000*			*$7,000*	*$10,000*	*$10,000*		*$10,000*	
4	*Seasonal Banner Replacements*	*The banners are a sustainable replacement to the former hanging baskets and add colour, art and interest to the downtown. They generally last for two-three seasons before needing a refresh and provide an opportunity to market the town to visitors. (Tourism budget will cover design in collaboration with the BIA for 2026, this budget covers printing and install).*	*$2,000*		*$2,000*		*$3,000*		*$3,000*		*$3,000*

5	*Millenium Park (Parkview Drive along the river) - Add seating, bistro style or picnic style with a shade cover*	*Adding seating to downtown boosts economic activity, attracts visitors to downtown, and supports local businesses. It makes public spaces more inclusive and accessible for everyone, aligns with our Beautification Plan, and responds directly to community and BIA feedback. We propose adding varying seating options, benches, lounge style chairs, bistro and picnic style seating and ensuring accessible options. This location has a view of the river and is close to parking and restaurants.*		*$5,500*			*$5,000*			*$6,000*	
6	*Lookout Chairs Townhall 'project' (pave front west grass portion of Town hall, garden remains with flowering perenials and replace lighting on grass)*	*Add the same accessory seating (2 chairs) to the front lawn at Town Hall in the square where the building sign is located. Keep the perennial garden to include greenery. This is an area often used for events at Town Hall.*				*$6,000*				*$3,000*	
7	*Concrete Pad Installation Seating Area - East Side Victoria Bridge at the site of the Town tourism sign and bike racks*	*This area includes a small patch of grass and uneven ground. The towns information sign is situated in this area as well as bike racks. The Riverview Walkway and views of the river. The intent it to proivde a small space that provides seating for visitors to downtown to enjoy a beverage, snack or their lunch.*		*$3,500*							
8	*Accessory Chairs East Side Victoria Bridge*	*The same chairs located at Town Hall this area is indicated in the GSP guide to include seating for enhancing a welcoming downtown with stunning views.*		*$2,200*							
9	*Fixed Table Seating - East Side of Victoria Bridge*	*As indicated on the GSP guide this is a prime location for a view of the river. We propose a bench or table style accessible seating in this area.*		*$5,000*							
10	*Accessory Chairs Townhall Parkette Area*	*Adding some casual chair style seating around town hall encourages community interaction and creates a welcoming atmosphere for relaxation, socialization and helps to make Town Hall a vibrant centre for downtown.*		*$2,200*							*$2,200*
11	*Café Style Accessible Seating Table - Victoria Bridge South - Fixed*	*As indicated on the GSP guide this is a prime location for a view of the falls. We propose a bench or table style accessible seating in this area.*			*$6,000*						*$6,000*
12	*Café Style Accessible Seating Table - Townhall and Library courtyard*	*The area between the Library and Townhall currently utilizes the Towns municipal picnic tables. This is also adjacent to the Cenotaph. Staff propose fixed café style table seating that is permanent and accessible.*			*$6,000*						

13	*Bike Rack enhancements / additions (Queen St E enhancements, Town Hall/Library, Lind Park, Post office)*	*Addition of removable Seasonal bike racks, avid cyclists preffer to remain close to bike parking and tend to not wander away from from light of sight. Strategically placing seasonal bike racks could increase cycling communiting in the downtown. This initiative can be done in collaboration with the high school if available. Will be explored.*		*$1,000*		*$5,000*		*$3,000*		*$5,000*	*$5,000*
14	*Town Hall - New garbage receptacles (3), 1 for Town Hall Square and 2 for cenotaph and Library courtyard*	*See above reasoning.*		*$6,500*							
15	*Add power to concrete tree box in Town Hall 'plaza' to improve lighting infrastructure*	*Requires removal of one concrete panel between planter box and townhall, eletrical power in plaza planter box would assist with seasonal lighting and pop up event information tent space*						*$5,000*			
16	*Town Hall - Lighting (replace existing spotlights with colour changing spotlights)*	*peform conduit work for signal wire, custom enclosures, concrete works, new lights*							*$30,000*		
18	*Bench style seating on the south east side of Victoria Bridge to create lookout to the falls - include hard surface.*	*Create concrete bumb out and new bench for scenic view seating*					*$7,500*				
	Yearly Total		*$35,500*	*$25,900*	*$25,500*	*$24,000*	*$25,500*	*$25,000*	*$33,000*	*$24,000*	*$23,200*
	FUNDING										
	BIA Reserve (Projected) - 2026 Confirmed 15K contribution to self-watering planters		*$15,000*								
	Existing Annual BIA Beautification Contribution with proposed increases		*$4,500*	*$5,500*	*$6,500*	*$6,500*	*$7,500*	*$8,000*	*$8,000*	*$10,000*	*$10,000*
	General Reserve		*$16,500*	*$21,000*	*$20,500*	*$20,000*	*$19,500*	*$18,000*	*$27,000*	*$15,000*	*$14,000*
	TOTAL		*$36,000*	*$26,500*	*$27,000*	*$26,500*	*$27,000*	*$26,000*	*$35,000*	*$25,000*	*$24,000*

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council
Prepared by:	Brent Kittmer, Chief Administrative Officer
Date of Meeting:	21 October 2025

TITLE

ADMIN 48-2025 Supplemental Information Regarding Staffing Changes Included in the 2026 Budget

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The staff proposed 2026 Budget includes changes that relate to staffing levels. As in previous years, this report is presented to further explain the rationale of these changes. This ensures that Council has sufficient information while deliberating these changes in the respective departmental operating budgets.

Council is not being asked to deliberate or approve/deny the staffing changes through this report. It is the CAOs expectation that those discussions will take place as the Director's provide their operating budget overviews.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT ADMIN 48-2025 Supplemental Information Regarding Staffing Changes Included in the 2026 Budget report be received for information.

REPORT & ANALYSIS

During each budget year, Council typically requests a detailed explanation of any staffing related charges or costs increases that are planned for in the budget. For almost all departments, staffing costs will increase in 2026 compared to 2025. This is a result of qualifying staff receiving a "step increase" for successful performance, and a result of applying a 1.92% cost of living adjustment to the wage grid across the corporation.

This report has been developed to provide Council with a more detailed explanation of the staffing changes and costs increases that are included in the staff proposed 2026 operating budget that are not related to wage grid increases.

Administration

Corporate Service Re-Organization (Approved)

In 2020, the Town hired KPMG to complete an organizational review. One of the key questions asked in the review was "Does the Town have too many staff"? Through the review, KPMG's reply was:

- The Town has a high service level for its size, more akin to a municipality with a population of 10,000 - 15,000.
- No, the Town does not have too many staff. The Town has just enough staff to deliver this high service level but is lacking back of house support staff as compared to its peers.
- The lack of back of house support has created concerning exposures in Finance, Clerks, and IT.

The exposures flagged by KPMG represented unacceptable risk to the Town, and through the KPMG review it became clear that the Town would need to staff up to close observed gaps. During the course of the KPMG review, Council and the CAO made the decision to reallocate the staffing budget of a vacant Director position (approximately $120,000) to close some of the exposures flagged by KPMG.

The current construct of the Corporate Services Department was created through the KPMG process and has been in place since the fall of 2020. The Town's Director of Corporate Services left the organization on August 20, 2025. When a position becomes vacant, particularly a senior management position, it is customary to review how it fits into the organization before moving forward. Through that review, the CAO learned that the breadth of the Corporate Services portfolio limits the Director's ability to be strategic in any one area of the portfolio, mostly being reactive to the issue of the day.

To move forward, the CAO has developed the following options:

1. **Status Quo**: Maintain the current structure with no budgetary impact but keeping the current strategic and operational issues related to one Director being responsible for the wide breadth of the portfolio.
2. **Create Director of Finance Position**: Reallocate responsibilities to focus on strategic financial areas, with cost savings but risking creating potential capacity issues in other departments and risking a lack of strategic alignment for culture, tourism, economic development and communications.
3. **Revert to Pre-2020 Structure**: Create separate Director positions for Finance and Culture, Tourism, and Economic Development, improving organizational capacity, strategic alignment and employee morale but increasing the budget by $66,174 for 2026.

On September 16, Council provided the CAO with direction to proceed with Option #3 above, and the Town is now in the process of recruiting for both open positions. To smooth out the 2026 budget impact of the changes, a reserve transfer of $35,000 will be brought in from the Tax Stabilization reserve. This amount is approximately equal to the staff gapping that has accrued in the Corporate Services Department due to turnovers in 2026.

Building, Development and Facilities

Part-Time Custodian (Seeking Approval)

With the recent renovations at Town Hall, the moving of Service Ontario to the Municipal Operations Center, and the moving of Adult Learning into the Library has created more patron and staff traffic throughout the buildings. The current workload of cleaning the facilities has not allowed the staff to attend to weekly and monthly cleaning duties.

The Facilities Department is requesting budget approval to hire a part-time custodian to support custodial staff within the Facilities Department. The custodian would be a 12-month duration and have a budget impact of $22,086, This hire would support facility cleaning of the Library for 3 hours a day Monday to Friday. The Library was chosen due to the amount of cleaning and the ability to perform the full 3 hours at one site. This would allow the existing full-time custodian to incorporate cleaning the Water Treatment Plant 2 hours a week, Landfill office building 1 hour a week, the Cemetery office building 1 hour a week and complete the current weekly and monthly cleaning tasks for all facilities.

The part-time custodian would also be used to cover the full-time custodian holidays. Allowing the Custodian Lead to continue performing their general maintenance duties instead of being moved to the cleaning role. Finally, a part-time position would be a cost-effective way to start succession planning by creating an opportunity to evaluate potential future hires if and when new buildings are added to the cleaning regime.

This request has not been approved by Council and will require a resolution from Council to add it to the budget when deliberating the Building, Development and Facilities operating budget.

Seasonal Custodians (CAO Approved)

The Facilities Department requested budget approval to increase the hours of the Seasonal Custodians to support the increase demands at the Quarry. Seasonal Custodians historically have been scheduled for 8-hour shifts starting in the middle of April and ending the end of October. The Facilities Department are proposing to change shifts to 10 hours starting the end of June and ending the start of September. This change to 10 hour shifts will allow the Seasonal Custodians to remove garbage from the grass seating area at the Quarry and clean the bathrooms at Teddy's Field without reducing service to any other parks. The additional work hours will increase staff time by 144 hours over the season and have a budget impact of $4,224. This past season, due to the increase in patrons at the Quarry and the clearing of zebra mussels in the water, the lifeguards could not keep up with the workload. These additional hours to the custodial staff will allow the Lifeguards to concentrate on the waterfront and the Facilities staff will look after the garbage and facility cleaning.

This funding for this staffing change has been included in staff's draft operating budget as presented.

Community Services

PRC Custodial Services (CAO Approved)

Within the staff proposed 2026 budget, the Community Services department is reallocating staffing budget to custodial services dedicated to the Aquatics Centre. This step is being taken to ensure that the newly renovated and reopened Aquatics Centres remains in like new condition.

Presently, the PRC full-time custodian dedicates two hours each weekday to maintaining the Aquatics Centre, focusing on tasks such as cleaning the three change rooms, disinfecting the pool deck, vacuuming, descaling showers, monitoring water chemistry, and performing light repairs. Part-time staff handle general cleanup after evening pool programs. Proper cleaning requires about 45 minutes per change room and 30 minutes for the pool deck and lobby. Under the current staffing allocation, on busy nights and weekends, both full-time and part-time staff work together to tidy change rooms and address other facility needs, but maintaining high standards is difficult during peak events or when staff are pulled away for other duties

While the current hours allocated to the Aquatics Centre cover daily upkeep, additional part-time hours are needed to maintain "like-new" conditions. Under this approach, part-time staff will handle routine cleaning, while the full-time custodian will perform more intensive deep cleaning, maintenance, and other specialized task.

Within the staff proposed 2026 budget, the part-time hours for cleaning the Aquatics Centre have been increased by 2.25 hours per pool operating day. On average, the pool operates 325 days per year, and these additional part-time hours will have a budget impact forecasted at $14,430.

These additional hours will be offset by staff savings in other areas of the Community Services budget. A restructuring of the Youth and Child Recreation Leader from a full-time role to a part-time role was completed mid-year in 2025. This has produced a staff savings of $15,000 within the recreation department.

This staffing change is presented for Council's information. The change is within the delegated authority of the CAO and has been approved as there is no net budget increase.

Senior Services Re-Organization (2025 Approved)

St. Marys residents over 65 years old represent the largest age group in the community, followed closely by the individuals aged 55 to 64. The Senior Services department actively serves many of these individuals through in-person programs and in-home services daily. Over the past few years, the department has seen a dramatic increase in demand for programs and services, compounded by an increase in more complex and emergent service delivery.

Since 2024, staff have evaluated the needs of the department and what changes may be necessary to meet the needs of the department under growing service demands from the public. During the 2025 budget presentation, staff proposed changes to staffing within Senior Services to meet the growing demand. These changes were approved by Council and budgeted for in 2025, however an internal decision was made to wait until the Recreation, Culture and Leisure Master Plan was completed in the event the RCLMP made recommendations that conflicted with staff's planned changes.

The Recreation, Culture and Leisure Master Plan identified the following recommendation which support the staff's recommendations in this report.

> ***Recommendation 47*** *– Undertake a review of roles, responsibilities, and requirements within the Community Services Department to ensure that the staff team is positioned to respond to a growing and aging population and demand for enhanced service delivery, particularly in the areas for children, youth, and older adults. This may require shifting responsibilities, additional staff, new or enhanced partnerships, and other strategies to meet community needs. Staffing needs for other departments that support recreation, culture and leisure in St. Marys will also need to be considered.*
>
> ***Recommendation 57*** *– Examine the merit of creating a Volunteer Coordinator position for the Community Services Department (or elsewhere within the corporation to play a multi-departmental role) to ensure that the appropriate resources are available to support local community volunteerism. With the support of other staff, potential responsibilities may include (but not be limited to), developing a volunteer strategy, using the Town's network to promote volunteer opportunities, providing volunteer training, hosting volunteer events (e.g., volunteer fair, recognition, etc.) and creating a volunteer database.*

These recommendations propose changes that will support the needs of the Corporation while simultaneously supporting pressure points within the Senior Services department and being fiscally responsible and mindful of the current employees' interests and needs.

As staff explored options it became apparent that three roles could be modified to meet both needs while ensuring a smooth operation. This means that no additional FTE would be required, however there would need to be a change in responsibilities with this realignment. A summary of the changes includes:

> **Program Assistant role modifications:** To address workload imbalances, the current Program Assistant positions will be modified. The full-time role will be expanding to include volunteer coordination responsibilities, and a title change to Volunteer/Program Assistant. The part-time role will become more focused on administrative support.
>
> **Manager role focus shift:** Volunteer management duties will shift from the Senior Services Manager to the new Volunteer/Program Assistant role, allowing the Manager to concentrate on strategic planning, strengthening health sector partnerships, and community wellness program development.

The proposed changes to the Senior Services department will be cost-neutral. Any increased costs will be offset by increased ministry funding and increased revenue in the department.

Public Works

Engineering Summer Co-Op (Seeking Approval)

Public Works is requesting budget approval to hire a civil engineering co-op student to support infrastructure planning, asset management, and project delivery within the Public Works Department during the busy summer construction months of 2026. The placement would be a 4-month duration from May to August and would have a budget impact of $15,000. This hire would support several objectives, including enhancing capacity during busy construction season to improve customer service and project delivery, offset anticipated consulting fees related to data collection required for the Master

Servicing Study planned for 2026, and augment inspection requirements for both regulatory maintenance standards and internally managed project.

Finally, hiring a civil engineering co-op student is a strategic, cost-effective way to enhance capacity, support infrastructure planning, and invest in future talent. It aligns with both operational needs and long-term workforce development goals.

This request has not been approved by Council and will require a resolution from Council to add it to the budget when deliberating the Public Works operating budget.

Parks Department Internalization (Approved)

For approximately the last 25-years, the Town has used contracted services to complete significant portions of the parks service delivery, and, for approximately the past decade, the outsourced services were divided into three main service contracts:

> **Turf Management / Grass Cutting**: This contract consists of the Turf Management of finished grass areas in parks, cemetery, municipal facilities and passive use open spaces and also included sports field turf maintenance of ball fields and soccer fields. Combined with the turf the Town maintains, there are approximately 150.3 acres of grass being maintained each week across all Town properties.
>
> **Beautification**: The current beautification inventory in the Town includes 20 perennial flower beds located at entrance signs, municipal facilities, and various parks, as well as 5 annual beds placed at the Downtown Cenotaph, Cemetery, Peace Garden, and Centennial Park. Removable features consist of 16 bridge box planters on the Queen St. Victoria bridge and 32 large planter urns throughout the downtown area. This contract consisted of the seasonal opening and spring planting of various flower beds throughout the municipality. This contract also included the ongoing seasonal maintenance of the beds and the ordering and planting of annuals for bridge boxes and downtown planter urns.
>
> **Seasonal Watering**: This contract consisted of the seasonal watering of flower beds and downtown planter urns. This service was internalized in 2025.

For 2026, the Town was required to re-bid contract turf management services. Four turf maintenance bids were received, with the lowest bid at $286,402/year. This significantly exceeds the proposed $193,000 budget and represents a 68% increase over 2025 costs. Staff have concluded that the contracted model is likely no longer fiscally viable from a budget containment perspective.

To move this forward for 2026, staff have developed three options for consideration by Council:

> **Option 1: Accept the Low Bid** - Accepting the lowest turf maintenance bid ($286,402) would exceed the $193,000 budget by $98,443. This would require a significant increase in municipal taxes This option maintains service levels but significantly increases costs and exposes the Town to unpredictable contract renewals and escalating costs beyond CPI moving forward.
>
> **Option 2: Negotiate Reduced Scope** - Negotiating with the low bidder could align costs closer to budget, but would likely reduce service levels and increase unit rates per acre. While this may offer short-term budget relief, residents may be dissatisfied, and future contract renewals could still drive costs higher than CPI, limiting fiscal control.
>
> **Option 3: Internalize Services** - Internalizing turf and beautification services, with a $165,000 allocation for equipment from the fleet reserve, is projected to save $20,732 as compared to the 2025 model while stabilizing long term operational costs. This approach leverages existing staff resources for management, requires a moderate staffing increase, avoids contract cost cycles, and returns expenses closer to previous years. However, surge capacity may be limited, and initial capital investment is required.

Based on projected cost savings, stable service levels, and improved fiscal responsibility, Council has approved internalizing turf and beautification services, realigning staffing, and investing in equipment. This strategy is expected to not only save money in 2026, but also contain rising costs, and maintain service quality, though surge capacity may be limited.

CONCLUSION

This report has been developed to provide Council with a more detailed explanation of the staffing changes and costs increases that are included in the 2025 operating budget that are not related to wage grid increases.

For those staffing changes that are "Seeking Approval" Council is asked to consider them while deliberating the respective operating budget they apply to.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

As noted in each discussion area.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

As noted in each discussion area.

OTHERS CONSULTED

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

None.

FORMAL REPORT

To:	Mayor Strathdee and Members of Council
Prepared by:	Spencer Steckley, Finance Manager / Deputy Treasurer
Date of Meeting:	21 October 2025

TITLE

COR 35-2025 Pre-Budget 2026 Public Engagement

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of St. Marys has actively engaged residents in the development of Staff's Proposed 2026 Capital and Operating budget through multiple consultation activities including in-person meetings, a public open house and online survey.

This report summarizes public input to inform Council's budget deliberations and ensure community priorities are reflected in the 2026 budget.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT COR 35-2025 Pre-Budget 2026 Public Engagement report be received.

BACKGROUND

The Town of St. Marys initiated planning and discussions related to the preparation of Staff's Proposed 2026 Capital and Operating budget. To date, the following meetings and engagement activities have taken place:

- July 15, 2025 – Pre-budget meeting and overview of corporate and strategic priorities
- August 26, 2025 – Confirmation and adoption of corporate and strategic priorities for the 2026 budget cycle
- September 6, 2025 – Public open house with Council held at the St. Marys Farmers' Market
- September 10 – 26, 2025 – Online budget survey available for public consultation

As part of the annual budget process, the Town gathered input from residents through both in-person and online consultations. A summary of this feedback is provided below.

REPORT & ANALYSIS

Similar to the prior year, the Town hosted a public open house on Saturday, September 6, 2025 at Milt Dunnell Field, in collaboration with the Farmers' Market. Approximately 20 community members engaged with staff and Council, with the majority of comments being positive and constructive.

Following the open house, the Town launched an online budget survey to further engage residents and gather broader feedback.

The following section summarizes the key themes and notable feedback received through both the public open house and online survey:

Question	Key Themes/Summary of Feedback
When you get together with your neighbours, what are three things you most often say needs to be improved in St. Marys?	• ***Infrastructure renewal*** – comments included maintaining/updating recreation infrastructure (i.e. pickleball facilities, pool, splash pads, playground equipment, structures to create shade at sports fields and playgrounds), making better use of waterfront property and facilities to ignite more entertainment within the community. • ***Downtown revitalization and beautification*** • ***Traffic control and speeding concerns in residential areas*** (i.e. Southvale excessive traffic speeding; reducing number of trucks traveling through downtown corridor) • ***Crime prevention and community safety*** (i.e. reducing presence of illicit substances; more resources for homelessness) • ***Environmental initiatives*** such as composting and waste management • ***Public transport*** – more options (i.e. busing options for high school students outside 'bus zone')
Sometimes the smallest things we can do for our community have the biggest impact. Do you have a project or idea that could positively impact our community.	• ***Downtown beautification*** (i.e. provide further incentives to businesses) ***and community clean-up initiatives*** • ***Enhanced signage and public safety*** (i.e. on Southvale near recreation spaces where children cross) • ***Tree planting*** (i.e. community fruit tree programs to support food security for vulnerable populations), ***green spaces and environmental projects*** (i.e. relocating parking at opera house and turning into multi-use green space for entertainment and leisure; compost program with reduced garbage allowance per household) • ***Outdoor fitness or recreational infrastructure*** (i.e. alongside trails and parks)
What do you think is a priority for the 2026 budget? What should the Town invest in?	• ***Infrastructure investment,*** particularly in roads and sidewalks (i.e. James St. North) • ***Parks, recreation and youth programming*** • ***Tree management*** (i.e. establish a program to maintain trees after being planted such as those at James St. North) ***and environmental sustainability*** • ***Support for housing, homelessness and community well-being*** (i.e. crime prevention and

	making community more inclusive and accessible for seniors) • ***Fiscal responsibility and workforce efficiency*** (i.e. look for redundancies in Town structure and contracted police services) • ***Community improvements*** (i.e. demolish derelict houses to create space for more homes and amenities) • ***Public transportation***
Property taxes are the primary funding source for Town services. The cost of maintaining current service levels and infrastructure has increased which means the Town must examine taxation and service delivery. Which of the following actions would you prefer the Town to pursue to address this situation?	• 45% of respondents voted to 'Increase taxes in line with inflation – to maintain services' • 33% of respondents voted to 'Maintain current taxes – by reducing levels of service' • 11% of respondents voted to 'Reduce current taxes – by reducing levels of service • 11% of respondents did not register a vote
Do you have any additional comments or concerns?	• ***Concerns regarding fiscal management*** (i.e. opposition against 14 Church St. , old Mercury Theatre, costs to date and further future costs that could lead to increased taxes; perception there are enough community spaces existing that can be utilized such as Army and Navy, Stone Willow Inn, Westover Inn, etc.; rising property taxes are creating financial pressure for property owners) • ***Calls for cost control related to consultants and contractors*** (i.e. PRC pool project) • ***Desire for improved communication and responsiveness from Council*** • ***Reduce by-laws that inhibit growth and expand by-laws that provide greater flexibility to residents*** such as maintaining gardens and backyard chickens • ***Objection to projects that would require the removal of mature trees*** (i.e. expansion of racquet courts)

CONCLUSION

The Town of St. Marys has received pre-budget comments and feedback from the public as it relates to the 2026 operating and capital budget. This feedback will support Council in making informed decisions as part of the 2026 budget deliberations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications of this report.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

N/A

OTHERS CONSULTED

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

BY-LAW 57-2025
THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF ST. MARYS

Being a By-law to confirm all actions and proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of St. Marys at its special meeting held on October 21, 2025

WHEREAS: *The Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c.25,* as amended, Section 5(3), provides that the jurisdiction of every council is confined to the municipality that it represents, and it powers shall be exercised by by-law;

AND WHEREAS: The Council of the Corporation of the Town of St. Marys deems it expedient to confirm its actions and proceedings;

NOW THEREFORE: The Council of The Corporation of the Town of St. Marys enacts as follows;

1. That all actions and proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the Town of St. Marys taken at its special meeting held on the 21st day of October 2025 except those taken by by-law and those required by by-law to be done by resolution are hereby sanctioned, ratified and confirmed as though set out within and forming part of this by-law.
2. The Mayor and the Municipal Clerk are authorized and directed to execute all documents necessary in that behalf and to affix thereto the seal of the Corporation of the Town of St. Marys.
3. For the purposes of the exercise of the authority of the head of council to veto a by-law in accordance with section 284.11 of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended, this Confirming By-law shall be deemed to be separate Confirming By-laws for each item listed on the meeting agenda.
4. This by-law comes into force and takes effect on the final passing thereof.

Passed in Open Council this 21st day of October 2025.

Al Strathdee, Mayor

Jenna McCartney, Clerk

By signing this by-law on October 21, 2025, Mayor Al Strathdee will not exercise the power to veto this By-law.