

2024

THAMES CENTRE ANNUAL HIGHLIGHTS





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Mayor	4	Events & Celebrations	14
Message from the CAO	4	CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS	16
Strategic Plan 2024-2027	5	FlightExec Centre Renovations	16
Municipal Council	6	Home of Boone Jenner	17
ACHIEVEMENTS & 2024 HIGHLIGHTS	7	Building Community	18
Economic Development	8	Investing in Inclusion	19
Support Local Business	10	Improving Fire Safety	20
Community Grants	11	Honouring Our Firefighters	21
Communications & Public Engagement	12	Connecting to Other Communities	21

MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

Mayor Sharron McMillan



Thames Centre had several notable accomplishments over the last year. Our community continued to attract investments, both from other levels of government and the private sector.

We saw great turnouts at our public meetings, town halls, and cultural events. The direction of local government is being driven by feedback from local residents, and we continue working to deliver the services you deserve in the most cost-efficient way.

2024 was a great year for Thames Centre, and I have every reason to believe that we can build on that success going forward to build a better, brighter community.

MESSAGE FROM THE CAO

CAO David Barrick



I am proud to share the 2024 achievements of the Municipality of Thames Centre.

This document and the highlights within it are a result of improved community engagement as laid out by Council in its Strategic Plan. This includes more transparency in government, and providing more information to the public, as well as getting feedback from residents to help determine our local priorities through town halls and community surveys.

Thames Centre continues to take a responsible, balanced approach that invests in delivering on community priorities while exercising long-term fiscal prudence.

I would like to commend the efforts of our Municipal staff, and their dedication to delivering on Council priorities, achieving the objectives of our Strategic Plan, and serving the residents of Thames Centre. We are one team and we are driven by one common goal – to make Thames Centre the best it can be.

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 36 recommendations which fall under **5 strategic pillars**.

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**.

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 & 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Thames Centre - Open for Business

Thames Centre is a great place to invest - and 2024 saw a number of significant private sector investments in Thames Centre.

In April 2024, Ideal Logistics made a significant investment in the community and started construction on a new pharmaceutical distribution facility and warehouse.



Our Planning & Development department has worked to streamline the building approvals process, and approved final site plans for the plaza at 2300 Dorchester Road. We also saw a number of other businesses opening in our community, including several new retail stores opening in the plaza.

The plaza now includes a Pizza Hut (opened in January 2024), a No Frills grocery store (opened in November 2024), and a new McDonald's location (opened in January 2025.)

These new businesses give local residents more options, and they are also a sign that private investors have realized that our community is a great place to work - and a great place to invest.





Investing In Thames Centre

2024 also saw large investments in our community from other levels of government, including a **\$1.1 million grant** from the provincial government from the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund.

This will improve local wastewater infrastructure, and is a sign that other levels of government are recognizing that Thames Centre is great place to invest.

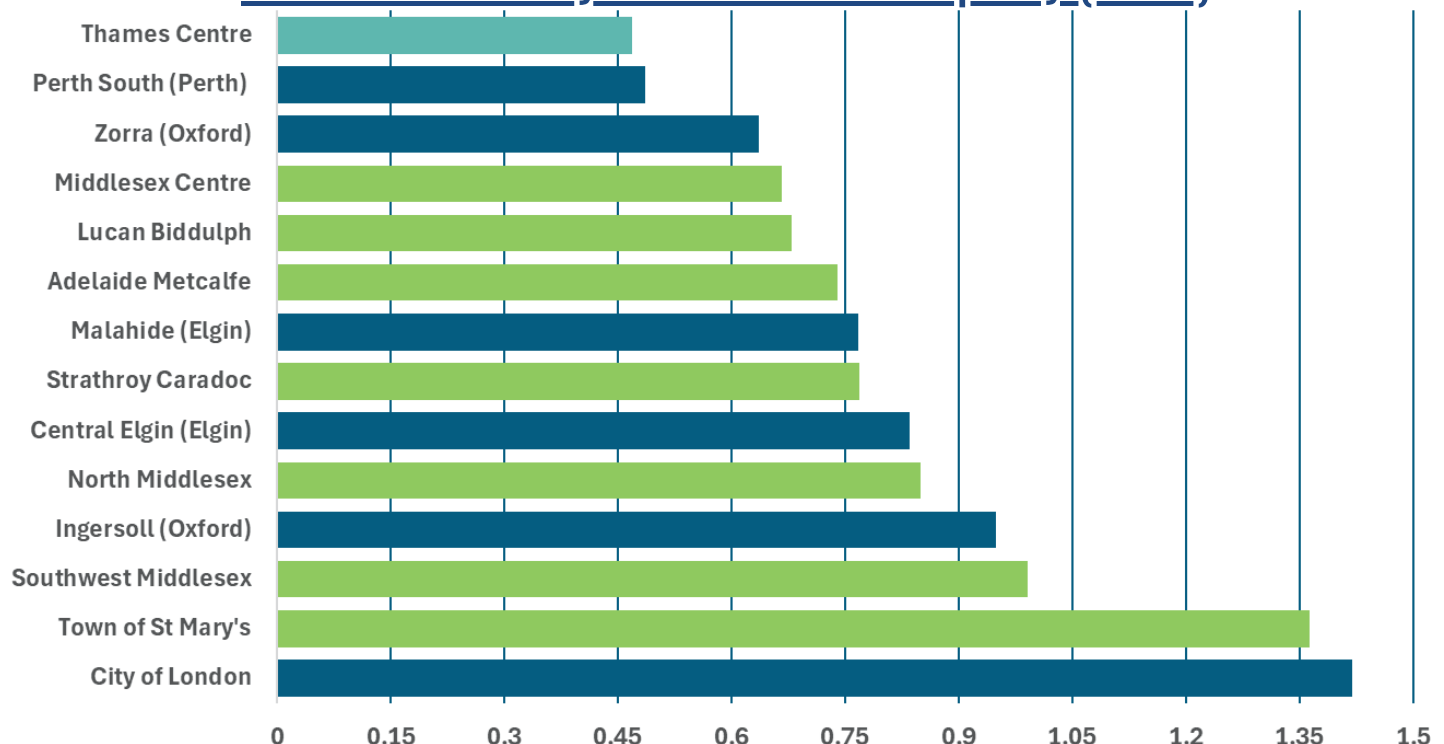
Keeping Taxes Low for Residents

In 2024 Thames Centre retained the lowest tax rates of any lower-tier municipality in the region. Thames Centre also received its first ever **Distinguished Budget Presentation Award** for a budget “representing the very highest quality” of municipal budget standards in North America.

The identification of operational cost-savings combined with increased investments in the community from other levels of government and the private sector helped to keep local tax rates low in 2024. A new Tax Billing and Collection policy was also adopted to improve transparency and establish a consistent framework for property tax billing.

The 2025 Budget is projected to continue on this path, keeping Thames Centre’s place as the **lowest taxed municipality in Middlesex County**.

Local Tax Rates by Lower-Tier Municipality (2024)



SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESS



Thames Centre continued to promote the **Support Local Business** campaign.

Thames Centre is home to a number of businesses that deliver high quality services to customers, and we're happy to support them.

Led by the new Economic Development Committee, every October we visit some of the great local businesses in our community and promote them to other residents.

We also established the **Community Improvement Fund** to help local businesses make property improvements that benefit the community as a whole.

Thames Centre is filled with great businesses and we are proud to **#SupportLocalBusiness**.



COMMUNITY GRANTS



The Community Grant program supported many partners who improve our community, including grants to the Thorndale Agricultural Society, Lord Dorchester Secondary School's robotics program, ("The Lost Sockets,") and a \$10,000 grant that went towards renovations to improve affordable seniors housing at the West Nissouri Non-Profit Seniors Complex.



COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In addition to Thames Centre being a great place to live, the 2024 **Best Places to Work** study also recognized the Municipality of Thames Centre as one of the Top 10 medium-sized employers in London and the surrounding area.

In February 2024 Council approved **Organizational Core Values** (pictured right) that help to guide municipal staff in providing more effective service to residents while maintaining a healthy workplace.

In May the Municipality also adopted a **new Customer Service Charter** that outlined our commitment to providing residents with a high standard of customer service. This commitment goes beyond treating customers courteously, it also recognizes the need for the municipality to provide effective and timely service.

We also transitioned one of our team members to work out of the **Thorndale Lions Community Centre**, so residents can receive in-person customer service in a second location Tuesdays to Thursdays from 9 AM to 4:30 PM.

Municipality of Thames Centre ORGANIZATIONAL CORE VALUES

COMPASSION

Compassion means being supportive, patient, understanding, empathic, and respectful through all interactions.



INTEGRITY

Integrity means being honest, ethical, responsible, and accountable.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous Improvement means pursuing excellence through embracing a goal-oriented mindset, professionalism, and innovation.



INCLUSIVITY

Inclusivity means working together to enhance our community's well-being through a dedicated effort to support every person.

COMMUNICATION

Communication means effective two-way communication, teamwork, transparency, and trust.



Left: In April Council hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast with food catered by Thorndale Family Restaurant.

Right: In December 2024 Thames Centre staff held their first annual Food Drive to support local families in need.



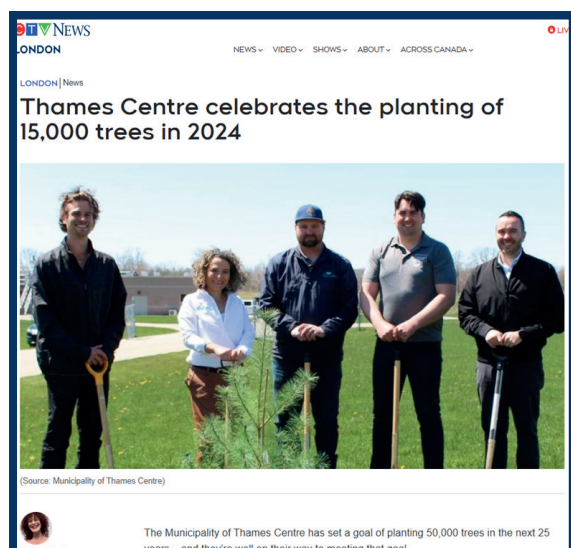
Thames Centre remained a leader in public engagement, hosting more town hall and open house events to invite the public to share their thoughts. That included another **Annual Builders Meeting**, three **Building/Planning Open House** events, and a pair of **Green Town Hall** meetings which allowed residents to directly interact with Council members and staff on environmental issues.

Staff upgraded the AV system to improve the quality of the online **broadcasts of council meetings**, and staff continued to produce **council highlights** documents to ensure that members of the public know about the most important events of the meeting.

We continued to use **public surveys** to allow people to share their thoughts and priorities with staff and Council on important issues, including the 2025 Budget.

The Environmental Advisory Committee also asked residents to participate in a survey before the Green Town Hall Meetings. Tree planting was identified as the top priority from the public survey.

The committee had previously set a goal of planting 50,000 trees throughout Thames Centre over 25 years. In 2024, the first year of that commitment, **15,000 trees were planted in Thames Centre.**



EVENTS & CELEBRATIONS

In the past year, Thames Centre unfolded a rich variety of events that showcased the vibrant spirit of our community. These included Canada Day celebrations, Movie Nights in the park, the new and inclusive CornFest (formerly Bridgefest,) and the Festival of Lights.



2024 Ontario Curling Championship

In January the FlightExec Centre was the site of the *Clash on the Thames* - Ontario's provincial Curling Championships. Thames Centre was proud to host the Men's and Women's Provincial Championships.

Congratulations to Scott Howard and Danielle Inglis on leading their teams to victory and earning the right to represent Ontario!



Michael Landsberg #SickNotWeak

In May, mental health advocate Michael Landsberg came to the FlightExec Centre.

The former host of TSN's *Off the Record* shared stories from his life and career and used his platform to promote mental health.

We are grateful to Michael for having the courage to share his experience with people in our community.



RED SHIRT DAY™



Wednesday, May 29, 2024
www.redshirtday.ca

WEAR RED.
MAKE A PLEDGE.
SUPPORT CANADIANS
WITH DISABILITIES.



Historical Recognition

Councillor Crockett teamed up with the Belmont Historical Society to install new historical signs across our community.



CAPITAL HIGHLIGHTS



FlightExec Centre Renovations Completed

The FlightExec Centre renovation/expansion project was completed in August 2024. This facility now features a much larger Active Living Centre (formerly called the Senior Centre), a new & larger auditorium, and double the space for the Victorian Order of Nurses to provide their services to the community.



The **Lions Active Living Centre** now has over **600** members.

In addition to the many ongoing programs and events previously offered, the following new programs and events were added in 2024: Mahjong, Strength & Tone class, Dance Fit, Tatting, and the Magic Yarn Project, where participants make wigs inspired by Disney characters for children who are battling cancer,

The added space also allows for the FlightExec Centre to serve the community in case of an emergency. Staff and volunteers were called into action to establish an Emergency Warming Centre in December to help travellers who were stranded following a multi-vehicle collision on Highway 401.





Home of Boone Jenner

In May 2024 the FlightExec Centre put up a banner under the entrance sign to honour local hockey star Boone Jenner.

Born and raised on a farm just outside of Dorchester, Jenner was selected in the 2nd round of the **2011 NHL Draft** by the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Jenner was named as the **Blue Jackets team Captain** in 2021. Through 2024, Jenner has played in 715 NHL games, all with the Blue Jackets. This makes him the team's **all-time leader** in games played.

Jenner was a member of **Team Canada's Gold Medal team** at the 2016 IIHF World Championships, and was selected to play in the **2024 NHL All-Star Game** in Toronto.



BUILDING COMMUNITY

Frost Field & New Playground Equipment at Harrietsville-Mossley Community Park

The baseball diamond at Harrietsville-Mossley Community Park was renamed **Frost Field Memorial Ball Diamond** In honour of the late Max Frost, who championed local sports and was crucial in the development of the diamond.

The playground equipment at Harrietsville-Mossley Community Park was also replaced.



Thorndale Dog Park

In August 2024, Thames Centre opened Thorndale's **first Dog Park**.

We'd like to offer thanks to the Thorndale Dog Park Ad Hoc Committee and the generous sponsors who made this project a reality.

Dorchester Community Garden

The **Dorchester Community Garden** was established in 2024.

In May, Council approved the creation of this new community garden while also enhancing existing community garden at the Thorndale Library.

The community gardens promote healthier lifestyles and have been able to provide nutritious food bank donations to help local families in need.



INVESTING IN INCLUSION

Lions Active Living Centre

The Lions Active Living Centre (formerly the Senior Centre) offers programs, events, and meals aimed at those aged 50 and over. **Over 3,000 people per month participate in activities.**

For VON Middlesex-Elgin, the expansion facilitated the addition of two new respite care beds, the relocation of the therapeutic tub (which increased community bathing facilities,) and increased the Adult Day Program's capacity.



Dorchester Dream Park

With the support of many community partners Thames Centre was able to open **our first inclusive playground.**

In 2024 we initiated Phase 2 of this project, and new seniors exercise equipment was added to make the Dream Park an even more inclusive space.

Thorndale Community Park Walking Trail

A **1.5 kilometre walking trail** in Thorndale Community Park was paved and expanded to make the trail more accessible and easier to use.

The trail officially opened in October 2024.



IMPROVING FIRE SAFETY

New Recruits and a New Fire Master Plan

In 2024 our Fire Department hired **5 new recruit firefighters**, and assigned two certified Fire Inspectors who completed several dozen Fire Safety Inspections.

In June 2024 Thames Centre adopted a new **Fire Master Plan**. This plan better organizes firefighting operations and equipment management, which will lead to more effective firefighting services to protect the residents of Thames Centre.

Public Education and Fire Safety Campaigns

In addition to their firefighting and inspection duties, the Thames Centre Fire Department also plays a role in **public education** for people of all ages about the importance of fire safety.

They perform this work at schools and other public events. They also partnered with Enbridge Gas on **Project Zero** to remind people about the dangers of carbon monoxide leaks, and to provide dual smoke & carbon monoxide detectors to dozens of homes in the municipality.





Honouring Our Firefighters

In November Thames Centre recognized the **outstanding service** of firefighters David Van Dyk (left), Dave Cove (2nd from left), and Rick Sager (3rd from left).

Investing in New Parklands

Thames Centre also adopted a new **Parkland Dedication by-law** requiring developers to provide lands or investments to support new parks or public recreation spaces.



Connecting Communities

2024 saw the launch of **Route 3**, a bus route that connects Dorchester to St. Thomas and the City of London from Monday to Saturday.







tel 519-268-7334 **website** www.thamescentre.on.ca

email inquiries@thamescentre.on.ca

4305 Hamilton Rd, Dorchester, Ontario, N0L 1G3

