

MEETING MINUTES
ST THOMAS DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Wednesday December 10, 2025 8:30am Room 304 City Hall

Attendance:

Chair - Grayden Laing	Y
Vice Chair-Renee Carpenter	Y
Past Chair-Earl Taylor	Y
Treasurer-Tina Swaenepoel	Y
Promotions Chair-Dave Thomson	Y
Reza Alavie	N
Jennifer Childs	N
Ian Gillespie	N
Duane Orth	N
Mayor Preston	N
Russell Schnurr	N
Sarah Van Pelt	N

Advisors:

Emily Mason	N
Sean Dyke	Y
Paul Jenkins	N
Jessica Pietens	N
Sarah Noble	N
Megan Pickersgill	N
Aaron Devries	Y
Tara McCaulley	Y
Todd Sawyer	N
Cody Montgomery	N

Staff:

Sarah Lynch	Y
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1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:39am meeting Quorum.

Mission: To cultivate a community of all Downtown property and business owners and residents, while advocating, beautifying and actively promoting our businesses and authentic heritage in Downtown St Thomas.

Vision: To engage, inspire and welcome our community and visitors to experience Downtown St Thomas as a unique destination.

2. Declaration of Conflict:

No Declarations were presented.

3. Confirmation of Agenda

Motion by Tina Swaenepoel. Seconded by Tara McCaulley. "To confirm the December 10, 2025 Agenda as distributed." Carried.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

Motion by Dave Thomson. Seconded by Earl Taylor. "To confirm the November 12, 2025 Minutes as distributed." Carried.

Note: Meeting Minutes can be found at www.downtownstthomas.ca/monthly-minutes

5. Deputations

No Deputations were presented.

6. Chair Report - Grayden

Business Updates – New/relocated/lost

- New: Let It Brie will be opening at 452 Talbot St. in the new year.

Social Media Updates

Continuing with standard numbers. Downtown Santa marketing had good reach.

7. Finance Report

The financial report was presented and reviewed by the board.

Downtown Dollars Tracking

Sarah reported that \$315 in DDB\$ were redeemed in November.

To date in 2025, \$7,850 DDB\$ have been issued — \$2,600 donated and \$5250 sold. Of this, \$1,695 has been redeemed, with \$6,155 outstanding.

Since 2018, \$296,115 DDB\$ have been issued, with \$255,885 redeemed and \$40,230 still outstanding.

8. Reports

8.1 Parks Dept Update – Todd

Planters will continue to be monitored and will prioritize keeping trails open and clean, when possible.

8.2 Promotions Report

Radio – Dave:

Shop Downtown St. Thomas slotted in until Christmas. Jingle will air on the 25th, New Year to air on 26th to 28th.

Downtown Vibe - Reza

The Downtown Vibe was distributed successfully before Santa roamed our members' stores. Thanks to Mayor Joe, Wendy's handed out half. Canada Post delivered 1/3 to Downtown homes. The other merchants distributed the rest.

8.3 Beautification Report & Event Update – Sarah

Light Up Talbot was a successful and well-received event this year, with positive feedback from attendees, participating businesses, and partner organizations. Several key improvements were implemented, contributing to smoother operations and a more engaging experience.

Adjustments were made to the horse and carriage rides, resulting in reduced wait times and improved line management. This led to a more organized experience and noticeably happier attendees.

The event featured a wide range of activations, many of which were highlighted in feedback as contributing to the event feeling “more activated” overall. Attendance was notably higher this year, and STPS supported crowd management by clearing the area near City Hall, allowing Santa to be escorted safely by STFD.

A post-event survey was circulated to participating businesses. While response numbers were lower due to the busy time of year, the feedback received was largely positive:

- 67% reported an increase in foot traffic during the event
- 33.3% saw an increase in sales
- 44.4% noted that Goosechase brought more visitors into their stores
- 33.3% reported that the event and Goosechase increased exposure and visibility for their business

Overall, Light Up Talbot demonstrated strong community engagement, increased attendance, and positive outcomes for many downtown businesses.

Snowflakes - Installation took place the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday leading up to the event. Some issues were identified with the snowflakes near the west end. Facilities and Roads connected with ERTH Power, who resolved the south side concerns. A few snowflakes remain non-functional—some due to

installation delays while issues were being addressed, and others that were previously operational but are now dim or not working.

Downtown Santa - Successful event. Started at west end to Ross St. Next year will start at Ross and head east. A couple from London praised our Downtown. Positive feedback from businesses and visitors.

8.4 Council Update - Mayor Preston

No Report.

8.5 Municipal Heritage Committee Update - Russell

No Report.

8.6 CIP Program – Russell

No Report.

8.7 Railway City Tourism Report – Megan

The Christmas campaign is underway, with the pre-Christmas shopping campaign currently running. Additional activities for the “12 Days of Christmas” will launch post-Christmas. Downtown will have representation in both parts of the campaign.

The YouTube Shorts project is being finalized, with more downtown features scheduled for release. (For example, the Horton video is completed and planned for a spring launch.)

Looking ahead to the new year, planning has begun for *Global Flavours 2026*, taking place in February, which is expected to include many downtown businesses. The *Taste Guide* is also being refreshed in time for the Home Show and will again highlight downtown businesses.

8.8 Economic Development Report – Sean

Christmas Market – Was a success. Record number of vendors and visitors. Many downtown businesses benefited from the increase in foot traffic.

8.9 SBEC – Jessica

SBEC is hosting another legal workshop with Albert Lin that will be held at Elgin Harvest on December 15 from 5:00–7:00 p.m., focusing on estate planning. The Eventbrite link has been provided for registration. <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/mull-over-estate-planning-and-grab-a-slice-of-security-tickets-1976023233685>

8.10 Chamber of Commerce Report – Paul

Chamber of Commerce Free Family Skate – Wed. December 31st 11:00am- 12:30pm @ The Joe Thornton Community Centre 75 Caso Xing. Tacos and Tequila will be hosted at the Caso Station on Friday January 23rd, 2026 from 7pm-10pm. Only 125 tickets will be sold – email Christy at christy@stthomaschamber.ca

Visit www.stthomaschamber.on.ca for full details.

8.11 EBRC Report – Tara

Working on a new strategic plan and rebranding. Will involve input from staff, clients and community partners.

Registration link for The Pitch – Free to attend, tickets will go fast. This year food is being provided by Taco House Co, a downtown business. [The Pitch 2026 Tickets, Wed, 4 Feb 2026 at 5:30 PM | Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/the-pitch-2026-tickets-wed-4-feb-2026-at-530-pm-1976023233685)

9. Old Business

9.1 Sign By-Law Update – The Planning Department was contacted regarding permit requirements. Planning advised that the current sign permit does not appropriately apply to this specific circumstance. They will review the matter internally and develop a more suitable process, including adding a section for building owner authorization and establishing an administrative fee that more accurately reflects the nature of the request rather than the standard sign or demolition permit fee.

9.2 Home Show - April 10-12, 2026. Fees are \$795-\$995 for a 10x10 booth. A question was added to the Light Up Talbot business survey to gauge interest in participating in the Home Show. Of the responses received, 25% of businesses indicated “yes,” and 37.5% indicated “maybe.”

The Mayor’s Office has reached out to ask whether the DDB would be interested in partnering with the City and Fire Department to have a grouped presence at the event. If the Board remains interested in participating in the Home Show, the booking will be completed by the end of the week. Earl expressed support for the DDB continuing to participate in the Home Show with its own booth and noted interest in coordinating with other City departments. The Board agreed to retain a dedicated DDB booth, explore volunteer recruitment in partnership with the City, and determine space needs based on volunteer availability. Sarah will also investigate options for updated promotional swag.

10. New Business

10.1 Draft 2026 Budget Review & Discussion

The 2026 Draft Budget was presented and reviewed by the board. The graffiti program was reviewed. The DDB can reimburse 50% of repair costs, to a maximum of \$500, with proof of invoice and proof of work completed. Funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis and applies to vandalism-related repairs. Sarah will promote the program to businesses, add the information to the resource card, and encourage businesses to file a police report when incidents occur. Motion by Tina Swaenepoel. Seconded by Renee Carpenter. “To approve the 2026 budget as presented.” Carried.

10.2 Board Meeting 2026 Schedule

Will continue with second Wednesday of the month for 2026.

10.3 Review of Structure for 2026

Chair provided an update regarding position on the board. This item was informational only; no action was required. Board members are encouraged to recruit new members.

11. Coming Event

- Chamber of Commerce Free Family Skate – Wed. December 31st 11:00am- 12:30pm @ The Joe Thornton Community Centre 75 Caso Xing
- Chamber of Commerce Business After 5 – Wed. January 21, 2026 @ Railway City Brewing 5pm-7pm
- Elgin Business Resource Centre – The Pitch February 4, 2026 at 6pm @ St. Anne’s Centre.
[The Pitch 2026 Tickets, Wed, 4 Feb 2026 at 5:30 PM | Eventbrite](#)

12. Adjournment

Motion by Tina Swaenepoel. Seconded by Dave Thomson. “To adjourn meeting at 10:06am”. Carried.

Next Meeting: AGM - Wednesday January 28, 2026, at 8:30am at St. Thomas-Elgin Public Art Centre.