

20
23

THAMES CENTRE
ANNUAL
HIGHLIGHTS

MUNICIPALITY OF
Thames Centre

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INTRODUCTION





MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Sharron McMillan

As I reflect on our work in 2023, I am struck by the progress we've made in achieving some of our key goals as you will note below. Along with the support of the residents of Thames Centre in providing invaluable contributions, whether in writing or by attending public open houses, we know that together we can continue to shape a progressive and thriving community where all people feel welcomed, supported and included.



MESSAGE FROM THE CAO

CAO David Barrick

This 2023 Highlights document is the first of many more to come in alignment with Council and community wishes for greater communication and transparency of what is happening at your local government. There is no doubt that 2023 was a transformational year! As the first year of a new Term of Council that saw the development of a renewed Strategic Plan (2024-2027), completion a Community Services Masterplan and an updated Official Plan. There was more public engagement through Open Houses, Community Consultations and public participation through new Committee's as well as greater transparency through a revised budget process. I am proud to share the 2023 achievements Municipal staff delivered guided by Council priorities.

I'm incredibly impressed by our staff's passion to bring Council's vision to life. These highlights are a testament of commitment and dedication to achieve the best possible results for the residents of Thames Centre. We all have one common goal – to make Thames Centre the best it can be. The future of Thames Centre is exciting, I look forward to sharing what we accomplish this year as a team.

MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Thames Centre Council has a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and three ward Councillors. Residents throughout the entire municipality elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Councillors are elected by the ward they represent.



Mayor
Sharron McMillan



Deputy Mayor
Michelle Smibert



Ward 1 Councillor
Tom Heeman



Ward 2 Councillor
Danielle Lockie



Ward 3 Councillor
Chantel Crockett

ACHIEVEMENTS & 2023 HIGHLIGHTS





COMMUNITY EVENTS & GREATER PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In the past year, Thames Centre unfolded a rich variety of events that showcased the vibrant spirit of our community. From the Thorndale and Dorchester Fairs to the captivating Renaissance Festival, Movie Nights in the park, and the inclusive Bridgefest, the community calendar overflowed with opportunities for engagement.

Thames Centre also enhanced public engagement by adding more public open houses to the mix to invite the public in on the conversations more and have their voice heard from planning events to council to initiative led open house for informative engagement. Thames Centre also rolled out council highlights to ensure the public who cannot attend meetings has access to the information to keep in the know. Communication engagement is one of the most important pieces to keeping everyone connected and involved in the progress at Thames Centre.





Additionally, our community outreach extended to supporting local businesses. Council continued the Support Local Business month, touring local streets and visiting businesses that define our Municipality. The remarkable talents and skills showcased by our community members not only draws visitors in but inspires some to make Thames Centre their permanent home.

In parallel, Council took a proactive role in connecting with the younger generation through school visits. One initiative involved donating hats and mittens to the little ones at River Heights Public School from the parade donations, while another visit to Dorchester Secondary School shed light on the role of a Council, emphasizing the responsibilities and the connection and service one can provide to the community should they explore the path of government and politics.

In 2023, Thames Centre also spearheaded the establishment of committees such as the Environmental Advisory Committee who have already ignited a series of impactful initiatives. Notably, the tree planting program which will drive the ambitious goal of planting 50,000 trees throughout Thames Centre.

Simultaneously, the establishment of the Economic Development Committee signifies a strategic move to strengthening business investment and promote sustainable economic growth in the Municipality.

Thames Centre continued the established committees, including the Accessibility and Inclusivity Advisory Committee, Local School Advisory Committee, Seniors Centre Advisory Committee, Thames Centre Special Events Committee, and Thames Centre Sports Wall of Fame Committee. Together, these committees enrich the community experience and pave the way for a vibrant future.



CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS



FlightExec Centre Renovations

Starting in September 2023, our FlightExec Centre underwent renovations, expanding the Senior Centre to introduce three multi-purpose rooms and a shared kitchen with the adjacent auditorium. This aims to accommodate more seniors and enhance year-round events. For VON Middlesex-Elgin, the expanded space facilitates the relocation of the therapeutic tub, increasing community bathing facilities and the Adult Day Program's capacity. New rooms for overnight respite care will also be introduced. Simultaneously, the Auditorium Enhancement enlarges and relocates the auditorium, providing a more versatile space for larger events and gatherings.

Crampton Park New Playground

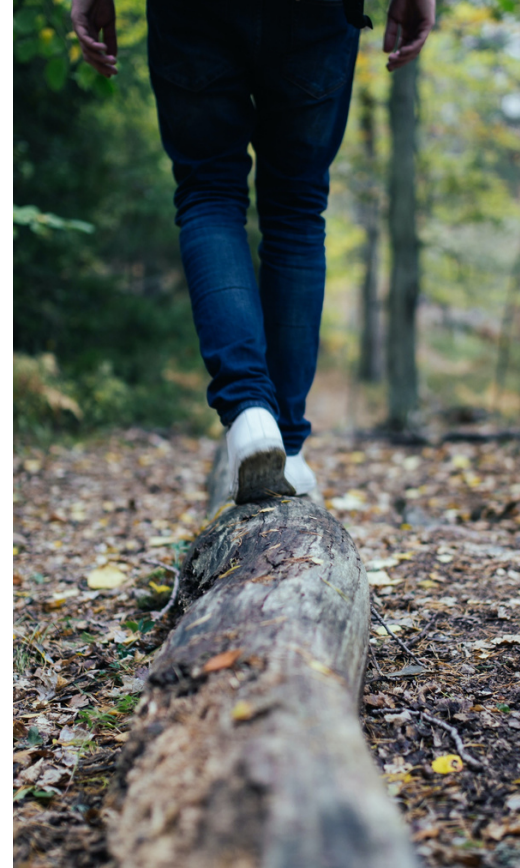
A new playground was installed at Crampton Park, complete with two swings designed for toddlers, two standard swings, and a compact single-platform climbing structure that incorporates a slide.

Pedestrian Bridge

Pedestrian Bridge replaced at Dorchester Conservation Area which extended its life expectancy.

Woodvale Drive

This project was completed under budget, and improved the integrity of the Dorchester Sanitary Collection System.



Porters Subdivision Phase 2

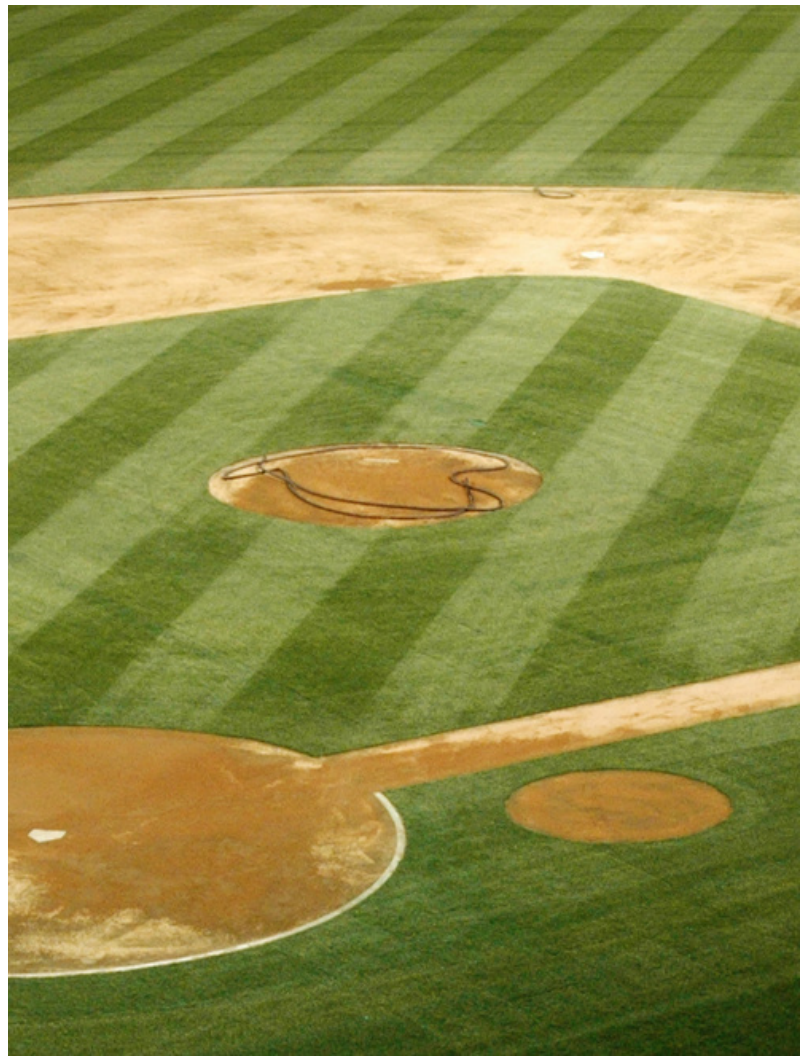
During this phase, Ross Avenue, Ruth Street, and Carl Street underwent comprehensive upgrades. These enhancements included converting the road surface from tar and chip to asphalt, adding curb and gutter infrastructure, constructing sidewalks compliant with AODA standards, replacing storm sewers, upgrading water mains, installing fire hydrants, and replacing water service lines. The project spanned over half a kilometer, incorporating upgrades to water mains, storm sewers, and street infrastructure from tar and chip surfaces with ditches to asphalt with curbs. These improvements impacted the streetscape of around 33 residences in the area.

Thorndale Wastewater Treatment Plan

Stantec Consultants Ltd. has been awarded the contract for this project, and will initiate the expansion of the current Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to accommodate the anticipated future demand and growth of the village of Thorndale.

Walking Trail

Thames Centre was incredibly honoured to receive the Ontario Trillium Foundation grant which will aid in creating accessibility trails throughout the Thorndale Community Park this year!



PLANS & REPORTS



Over the past year, our municipality crafted and refined strategic initiatives designed to address the evolving needs of our residents and enhance the quality of life within our area. From infrastructure developments to community needs, each plan reflects our commitment to building a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive community.

Strategic Plan 2024-2027



Driven by a commitment to our community, the Strategic Plan serves as a guiding light for municipal decisions throughout this term of council. The Strategic Plan process began in June, 2023 involving extensive documentation review, online surveys, interviews, open houses, a Council Workshop session, and three Council Meetings. This Plan comprises 5 strategic pillars and 36 recommendations.

Smart Planning

A commitment to informed decisions for community growth while maintaining a cherished "hometown feel". Increased transparency in decision-making, better communication of local events, and essential municipal information are paramount.

Community Communications & Engagement

Heightened communication channels between the Municipality, Council, and residents, fostering transparency in decision-making around budgets, planning, and infrastructure. Emphasis on enhancing communication about annual community events is prioritized.

Active Living

Expansion and improvement of recreational services accessibility and programs, particularly targeting youth and seniors. Aligning service growth with community needs remains a key goal.

Economic Development

Efforts focused on retaining and attracting businesses to enrich local amenities and facilitate accessibility through active transportation. Supporting existing businesses while attracting new ventures is a strategic priority.

Sustainability

A prioritized goal to ensure that the Municipality maintains fiscal prudence, along with affordable and sustainable taxation levels.

Thames Centre Official Plan



In 2023, the Municipality updated its Official Plan which sets policy direction for land use within the Municipality. The updated Official Plan draws from the previous Plan, benefiting from past successes and incorporating lessons learned. Informed by a series of background studies, the plan provides a holistic understanding of how future growth and development will shape our unique communities within Thames Centre. A forward-looking perspective includes meticulous planning for the impacts of a changing climate and economy, as well as addressing the evolving needs of residents, businesses, and visitors.

Asset Management Plan



Thames Centre entered into an agreement in 2023 with PSD Citywide Inc. for professional asset management support to continue to build internal Asset Management capacity and to meet reporting directives set out through O. Reg 588/17. Since 2013, PSD Citywide has advised the Municipality on key asset management activities and led efforts to develop the Municipality's initial asset management plans to meet provincial regulatory requirements.



Community Services & Facilities Masterplan



In September 2023, Thames Centre unveiled the Community Services & Facilities Masterplan, a strategic blueprint to enhance leisure amenities in response to evolving community needs. This forward-looking plan prioritizes investments in parks, recreation facilities, and service delivery, aligning with Thames Centre's vision for a vibrant and inclusive community.

By integrating with the Thames Centre Official Plan and other studies, the master plan ensures synergy across initiatives. Informed by comprehensive analysis and national frameworks, it aims to maximize benefits for residents across all life stages while fostering partnerships and leveraging external funding. With a commitment to regular review and updates, Thames Centre is poised to adapt swiftly, ensuring its initiatives remain responsive and impactful in a dynamic environment.

Community Risk Assessment & Fire Master Plan



Our Fire and Emergency Services Department initiated the legislated Community Risk Assessment and Fire Master Plan, and contracted a consultant to ensure a comprehensive and strategic approach to future planning.

Community Improvement Plan



The Community Improvement Plan was initiated in 2023 and aims to protect and enhance the Municipality's hometown feel by strategically supporting the retention and attraction of businesses, encouraging agri-tourism initiatives, and assisting in the revitalization and beautification of urban and rural areas to illustrate the investment readiness of Thames Centre.



GRANTS, ENHANCED TRANSPARENCY & ACCESSIBILITY

Thanks to increased grant applications, our community will see this coming year significant enhancements in both accessibility and mental health support services!

The Ontario Trillium Grant, totaling \$85,000, has been secured for an accessible trail at Thorndale Community Park. This project aims to level and pave existing pathways, ensuring that individuals of all abilities can fully enjoy the park's amenities. From baseball diamonds to a splash pad, Thorndale Community Park serves as a vibrant hub for recreational activities, and these improvements will further amplify this.

In addition to this, Thames Centre is proud to announce the receipt of a \$117,500 Mobile Crisis Response Team Enhancement Grant. This funding will bolster the local OPP Mobile Crisis Response Team, expanding mental health and addiction support services within Thames Centre and Middlesex County as a whole. Such initiatives underscore our commitment to prioritizing the well-being of all residents, particularly those facing mental health challenges.

These grants represent a significant investment in the future of Thames Centre, and we extend our gratitude to all partners and stakeholders involved in making these projects possible. Together, we continue to work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive community for all.

Paymentus

In 2023 the Municipality unveiled our new online payment platform, "Paymentus." This platform expands payment options for residents, enabling convenient online transactions for property tax bills, water utility bills, miscellaneous payments with invoice numbers, and building permit fees. Additionally, users can seamlessly request tax certificates or zoning certificates as needed for legal purposes.

Paymentus, is a trusted third-party service provider, and ensures the secure processing of online property tax and water utility payments on behalf of the Municipality. This initiative is designed to enhance the overall payment experience, offering a more cost-efficient and streamlined electronic bill presentment and payment solution. We are committed to providing residents with increased flexibility and efficiency in managing their financial transactions.

OpenBook

The Municipality is thrilled to announce the upcoming launch of Qwestica OpenBook software, which is the result of dedicated efforts throughout 2023. This innovative tool, set to debut early this year, underscores our commitment to transparency and trust within our community. With user-friendly visualizations, including interactive charts, tables, and graphics accompanied by descriptive text and informational pop-ups, OpenBook will serve as a dynamic platform for showcasing both financial and non-financial data. Our residents will benefit from easy access to crucial information about our budget, plans, and projects, empowering you to stay informed and engaged.







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