



Town of Fort Erie

Municipal Council Term in Review

2022-2026

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Town of Fort Erie Municipal Council 2022-2026



Mayor
Wayne Redekop



Ward 1 Councillor
George McDermott



Ward 2 Councillor
Nick Dubanow



Ward 3 Councillor
Darren Flagg



Ward 4 Councillor
Joan Christensen



Ward 5 Councillor
Tom Lewis



Ward 6 Councillor
Ann-Marie Noyes

Overview

In September 2023, the Mayor and Council adopted the 2023-2026 Corporate Strategic Plan (By-law 136-2023). The Strategic Plan developed priorities, goals, and initiatives that provided focus and direction over the four-year term of Council to serve a population of approximately 37,000 residents. Since its release in 2023, the Plan's strategic vision for the Town of Fort Erie has driven departments' operational activities.

This term, Council has improved Fort Erie's government relations framework to advocate for local priorities with ministers at the provincial level. Council and staff have attended 56 meetings with provincial ministers and stakeholders. An additional 10 meetings are planned for the 2026 municipal conference in August.

The Municipal Council Term in Review report provides a high-level perspective of the Town of Fort Erie's most significant operational accomplishments resulting from the Strategic Plan's objectives. The report was prepared by the Office of the CAO in collaboration with Town of Fort Erie department staff.

Strategic Pillars



Operational Improvements

Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) department at the Town of Fort Erie seeks to foster a safe, healthy, and productive workplace for all municipal staff. During this term of Council, the Town's HR department has completed several projects to support municipal staff, including:

- Leadership Training (2024)
- Canadian Mental Health Association Wellness Initiative Launch
- New Employee Welcome Tours (2025)
- Upgrades to ADP (Human Resources Information System)
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Training (see Strategic Pillar 2)
- Successful Bargaining for a New Collective Agreement for 2025-2027.

Information Technology Services

Customer Self-Service Portal

In 2022, the Town introduced myFE; a self-service portal for taxpayers to access their bills online. The myFE portal currently has 5,479 subscribers with 80% of users choosing paperless.

E-service options at the Town continue to expand. These e-services offer flexibility for corporate and residential customers to apply for licences, permits, and make payments online, saving time and money associated with in-person options. In 2026, e-services processed 6,445 online payments; 2.5 times the number of transactions processed in 2020.

Wide Area Network Improvements

Information Technology has significantly increased the capacity and resilience of the network providing services at Town facilities. Information Technology's key improvements include the:

- Creation of a datacentre at Fire Station 2.
- Addition of fibre optic network and internet connectivity at Town Hall, the Leisureplex, and Fire Station 2.

- Network expansion to Gibson operations centre, Fire Stations 4 and 5, 3 library locations and the Crystal Ridge Community Centre (to be completed in 2026).

Legal & Legislative Services

Legal and Legislative Services is a strategic resource to Council, boards, and committees. The department has prioritized improving legislative services for Town staff and residents alike.

Managing Council and Committee Meetings

- **eScribe** - the Town adopted a new meeting management software – eScribe – to centralize Council and Committee agendas, minutes, and legislative information.
- **Meeting Schedule** – the Town changed procedural by-law to optimize scheduling for Council and Committee meetings (By-law 117-2024).

Records Modernization

- **Docusign Adoption** – choosing digital, rather than physical signatures, has reduced the amount of paper used, saving staff time and resources.
- **Digitization of Physical Records** - Town records are moving to an Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS). As of April 2026, one million documents had been transferred to the EDRMS, improving document access and organization.

Community Services

Collaborating with Service Providers

The Town is fortunate to have great organizations that provide social services to our residents. The Fort Erie service providers network – hosted by the Town and led by United Way of South Niagara – meets quarterly to discuss programming, opportunities, and challenges that the organizations are facing. Most recently an Anchor Table for Food Security has emerged from the group, and a survey will be conducted to capture the programs available.

Customer Service Improvements

Contact Centre as a Service (CaaS) software was approved in the 2026 Capital Budget based on a business case that identified opportunities to improve customer service, to modernize processes, and increase opportunities for data collection, analysis, and reporting of customer requests to the Town. The project kicked off in June 2026 and is scheduled for full implementation by mid-Fall.

Museum Services

- **Three-Year Strategic Plan** – in June 2026, Council approved the Fort Erie Museum Services Strategic Plan for 2026-2029. The plan synthesizes broad internal and external engagement responses to offer a clear, forward-thinking vision for Museum Services that is grounded in Fort Erie's unique identity. Museum Services prioritizes knowledge mobilization, community engagement, storytelling, and sustainability in the plan.
- **Interpretation and Programming** – Museum Services engages the community through new exhibitions and programming. Over the past four years, the department has opened a Wartime Experiences Exhibition, Community of Communities Online Exhibition, Heritage Plaques Online Exhibition, and temporary Town Hall Exhibitions. In addition, the department coordinated the Railway Museum's 50th Anniversary Event and initiated the Seniors Home Outreach Program.

Communications Advancements

Social Media Growth

Facebook	Instagram	LinkedIn
• Current followers: 11,912 • Growth since 2023: +5,161 followers	• Current followers: 4,270 • Growth since 2023: +2,046 followers	• Current followers: 4,669 • Growth since 2023: +2,262 followers

Communications has delivered **1,783 social media posts** and **68 media releases** since 2023, keeping residents informed on Town issues and news.

Additional Improvements

- **New Text Notification Service** – Fort Erie launched its new text notification service (SMS) for residents to stay up to date on local community events and to provide information during emergencies. In two years, the Town has gained 1,101 SMS subscribers. Sharing immediate updates with residents has never been easier.
- **Social Media Promotions for Business and Park Openings** – Fort Erie's Communications department prioritizes public engagement by attending all Town Business and Park openings to take photos and to promote on our social media channels. This helps residents connect with new local businesses and discover new places to visit.
- **Destination Attraction Marketing Campaigns** – Communications and Economic Development and Tourism Services deliver annual summer and winter tourism marketing campaigns that position Fort Erie as a year-round tourism destination. Each campaign features a variety of content, including social media reels, still ads and unique content created by social media influencers. Together, these efforts increase engagement, broaden audience reach outside of Niagara, and highlight the unique experiences available in Fort Erie.
- **Fort Erie Website Upgrades** – Over the past four years, Communications has updated/migrated "forterie.ca" to two new website hosting platforms. Both migrations included changes to hundreds of unique pages and helped improve site functionality and design, using modern best practices. Communications have also migrated Let's Talk Fort Erie to a new provider. Let's Talk Fort Erie now features a variety of new engagement tools for residents to use when providing feedback on projects.

Finance

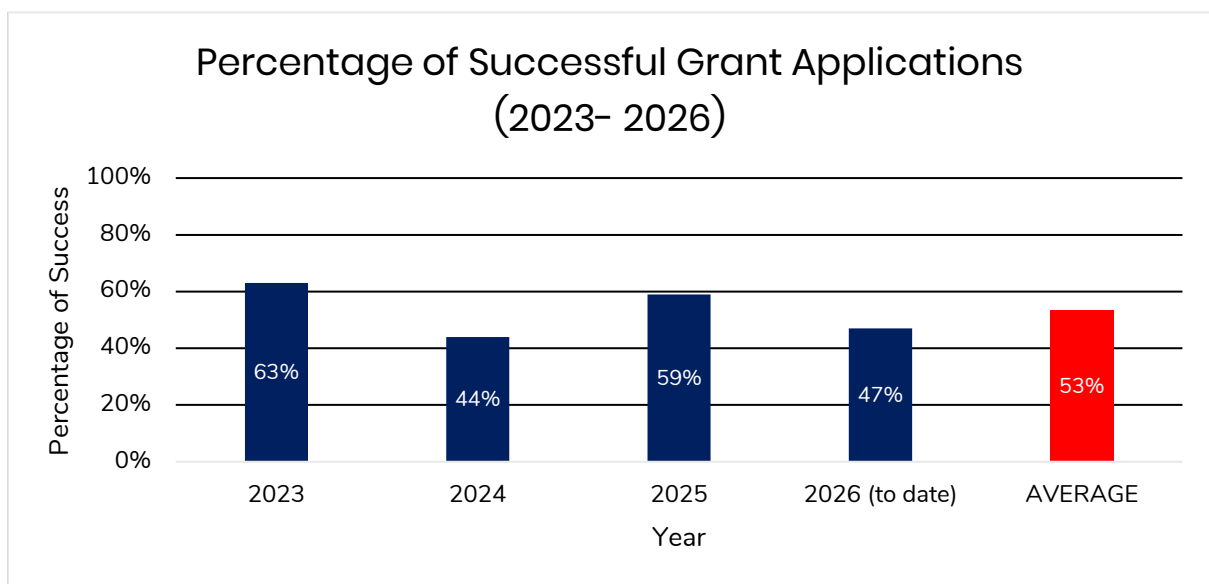
There have been many enhancements to financial operations, including the expansion of electronic payment options, development charge and fee reviews, investments, as well as system and reporting enhancements.

Grant Application Success

The Town of Fort Erie has received grants across a range of our service areas from the federal, provincial, and regional governments, as well as other funding organizations. Since the start of term, Fort Erie has received over \$9.36 million in grants, not including

permanent and core programs such as the OMPF and Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. In 2025, Fort Erie received notice that significant contributions would be made towards infrastructure developments totaling over \$6.7 million, through the Housing Enabling Water Systems Fund and Health & Safety Water Stream of the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Program.

Overall, Fort Erie has seen success in its grant submissions, with on average more submissions being approved for funding than denied. The data below is categorized based on the year the grant application was submitted.



Financial Indicators

The Town performs well across the standard financial indicators produced by the Province of Ontario. All key indicators meet the “low” risk and 5 of 7 indicators compare favourably to the provincial average. When comparing “like” properties in the most recent annual provincial BMA Study, the Town residential tax levy was the second lowest of all Niagara municipalities and all other property types were below average for all Niagara comparators. Even when expanded to include the water and wastewater utility – which is more expensive in Fort Erie due to several underlying factors– the total “municipal burden” charges are still below average. The average annual tax levy increase during this term of Council was 3.7% for the median assessed home.

Asset Management Plan (AMP) Financing Strategy

The Strategy was brought to Council in April 2026. Council has made a cumulative 36% increase in sustained investments in total capital reserve contributions over this term, but the strategy noted large, continued infrastructure funding gaps, common in Ontario, that need to be addressed into the future. The Town has very low debt balances and annual servicing costs which will assist with this funding strategy.

Infrastructure Services

Watermain Replacement Projects – 2022-2026

Project Location	Construction Start	Substantial Performance
Idlewylde Street	March 2023	December 2023
King Street	January 2024	September 2024
Lindbergh Drive & Burbank Terrace	February 2024	November 2024
Point Abino Road South	February 2024	November 2024
Ott Road & West Main Street	March 2025	December 2025
Bowen Road	March 2026	May 2026
Elm Street	March 2026	June 2026 (expected)
Thunder Bay Road	April 2026	November 2026 (expected)

Key Outcomes



Wastewater Trenchless Rehabilitation Program – 2024-2026

The Town's Wastewater Trenchless Rehabilitation Program is a multi-year infrastructure renewal initiative focused on reducing inflow and infiltration, improving wastewater system reliability, extending the useful life of underground assets, and minimizing disruption to residents through trenchless technologies.

Project Location	Construction Start	Substantial Performance
North-End Fort Erie Catchment Areas	Summer 2025	May 2026
Lakeshore SPS Catchment Area	May 2026	To Be Determined
Catherine Street SPS Catchment Area	July 2026	Fall 2026 (expected)

Key Outcomes



New Maintenance Hole Liner Installations

The Town of Fort Erie successfully identified 17 maintenance holes experiencing high levels of inflow and infiltration, accelerating their corrosion. Installing maintenance hole lining technology stopped the flow of infiltration into our sanitary system. The flex liner installments have saved Fort Erie significant wastewater treatment costs and energy costs, while improving resiliency to climate change and reducing our impact on the environment and Great Lakes watershed. The flex lining technology has already rehabilitated 10 corroding maintenance holes. The final 7 lining installations are scheduled for summer 2026.

Asset and Work Order Management System

Continuing work started in 2019, the Town implemented a new Asset Management Policy, Strategy, and the new AWOMS (Asset and Work Order Management System), aligning with *Ontario Regulation 588/17: Asset Management Planning for Municipal Infrastructure* and Fort Erie's Corporate Asset Management Plan.

The AWOMS spans a wide range of assets including transportation networks, water and wastewater systems, natural assets, and facilities supported by an asset register, GIS integration, and real-time data analytics. The AWOMS has over 80 contributors across 8 departments. The AWOMS defines Levels of Service (LOS) and improves decision-making through scenario-based financial and lifecycle planning.

Over the past four years, Fort Erie has made substantial progress in advancing data accuracy, governance, and operational efficiency, through the implementation of the AWOMS.

Planning and Development Services

Operational Accomplishments

Since 2022, Ontario has experienced an unprecedented pace of Planning reform. There have been approximately 10 major legislative packages that directly affected municipal planning, with hundreds of individual amendments to the *Planning Act* and related legislation. Even so, during this term, Planning staff have met the *Planning Act's* legislated timelines for a majority of their applications.

Planning staff have also cleared historical subdivision files with a history of multiple extensions and been successful in several development appeals. In addition, the responsible staff are nearing completion of the Planning Application Fee Review, which recommended full cost recovery and is anticipated to increase annual revenues by approximately \$1.5 million and reduce the net annual deficit from \$1.8 million to \$262,100.

Parks and Recreation

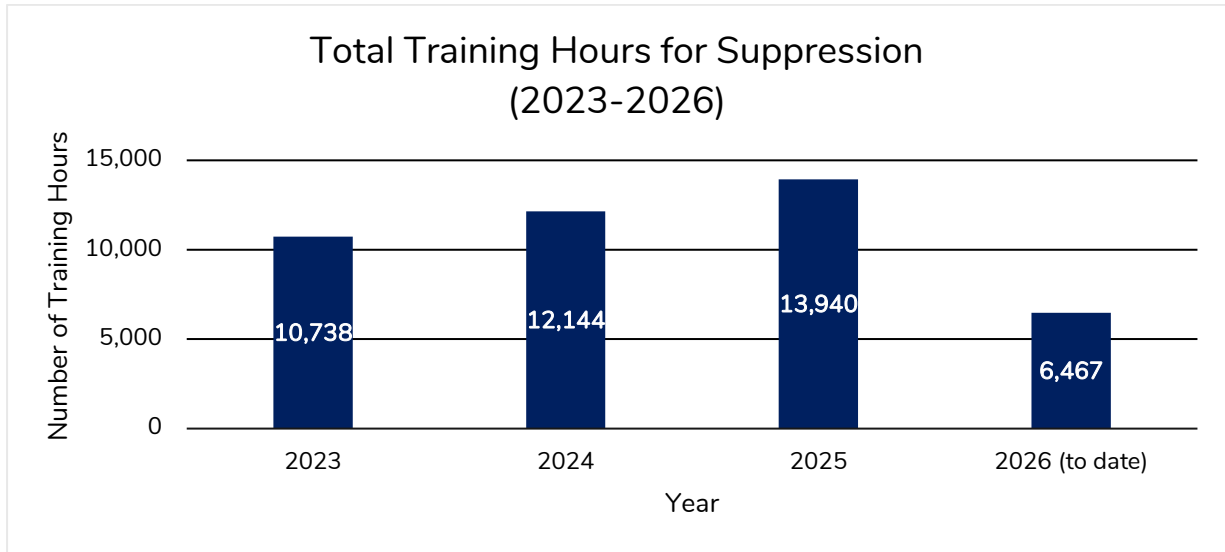
Below is a list of the many new and revitalized parks and recreation services within the Town of Fort Erie, positively contributing to residents' quality of life.

- Douglas Park Master Plan and Revitalization.
- Sugar Bowl Park and Splashpad.
- Stevensville Dog Park.
- High Pointe Park.
- Grand Re-opening of the Town of Fort Erie Tennis Courts.
- Erie Beach Park Plan (concept design stage).
- Ferndale Multi-use Court Conversion.
- Albert Street Park Renovation.
- Crystal Ridge Park Improvements.
- Friendship Trail Pedestrian Crossing (Ridge Rd & Gorham Rd).
- Ridgeway Battlefield Park Improvements.
- Goderich Street Park Playground Replacement.
- Energy Field Court Replacement.
- Oakes Park Ball Diamond Improvements.
- Lions Sugarbowl Park Band Shell and Playground Replacement.
- Waterfront Parks and Windows Signage.
- Spears Park Development.

Fire and Emergency Services

The Fort Erie Fire Department consists of 100 trained and certified volunteer firefighters supporting emergency response calls out of four stations. The department responds to approximately 1,200 calls per year to prioritize community safety. In 2023-2025 the most common calls responded to were medical in nature.

Training Hours for Suppression

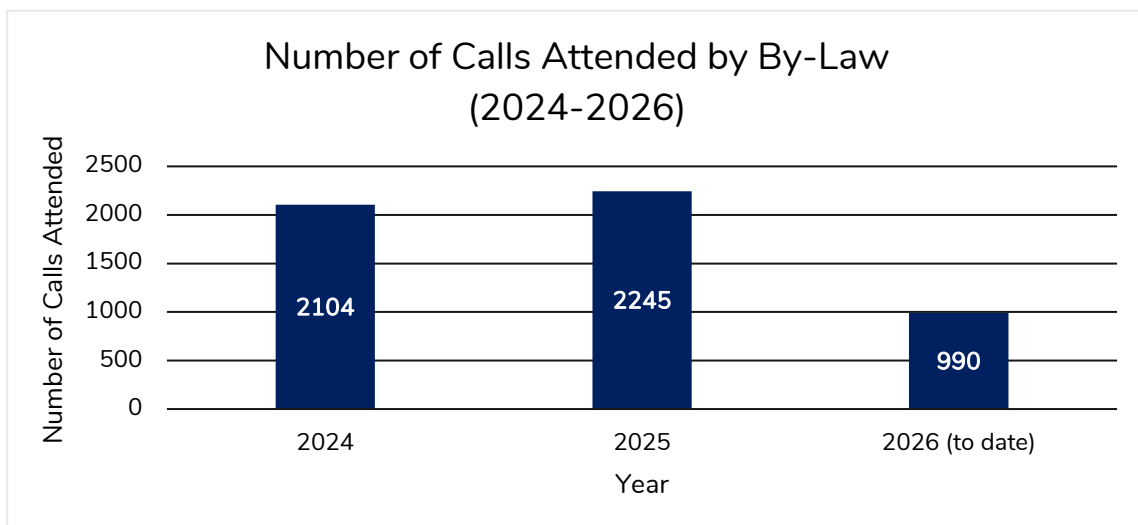


Public Education

Public Education is a priority for the Fort Erie Fire Department. Approximately 12 public educators are dedicated to a volunteer public safety team, which assists with the door-to-door smoke alarm program, S.A.F.E (Smoke Alarms Fort Erie), in addition to community events, school presentations and junior firefighter camps.

By-Law Services

By-law Enforcement Officers at the Town of Fort Erie have improved their relationship with the community by engaging the public at local events, attending calls (see chart for data below), and education efforts. Some of these engagements include Earth Day initiatives, Supper Club in Crystal Beach, Suicide Prevention Groups, and Junior Fire Fighters Camp.



Strategic Pillar 1 – Sustainable, Reliable Access to Local Health Care

A community...where all residents have equitable access to comprehensive, community-based, innovative health care and social services.

The past four years, the Community Health Services team has worked to protect, invest, and build out comprehensive health services to the community of Fort Erie.

Gilmore Lodge Community Hub and Hospice Niagara

In 2025, Gilmore Lodge opened; a long-term care home and community hub. The new Gilmore Lodge redevelopment project is a three-storey, non-combustible structure that includes 160 long-term care beds and a community hub. Each resident home area is subdivided into two 16-bed wings, featuring shorter hallways with sitting areas located at the end of each corridor. The redevelopment is an investment in comprehensive health and social services for Fort Erie residents. Planning staff also approved a site plan for a Hospice Niagara building on the same site as the Gilmore Lodge long-term care facility. This hospice includes 10 beds and other supporting programs to bring a valuable healthcare facility to Fort Erie.

Physician Recruitment

- Community Health Services staff have attended international repatriation and recruitment events in partnership with the Niagara Region.
- Council passed a by-law (By-law 25-2024) to adopt the Physician Recruitment, Retention, and Medical Education Financial Incentive Policy to support efforts to attract and retain physicians in Fort Erie.

Reimagining Douglas Memorial

The Town has worked hard to make sure that health care services will still be provided at the Douglas Memorial site after the new South Niagara Hospital opens. Efforts to make this vision a reality include:

- Meetings with the Community Health Services Committee.

- Consultations with Urgent Care Centre physicians about future partnerships with service providers.
- Press conference in response to the reduction of Urgent Care Centre hours.
- Presentations to the Niagara Health Board.
- Delegations to the Ministry of Health.
- Meeting with members of the Ontario Medical Association.
- Meeting with interested community and stakeholder groups.
- Researching and reviewing community health care models in other municipalities.

Strategic Pillar 2 – Quality of Life and Community Well-Being

A community...that is welcoming, engaged, and inclusive and provides opportunities for everyone.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Training

In 2023 and 2024, the Town implemented an EDI Action Plan to embed inclusion in all facets of the organization. EDI principles enable a working environment that allows every employee to be treated fairly and can contribute to the success of the Town. The EDI workplan seeks to increase the EDI competencies of all employees and enhance the inclusive culture of the organization.

Friendship Trail Safety Study

The Friendship Trail Safety Study, completed in 2024, reviewed crossing conditions, signage, visibility, and cyclist and pedestrian safety at all 17 road crossings throughout the Town. The study identified areas where safety improvements are needed, including enhanced warning signage, improved visibility, and more consistent crossing treatments.

Multi-year Accessibility Plan

The 2024-2029 Multi-year Accessibility Plan outlines Fort Erie's strategy to remove barriers and meet requirements under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. The Plan was approved by Council in 2024 (By-law 131-2024) to ensure that Fort Erie commits to sustaining an inclusive community that remove barriers and prevents new barriers from being created.

StopGap Ramp Program

In alignment with the Multi-year Accessibility Plan, the Town's Accessibility Advisory Committee has undertaken the *StopGap* ramp project to increase accessibility in Fort Erie. In 2023, a pilot project took place in Ridgeway in which nine businesses successfully applied for a *StopGap* temporary ramp to reduce barriers to entry in local buildings. In 2024, Council approved the funding for 10 more ramps.

Parks and Open Space Master Plan

Fort Erie's parks and open space system includes 34 parks, covering 150 hectares of sports fields, passive parks, natural areas, heritage parks, and civic squares. The Parks and Open Space Master Plan is a guiding document that provides a framework for making decisions about the outdoor spaces and facilities the Town manages.

Strategic Pillar 3 – Sustainable and Managed Growth

A community...that manages growth responsibly and recognizes existing neighbourhoods by implementing effective planning and policies.

Development Planning

The Development Planning team has worked towards site and development approvals to sustain the managed growth occurring in Fort Erie. Below is a list of the most significant projects from recent years that are approved or being reviewed for approval.

Development	Approval Status	Units Created
Spring Creek Subdivision	Final Approval	219 units
Spears Garden	Final Approval	211 units
Regional Housing – 255 High Street	Site Plan Approval	62 units
576 Ridge Road Subdivision	Draft Approval	118 units
Waterford Estates	Draft Approval	129 units
Crescent Acres	Draft Approval	238 units
Rebstock Road Condo	Draft Approval	90 units

High Pointe East Subdivision - Pettit Road	Draft Approval	97 units
3770 Hazel Street Condo	Draft Approval	93 units
436-440 Ridge Road	Zoning By-Law Amendment and Site Plan	90 units
825 Garrison Road	Zoning By-Law Amendment	100 units

Fort Erie Education

Investments in Fort Erie Public Schools

The provincial government announced funding in Fort Erie to open a new elementary school and to expand Greater Fort Erie Secondary School. The provincial investment will help accommodate the growth within our community and improve the quality of student life. The two school expansion projects will receive a combined approximate of \$46 million to add over 1,000 student seats in Fort Erie.

Heritage Planning

In 2024, the Town advanced its heritage planning efforts through the engagement of a heritage consultant, Architectural Research Associates Inc., to review properties listed on the Municipal Heritage Register. At the start of this initiative, 34 non-designated properties were listed on the Register. A total of 32 properties were reviewed as part of this process. As a result, 12 properties have been successfully designated under the *Ontario Heritage Act*. This represents a significant milestone for the Town and reflects a proactive approach to heritage conservation.

New Town of Fort Erie Official Plan

Fort Erie was the first local area municipality in the Niagara Region to receive provincial approval of their new Official Plan. The new Official Plan came into effect in May 2026. The Plan will guide growth and development in Fort Erie to 2051, setting out updated policies for land use, housing, employment, natural heritage, agriculture, cultural heritage, infrastructure, and community planning.

Strategic Pillar 4 – Economic Prosperity and Diversification

A community...that creates opportunities for economic growth and job creation by maximizing our strategic location and tourism potential.

Business and Industry Growth

Since the pandemic in 2020, Fort Erie has seen more than 200 new net total businesses open. The types of businesses include retail, food establishments, and professional services. This number continues to increase as companies and entrepreneurs experience the value of Fort Erie as a place to live, work, and invest.

The Fort Erie Advantage

Fort Erie's location remains its greatest strategic advantage with a market of 135 million people within 800 kilometres.



Source: Niagara Economic Development

Abatement Technologies

Abatement Technologies has been operating in Fort Erie for 79 years. They completed construction on a new state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in summer 2023. The new facility now serves as the company's global headquarters contributing to local employment and economic prosperity.

Holland Power Services

Holland Power Services (HPS) is a Canadian company that provides emergency power restoration services, typically resulting from severe weather events. HPS purchased six

acres of vacant industrial land in Stevensville to accommodate their company's growth. The official unveiling of Holland Power Services' new 13,000 square foot facility was held in August 2024 and represents a \$3 million investment in our local economy.

New Ridgeway Centre

A new commercial development – Ridgeway Centre – exemplifies businesses' growing presence in Fort Erie. The development will progress in two phases. Phase one is complete and focused on the development of 16,000 square feet of commercial space. Phase two of the development is underway and will consist of additional commercial units available for lease.

Siltech Corporation

Siltech Corporation manufactures speciality silicone used in the personal care, automotive, agriculture, pulp and paper, and oil and gas industries. In 2025, Siltech's new 237,000 square foot manufacturing facility officially opened its doors in Fort Erie, stimulating local economic growth.

New Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

The new CIP consolidates the Town's existing CIPs into a single comprehensive document, modernizes the Town's financial incentive programs, establishes six Core Area Community Improvement Project Areas and a Town-wide Brownfield Community Improvement Project Area. The CIP provides a coordinated framework to encourage investment, revitalization, brownfield redevelopment, and environmental sustainability. The draft has gone through public consultation, received its final review from the Province of Ontario, and is targeted to be approved by Council before the fall.

Tourism Strategy

Economic Development and Tourism Services is currently developing a comprehensive five-year Tourism Strategy and Destination Development Plan. The goal of the plan is to strengthen Fort Erie's position as a compelling, competitive, and sustainable tourism destination. The strategy will help guide growth and support tourism over the next five years in a way that benefits both visitors and residents. Key areas of focus include destination and experience development, identifying infrastructure improvements, and

enhancing the overall visitor experience. The Tourism Strategy will be implemented using a phased approach.



Strategic Pillar 5 – Environmental and Climate Change Resiliency

A community...that addresses climate change and the impacts to the natural environment by proactive planning and action.

Climate Change Action Plan

The Town adopted its first Climate Change Action Plan as a step forward in protecting the community and environment for future generations. Fort Erie has worked to advance the Climate Change Action Plan by implementing various environmental initiatives.

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Chargers** – The Town of Fort Erie started offering publicly available EV charging stations at multiple locations across the community, supporting cleaner transportation, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and improving convenience for residents and visitors.
- **Tree Planting Partnerships and Initiatives** – the Town received two environmental grants from the Niagara Community Foundation (NCF) for community projects that will help protect local wildlife, support biodiversity, and expand green space for

residents to enjoy. Fort Erie's tree planting partnerships contribute to early success with the Town's Climate Change Action Plan.

- **Community Gardens** – 2026 marked the launch of Fort Erie's first Town-led Community Gardens initiative bringing together community residents and organizations to grow fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers. The gardens encourage healthy eating, physical activity, social connection, and provide a source of low-cost food. These gardens are made possible by the generous support of community partners and sponsors.

Tree By-law

The Town has updated the tree by-law (By-law 33-2024) to help protect our tree canopy and natural heritage within Fort Erie's Urban Boundary. Heritage trees and endangered, threatened, and at-risk species are also protected and may require additional approvals in addition to a tree permit.

Strategic Pillar 6 – Comprehensive Housing Options

A community...where all residents have access to safe, stable, and appropriate housing that is affordable for all ages, abilities, and income levels.

Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan

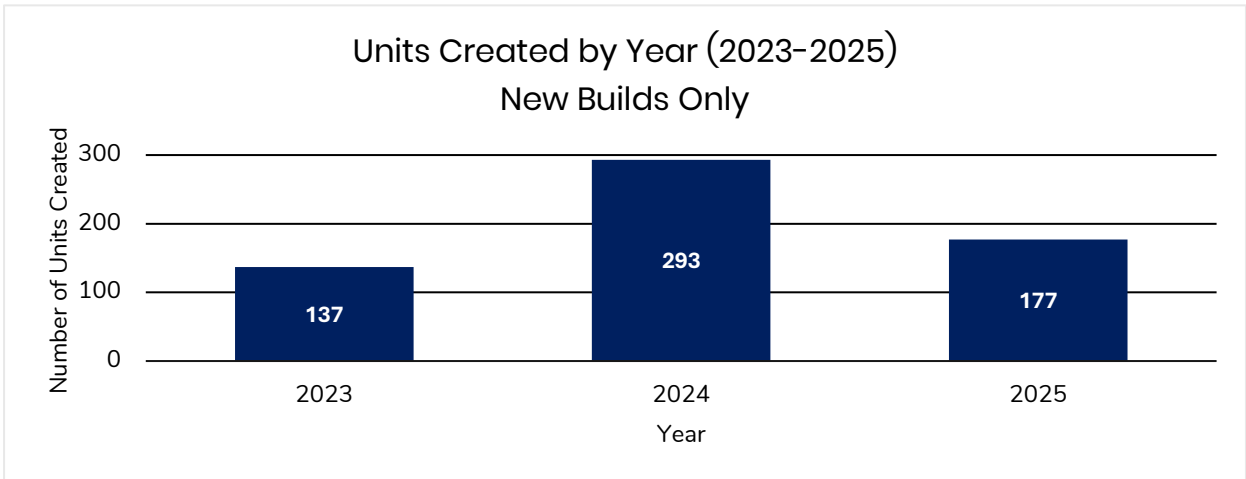
Council adopted the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (AHCIP) and approved the implementing by-law in February 2025. This marked a significant milestone in the Town's ongoing efforts to increase access to affordable housing units for residents. The AHCIP initiated three incentive programs available for applications: the affordable housing per door grant, the affordable housing study grant, and the additional dwelling unit grant. The first application was received in March 2025, with a total of 16 applications received to date.

Affordable Housing Symposium

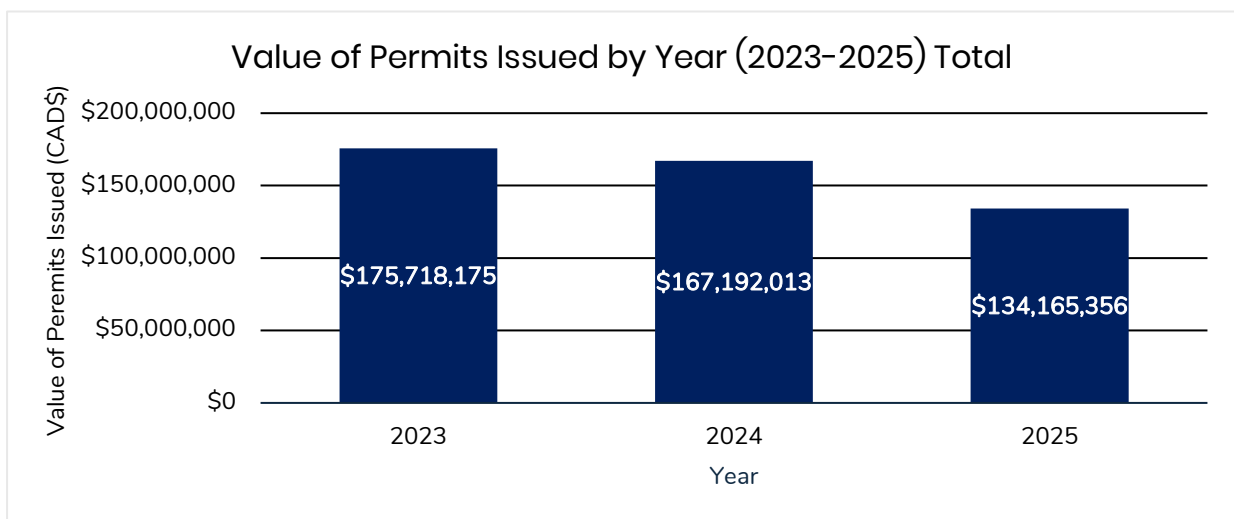
In alignment with its plan, the Town hosted its first Affordable Housing Symposium in 2025 to bring together builders, developers, and community partners to discuss the existing solutions for addressing affordable housing problems.

Building Permits and Units Created

Fort Erie continues to issue a sustainable number of building permits. The number of new units built, and value of building permits collected, reflects the Town's commitment to advancing housing development in Fort Erie.



Sources: PBBS-22-2026, PBBS-31-2025, PDS-27-2024



Sources: PBBS-22-2026, PBBS-31-2025, PDS-27-2024

Conclusion

This report demonstrates Town staff's commitment to public service and Council's commitment to their mission: "to lead and serve Fort Erie by fostering opportunities, leveraging partnerships and managing our resources to achieve prosperity."

The Town of Fort Erie pursued important projects in support of the six pillars of the Corporate Strategic Plan. Strategic plan reporting tools, like the public dashboard, are accessible for residents to ensure the Town of Fort Erie is meeting its strategic objectives.

The Town of Fort Erie works to create *A Community for Everyone...*