



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 — 2027



Strategic Plan 2024–2027

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MESSAGE FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

On behalf of the Municipality of Thames Centre Council, I am pleased to present our 2024 to 2027 Strategic Plan. This blueprint embodies our commitment to steering our community's course while cherishing its essence.

Your insights have been instrumental in shaping this roadmap, setting the foundation for growth while safeguarding the core of our community. From diverse solutions housing to transparent decision making, accessible recreation, economic prosperity, and sustainability, your voices echo through every aspect of this plan.

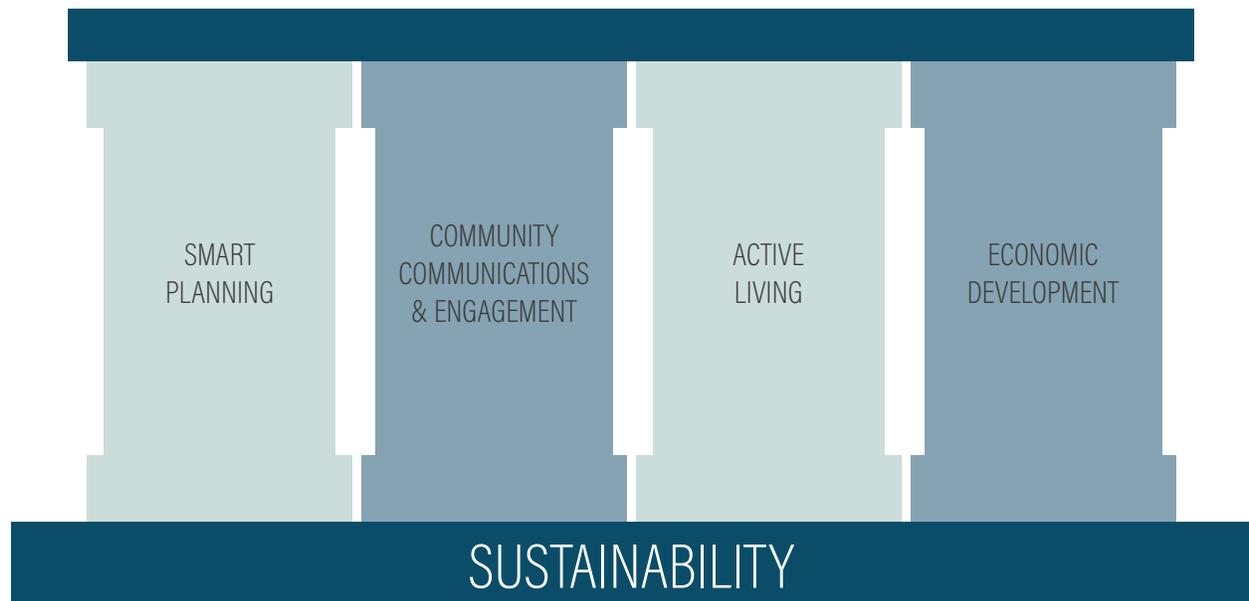
Through strategic planning, we aim to streamline processes, enhance services, empower our youth, prioritize sustainable water management, recruit healthcare professionals, and champion green initiatives, all envisioned with your feedback at the forefront.

Strategic planning is paramount for our Council's term, shaping the future of our Thames Centre. Let's unite in turning this plan into action, fostering a community that thrives and evolves together.

Warm regards,

Sharron McMillan
Mayor, Municipality of
Thames Centre

AT A GLANCE



On a foundation of **Sustainability**, the pillars of Thames Centre includes the framework of **Smart Planning, Community Communication & Engagement, Active Living** and **Economic Development**. These pillars strengthen the Strategic Priorities of the Municipality.

VISION

Thames Centre is a vibrant safe community combining innovation and tradition for all stages of your life.

MISSION

Working together to sustain and grow our community through quality services and responsible leadership.



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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.

<p>SMART PLANNING</p>	<p>Make smart planning decisions to grow the community, while maintaining a “hometown feel”</p>
<p>COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT</p>	<p>Increase communications between the municipality (Council and Staff).</p>
<p>ACTIVE LIVING</p>	<p>Increase the accessibility and programming of recreational services, especially to community youth and seniors.</p>
<p>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>Retain and attract businesses into the community to enhance availability of local amenities, and, accessibility by active transportation.</p>
<p>SUSTAINABILITY</p>	<p>Ensure that the Municipality maintains fiscal prudence, along with affordable and sustainable taxation levels.</p>



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THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The development of the 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for the Municipality of Thames Centre was based on comprehensive consultative efforts with the community, and, collaboration with Council and Staff.

1. Community Consultation

The community (residents, businesses and farms) received a mailed postcard inviting them to participate in the online community survey. In addition, the survey was advertised on Google, Facebook, and the Municipality's webpage and public communiques.

Overall, the survey was successful, where the results achieved a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 4%.

As added value, two Open Houses were conducted, respectively in Dorchester and Thorndale.

2. Staff Consultation

All members of the Senior Management Team received a unique survey and feedback was received, not only on their own department, but the municipal operations as a whole.

3. Council Consultation

All members of Council received a unique survey and feedback was received.

Members of Council also participated:

- Council Workshop on October 26, 2023 (feedback received);
- Council Meeting on October 30, 2023 (no revisions received); and
- Council Meeting on November 14, 2023 (amendments received).

A Final Report was submitted to Council for their November 27, 2023 meeting.



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GOALS

Smart Planning

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 local community events, important Municipal notices, Council happenings, as well as other items of interest to residents.

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 support existing businesses, and to attract new businesses into the community. In so doing, the initiative could help enhance the availability of local amenities as well as increase accessibility by means of active transportation, such as walking and biking.

Sustainability

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

CATEGORY	NUMBER	RECOMMENDATION
Strategic Priorities		
	1A	Council adopt the Strategic Pillars of Smart Planning, Community Communications & Engagement, Active Living, and Economic Development as key priorities.
	1B	Council incorporate the strategic priorities into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Budgets To prioritize the allocations of financial resources; ▪ Policies When reviewing, updating or developing new policies; incorporate strategic priorities into the “purpose” of the specific policy and ▪ Staff Reports Continue with identifying how report relates to a Strategic Community Priority.
	1C	The Municipality should identify and promote the strategic priorities on the Municipality’s web site, publications, and future marketing campaigns.
Smart Planning		
	2A	Staff and Council of the Municipality should work together to reduce wait times for applications for consent, minor variances, official plan amendments, and zoning amendments.
	2B	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 by-law.
	2C	When approving new residential sub-divisions, Council should adopt policies (and zoning by-laws) 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.



Community Communications and Engagement

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.
3F	The Municipality should conduct an Integrated Service Delivery Review.



Active Living

- 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 should work with existing partners to support the Playroom and Youth Centre in the urban centres of Dorchester and Thorndale.



Economic Development

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 an “Agricultural Advisory Committee” reporting and advising to Council, and/or, partnering with the Middlesex Federation of Agriculture.
5D	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.
5E	The Municipality could consider a welcoming display greeting drivers along Highway 401 to visit and enjoy Thames Centre’s agriculturally based tourism.
5F	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.
5G	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).



Municipal Services

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| 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 should explore cost saving measures without compromising the service, safety or water quality. |
| 6C | The Municipality could address constraints and opportunities involving by-law 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). |
| 6F | The Municipality should form an Ad Hoc Doctor Recruitment Committee. |

Sustainability

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| 7A | The Municipality establish a Reserve Fund Policy and review the policy annually. |
| 7B | The Municipality should ensure that it acts with fiscal prudence, maintaining affordable and sustainable taxation levels. |
| 7C | The Municipality should prioritize green initiatives and work closely with the Thames Centre Environmental Advisory Committee. |
| 7D | The Municipality should develop a Tree Planting program and ensure that funding is made available for this initiative. |