



# *Strategic Plan*

November 2023  
Executive Summary

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# PURPOSE

The purpose of the Strategic Plan for the Municipality of Thames Centre is to provide a navigational path in planning for the future of the local government. The Strategic Plan, which is based on community priorities, establishes priorities that enable the municipal Council and staff coordinate budgets, policies and services.

When a Strategic Plan is developed with significant community participation, the municipality can be confident they are setting future community goals based on local public feedback. With this community collaboration, Council can direct municipal staff in the allocation of resources to successfully achieve the identified community goals.

The prioritization and allocation of municipal resources – both in terms of staff and financial resources – signals a commitment to the community that their engagement was paramount and adopted into the plan. This is communicated with the public reporting and support of the Strategic Plan.

From the community consultation, primary themes emerged, identifying the Strategic Pillars of: Smart Planning, Community Communications and Engagement, Active Living, and Economic Development.

# STRATEGIC PILLARS



The Strategic Pillars are identified as the Priorities of Council.

# GOALS

## ***Smart Planning:***

A prioritized goal to make smart planning decisions to grow the community, while maintaining a “hometown feel”. Smart planning also includes diversifying residential housing, providing affordability for young families the capacity to purchase their first home, and, providing the opportunity for seniors to stay within the community.

## ***Community Communications and Engagement:***

A prioritized goal to increase communications between the municipality (Council and Staff) and the community, for greater transparency in decision-making on budgets, planning, and infrastructure. Also a goal to better communicate annual community events.

## ***Active Living:***

A prioritized goal to increase the accessibility and programming of recreational services, especially to community youth and seniors. In parallel, to keep pace with community growth by increasing recreational services.

## ***Economic Development:***

A prioritized goal to retain and attract businesses into the community to enhance availability of local amenities, and, accessibility by active transportation (such as walking and biking).

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Category	Number	Recommendation
Strategic Priorities		
	1A	Council adopt the Strategic Pillars of <b>Smart Planning, Community Communications &amp; Engagement, Active Living, and Economic Development</b> as key priorities.
	1B	Council incorporate the strategic priorities into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Budgets – To prioritize the allocations of financial resources;</li> <li>▪ Policies – When reviewing, updating or developing new policies, incorporate strategic priorities into the “purpose” of the specific policy and</li> <li>▪ Staff Reports – Continue with identifying how report relates to a Strategic Community Priority.</li> </ul>
	1C	The Municipality should identify and promote the strategic priorities on the Municipality’s web site, publications, and future marketing campaigns.
Smart Planning		
	2A	The Municipality should reassess the administration of certain planning functions by the upper-tier municipality. Although this may create a “two-step” process for planning applications (such as amendment to the Official Plans), the community can have confidence that local planning decisions are being made by local elected officials.
	2B	Thames Centre Council should consider creating a standing committee of Council entitled “Planning and Development Committee”, where all planning matters are discussed in a dedicated meeting, and thereafter, planning recommendations are forwarded to Council for adoption with the associated bylaw.
	2C	When approving new residential sub-divisions, Council should adopt policies (and zoning bylaws) that promote greater diversity in housing stock, such as increased number of apartments, townhouses, and semi-detached homes for young families and seniors.
	2D	When approving site plans, Council should adopt policies that promote “small town” features, such as themed street light poles and lighting, sidewalks, signage, building facades, parks and trails.

	2E	The Municipality should partner with the County of Middlesex to develop a Transportation Master Plan specific to the Thames Centre community.
	2F	The Municipality could implement a “Community Improvement Plan” as recommended in the recent Stantec report completed in October 2023.
<b>Community Communications and Engagement</b>		
	3A	The three Ward Councillors could conduct annual “town hall” meetings in their respective wards to update their constituents on Council decisions, budgets, policies, and in turn, receive citizen feedback on “green” initiatives, ward and municipal issues.
	3B	The Mayor and Deputy Mayor could attend the ward annual Town Hall meetings (as recommended in 3A) to update the community on decisions and issues that impact Thames Centre from the County level. This could include “guests” from the County (such as public health, land ambulance, community services) who can provide updates, in addition to, updates from police service management.
	3C	The Mayor can conduct an annual “Business Breakfast” event, focused on the business community, but welcoming the general public. The event can provide Business Awards for a variety of business categories (such as best small business, best produce, best store front, etc) and best local winery.
	3D	Live streaming of Council meeting can be improved by implementing additional camera views to showcase delegations, and Council members, when speaking.
	3E	The municipality could fund the initial establishment of the Thames Centre Chamber of Commerce, in addition to, funding for community groups and local arts and culture initiatives.
<b>Active Living</b>		
	4A	As recommended within the Community Services and Facilities Master Plan, the plan should be reviewed annually as part of the Municipality’s budget cycle.
	4B	Based on the community feedback received in the Strategic Plan process, the recommendations received in the Community Services and Facilities Master Plan should be prioritized towards youth and seniors.
	4C	The Municipality could consider developing and implementing a Parks and Trails Master Plan based on growing community needs and expectations. The Master Plan could focus on walking trails (operations and capital), volunteerism, and citizen engagement for

		support and promotion. An annual progress report on the Parks and Trails Master Plan should be prepared for Council.
	4D	The municipality could create a playroom and youth centre in the urban centres of Dorchester and Thorndale.
<b>Economic Development</b>		
	5A	The Municipality could consider financial incentives to retain and attract local businesses into the local community, for greater accessibility of stores to seniors, employment for youth, and general amenities (groceries, restaurants, household goods) for the general population.
	5B	Partner with the County of Middlesex to create an Economic Development Strategy focused on Thames Centre, supporting the retention and attraction of local businesses. This could involve leveraging Middlesex County in allocating dedicating resources for Thames Centre.
	5C	Work with local farmers on bringing their harvest to local residents with “food to table” programs, such as sponsored farmer’s markets, fall fair, and “buy local” campaigns. This could be facilitated by creating a “Agricultural Advisory Committee” reporting and advising to Council, and/or, partnering with the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture.
	5E	The Municipality could consider funding grants for eligible farmers to establish road-side fruit and vegetable stands, as an enhancement of “food to table” marketing and programming.
	5F	The Municipality could consider a welcoming display greeting drivers along Highway 401 to visit and enjoy Thames Centre’s agriculturally based tourism.
	5G	The Municipality should develop an Economic Development Committee of Council to organize, structure and prioritize their strategy. This could involve operating a Community Grant working group to manage funding requests from local community groups.
	5H	The Municipality could develop and implement a Tourism Master Plan focused on hosting sporting events (such as hockey and baseball tournaments), arts and culture events (such as fiddle, dance and music festivals), and additional opportunities for the Dorchester Fair (such as tractor pull and race derby).
<b>Municipal Services</b>		
	6A	The Municipality should develop a Community Risk Profile and a Master Fire Plan as required in provincial legislation. This will provide

		the Fire Chief and Council with information when determining the level of effort in regards to fire and emergency services.
	6B	The Municipality should develop an updated Water and Wastewater Master Plan to address future needs and planning initiatives. The Municipality could also explore uploading water and waste water services to the upper-tier municipality, such as the delivery model operating in neighbouring Oxford County.
	6C	The Municipality could address constraints and opportunities involving bylaw enforcement services. This could involve a divisional review of all bylaws, policies, and standard operating procedures.
	6D	The Municipality should initiate a Performance Measurement project, which would establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for all municipal services to determine baseline performance levels. The KPIs could then be publicly reported and utilized in annual budget planning.
	6E	The Municipality could partner with London Health Sciences in the generation and promotion of additional medical services in Thames centre (such as family doctor recruitment and health care teams and clinics).

