



# OUR WEST END

## Neighbourhood Renewal

*Our Streets. Our Neighbourhoods. Our West End.*

Spring 2016 Newsletter



PROUD FUNDED PARTNER OF

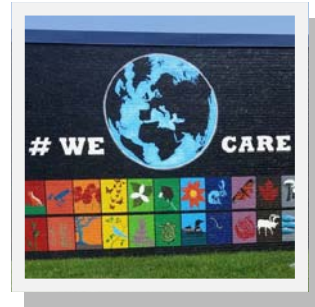


United Way  
Centraide  
Windsor-Essex County

# Highlights

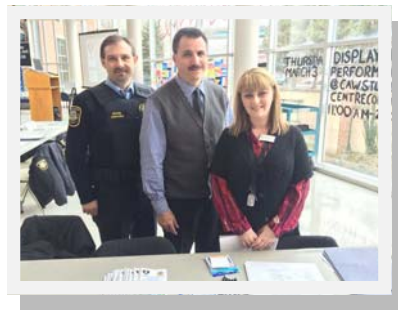
## #WeCare Community Mural

Last Spring Our West End and Windsor Police Community Services Branch partnered with Westview Freedom Academy's Art Program to create the #We Care Community Mural as a graded project of the school's art classes. The students each created endangered species artwork to contribute to their piece of the mural. You can check out the results at the corner of Askin Ave and Tecumseh Rd W, at Aaron's Furniture.



## Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Town Hall

On March 1st OWE hosted our annual Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Town Hall in partnership with Windsor Police and Campus Police at the University of Windsor. The event provided a great opportunity for residents to come to campus and meet their student neighbours, while learning crime prevention skills from Windsor Police.



## Biz West Networking Night

On February 23rd we hosted our first ever networking night as part of our new Biz West business engagement program, a program established in partnership with **Biz X** magazine. The purpose of this event was to promote strength and unity among the West End business community. The event was a huge success thanks to the help of our many partners including Rock Bottom, Hurricane's Pub and Grill, West Side Foods, Black Bench Coffee Roasters, Colio Winery, Walkerville Brewery, and Bailey's.



# Life After Fifty

## Who We Are...

Life After Fifty (LAF) provides opportunities for older adults in the Windsor-Essex community to be fit, be social and be well! LAF is a non-profit organization and a registered charity.

## What We Offer:

- Recreation Centres for older adults in the East & West sides of the city, as well as programs in Lakeshore at the Atlas Tube Centre.
- A large array of programs, classes, activities & workshops designed to promote well-being and active living.
- Special events, educational presentations, day trips & more!
- A Café offering affordable, nutritious meals.
- Volunteer opportunities to stay involved and engaged in your community.
- Wellness Services including Foot Care, Friendly Visiting & more.

## LAF's Connection with Our West End

Life After Fifty is proud to be a resident of Windsor's West End through our West Side Recreation Centre. As a tax payer in west Windsor, and as an key community resource, we believe strongly that LAF has an important role to play in the strengthening and revitalization of our surrounding neighborhoods. The Our West End neighbourhood renewal strategy is now officially a program of Life After Fifty. This program, along with funding from the United Way, allows us to continue to expand our community work in supporting the Our West End neighbourhood renewal.



## Exciting Upgrades for LAF's West Side Computer Lab



Both centres are equipped with computer labs with desktop computers, internet, laptop accessibility and printer/scanner services. The computer lab is open to the public - membership/ day pass not required.

Recently in 2016, Caesars Windsor and the Circle of 7 donated \$14,000 towards the renovation of the West Side Centre's Computer Lab. These funds will

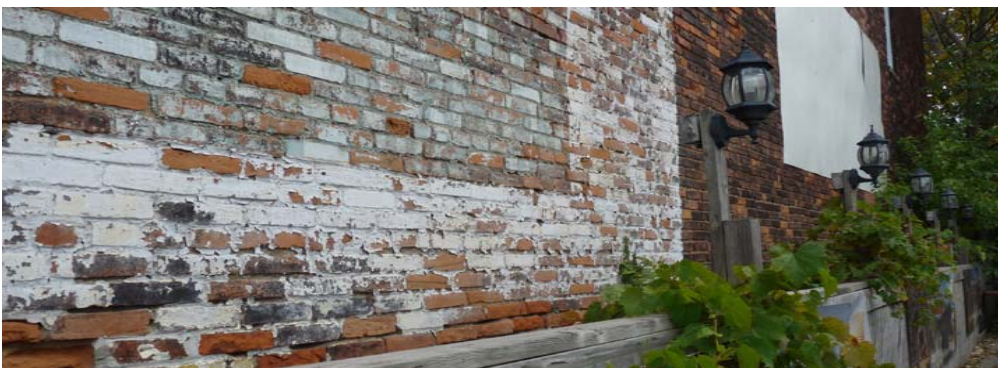
allow Life After Fifty to not only replace old computers and outdated software, but also improve the physical space to increase accessibility. This upgrade will provide LAF with the tools necessary to properly teach computer literacy, and encourage people to stay connected with loved ones and informed about community news and events.

# Our History

Sandwich, Walkerville and Ford City were separate communities until they were amalgamated with Windsor in 1935. Each of these communities has their own defining characteristics that make them unique despite their similar origins. Sandwich, located on Windsor's western edge, is the city's most historic community and home to some of the region's most important institutions: the University of Windsor, the Duff-Baby House (Windsor's oldest home, built in 1798), the HMCS Hunter Naval Reserve, Dominion House and Mackenzie Hall (constructed by Canada's second Prime Minister, Alexander Mackenzie, in 1855). These buildings are a direct link that connect Windsor's west end to its origins, and though brick and mortar gives it form, the colourful people that make up its past provide its character.

The first ferry to transport passengers across the Detroit River was operated by Canadians Thomas Chilver and William Campbell. Although these men were not from Sandwich, the ferry service they operated was. The Gem disembarked at the foot of Brock Street and carried passengers by day while transporting fugitive slaves across the border into Sandwich at night, one of the final stops on the Underground Railroad.

In more recent history, Sandwich has been the home to rum runners who smuggled alcohol into the United States during prohibition (1920-1933). Rum running was a dangerous task that required runners to cross the Detroit River in total darkness while eluding American authorities; in the winter, it was made especially dangerous as they had to cross over ice. Many people in Sandwich profited from this era, one of whom was Jules Robinet, a winemaker with thousands of acres of grapes reaching beyond Peter Street where Sandwich ended. The building at the corner of Mill and Sandwich was even built by Robinet in 1895 and housed a cellar for his wine, a grocery store and living quarters for his family on the third floor.



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These are just some of the people and places that make up the history of Windsor's west end, and it is more important than ever that we bring attention to this forgotten part of the city. Many of the west end's historic buildings have fallen into disrepair, but there are signs of hope. The Sandwich Post Office, built in 1905, is being converted into a coffee shop and there is a new microbrewery being installed next to Rock Bottom restaurant and bar. The Sandwich Fire Hall, built in 1921, is being converted into a library and Westside Foods continues to be a huge success. These institutions and businesses are important to Sandwich as they are not only a link to the past, but the way to the future. The history column for Our West End will explore the people and places of the west end to bring attention to this vital community of Windsor and to show that it is more than the vacant homes on Indian Road or a victim of the Ambassador Bridge, but a community that can draw on its past as an inspiration for the future.

Jason Lavin

MA Candidate in History at the University of Windsor





# Our Experience

Growing up in the west end in the 70's we walked everywhere. Every kid did. We'd walk to University Mall when it was loaded with stores. Then we'd cross the street to Kmart to get their yummy fries and gravy. On Friday nights we'd walk to Kennedy High school for their Friday night dances. They had the best bands. And after we'd walk home in the dark.

My best friend and I lived 2 blocks apart. When we were getting together we'd walk and meet up half way in the middle. Every Saturday we'd walk downtown to go shopping or to the show. All the movie theatres were down there and the stores were plentiful. I remember Smith's, Kresge's there were so many. We'd walk to Bowlero to go bowling though we never did know how to keep score. We'd walk to Adie Knox to go swimming then later at night to go roller skating. Can't forget walking to the corner store for chips and pop.

When you were from the west end there was really no reason to go to the east end. We had everything...school, shopping, hospital, friends, even grandma's. The only time we ventured east was to eat at Franco's. They had the best pizza. And we'd walk all the way. Now that was far.

Walking in the winter was no fun with our short bomber jackets and Levi's hugging our hips. Man it was cold but we looked good.

Back in my public school days there were no school buses. We all walked to school and home for lunch then back to school for the afternoon. Four miles a day I had to walk, a kid in public school. How I admired the kids who lived close to the school who wouldn't have to walk all that way. I didn't realize it then but you really do get to know yourself when you walk.

Caroline Taylor  
West Windsor Resident & Our West End Volunteer

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# Our Business

Smack in the center of Bridgeview, on College near Campbell, Stathis Grill opened their restaurant in May 2013. Seeing pretty much nothing but houses on neighbouring streets in all directions, it was a prime location to choose.

During the eight months of renovations, residents would stop and inquire on the type of business, and were glad to hear it wasn't going to be "another bar". Once opened, customers started trickling in, and were very excited to finally have a family restaurant in their neighbourhood. They soon became regulars, sitting at preferred tables, and bringing friends. Since then, news spread about their great food and service. Their staff is hardworking, loyal, and have become like members of the family. People continue to recommend the place, repeat customers are a constant, and business is still growing. People like me practically live there. If you haven't been yet, you should go!

Owned by Demetrios "Jimmy" Stathis, his son Pete and wife Celia, I can't imagine my neighbourhood or life without them. Pete & Celia's daughter Zoe, a year old in February 2016, is the most adorable little girl with such character! Their second baby-on-the-way is due to arrive in June 2016.

They are community-minded, very generous, and supportive of great causes. As a member of many West end organizations, this writer cannot convey enough, just how much their support is appreciated. Go to their Web site [www.stathisgrill.com](http://www.stathisgrill.com) or just stop in, and check out their menu. Find them on Facebook, and give them a "Like"!

Stathis Grill is: People, Comfort, Home cooked food, Meeting place, Warm, and Inviting. They are an essential addition to the Bridgeview area, and the West end. Stathis is most importantly, Family.

*Rita Higgins*

West End Resident & Our West End Volunteer  
President of West Side Crawlers  
Vice President of Bridgeview Community Outreach Group



Sunday 9:00am-10:00pm, Monday: CLOSED, Tuesday-Saturday 10:30am-10:00pm

# Our Parks

In theory, parks foster cooperation and collaboration. They are spaces where everyone is equally afforded opportunities to be active, to socialize, to relax, and to be entertained. They are spaces where youth come to gain independence and to develop social skills. They are spaces where we go to collectively garden, sharing quite literally in the 'fruits' of our labour. In turn, they can and often do become *places* that engender emotions and unique experiences shared by neighbours and friends. Parks develop their own identities in a community, and as a result they are watched and protected by the people who use them. Well-developed park space enhances the quality of life in a neighbourhood and supports community development. At Our West End we believe that we need to advocate for the preservation of our parks, but by preservation I am not only referring to the mere existence of our parks; I am also referring to the need to keep them well-developed. What we hope to do through this short article is to highlight the current realities of park space in West Windsor, and then to explore what kinds of opportunities there are for all of us together, and with our partners in the City of Windsor Parks Department, to improve our park system.

Our current reality is that in West Windsor many of our neighbourhood parks have suffered from disinvestment, which is evidenced by the fact that many have actually lost infrastructure. Removing infrastructure from a park without a plan for redevelopment can destroy that park's identity and can remove the capacity for productive activity. Some of our parks have become completely bare, and because of this they run a greater risk of attracting crime and illicit activity. At the very least, parks need to contain a base level of amenities including lighting, park benches, tree cover, signage, walkways and garbage cans. Again, we need to advocate not only for the preservation of our parks, but for investment in the basic infrastructure necessary to generate positive activities within them.

What is more disheartening is that we are also faced with the prospect of our parks being sold. This is particularly concerning because the land in West Windsor's residential neighbourhoods that is being bought and developed is being turned into multiunit student rentals. Opportunistic landlords often overdevelop property beyond its planned and safe capacity. These types of dwellings completely change the character of a neighbourhood in a way that can impede

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successful community development. In addition, the loss of our neighbourhood parks could create barriers great enough that some people may lose access to green-space all together. For someone who cannot afford to drive or is dependent on public transit, who cannot physically walk further than a block, and who cannot cross major roads alone, these neighbourhood parks may be the only parks they have reasonable access to.

## Should we measure usage in parks that are under resourced?

The logic behind selling parks in West Windsor is that many of our parks are going unused or underused. In my opinion, this assessment is based on an inadequate measurement system that exists because of the many financial and staffing barriers facing the Parks & Recreation department. Frankly, the way park usage is measured does not reflect reality. Based on what I have been told, this is done in two ways: through maintenance staff observation; and, through the frequency of phone calls that the Parks Department receives from residents asking to reserve park space. In West Windsor, as I've noted, many of our parks are missing their basic infrastructure and in those parks that do have this infrastructure, it is quite old.

This raises many questions for me: Is it fair to measure the use of something that is under resourced? Are the same maintenance workers going to the same parks to track wear and tear? How often do they go? How is wear and tear measured? Is there research that suggests what constitutes a "normal" or "expected" rate of wear and tear? How do maintenance workers make sure that they objectively assess this wear and tear? Do they have a list of criteria to guide them? Do they take notes or pictures to remember what parks looked like at their previous visit? I believe that the answers to these questions are important, especially because the claim that parks are unused or underused conflicts with the statements made by community members who actually *live* near those parks. Members of our community often tell me that they use the parks very often, and that they see the parks being used very often, even *without sufficient infrastructure*.

Another method used to measure park usage is the frequency of phone calls received by the Parks Department to buy permits in order to reserve park space. I can confidently say, however, that people do not always call the department to obtain a permit before running community events or programs. In part, this is

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because many people do not have the money to pay for these permits. While it does make sense to have to reserve park space for an event, to make sure that this space is available, it makes no sense to have to pay to use what is supposed to be community space. This is especially true in light of the fact that much of the programming offered by community groups fills social service gaps. Of course park permit fees can be waived, but this is the exception and not the rule. Another issue with this type of measurement is that requests for park permits are usually made by people providing programming and thus miss frequency of casual park activities like children playing, dog walking, or picnicking. Think about the way you use your parks. I would guess it often fits into the 'casual' or 'passive' category of park use.

For argument's sake, let's assume for a moment that city officials are right, that our parks are simply not used *enough*. In this situation the question we should be asking is, if these parks contained the base level of infrastructure that I've described, would they still go unused or underused? My guess is, absolutely not. I think that what is most important for us to know is that a disagreement exists between some city officials whose lives take them outside of West Windsor and the people who live, work and play inside of our neighbourhood.

## There's Always Opportunity

While it is my job to draw attention to issues in our neighbourhood, it is also my job to point out opportunities when I see them. One very clear opportunity comes from The City of Windsor's Department of Parks and Recreation which recently published a draft of their new Master Plan for Parks and Open Space. It is very clear that under new leadership the Parks Department is heading in a very positive and exciting direction. The Master Plan notes that we have a deficiency in neighbourhood parks in the core, and alludes to the importance of acquiring more park space. I admire that the Master Plan is informed by the need to enhance our attention to accessibility, environmental sustainability, ethno-cultural diversity and crime prevention through environmental design. I commend them for accepting a partnership with the Windsor-Essex Local Immigration Partnership which resulted in the translation of their surveys into Arabic, French, Spanish, and Chinese. This demonstrates a deeper consideration of, and appreciation for, the views of the newcomer population. The Master Plan also touts the importance of providing a base level of infrastructure in neighbourhood parks that is consistent with what we,

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as a neighbourhood renewal organization, see necessary to encourage community development. Unfortunately, the Master Plan has been stalled and without Council's acceptance of this document the department will not be able to move forward in pursuing its goals. The Parks Department showed through their Master Plan that they are on board with heading in a more socially responsible and collaborative direction.

It is my opinion that as residents of West Windsor we need to take advantage of the culture shift that is happening in this department and look at the Master Plan as an opportunity. We need to come together and pressure council to increase the funding available for infrastructural development in parks, and park acquisition, throughout the core of our city. There are many ways that we can do this. We can write or phone our councilors, attend public consultation meetings and open houses hosted by the parks department, become delegates at council meetings, get involved with community organizations by volunteering, and talk to our neighbours and friends about why park space is important. In addition, we can fundraise and write grants that will support the kinds of improvements we want to make in our parks. There are so many ways that we can come together around this issue, and it is only by doing so that we will be able to make our park system more equitable, ensuring that everyone has equal opportunity to accrue the social benefits that neighbourhood parks provide.

**Meagan Huggall**

West End Resident

Community Coordinator | Our West End Neighbourhood Renewal

A Program of Life After Fifty

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# Call to Action!

## *Shifting Toward a Culture of New Urbanism*

Hopefully we're all in agreement that park space is valuable. From this starting point, we need to ask a broader question: Why are neighbourhood parks suffering from disinvestment and threatened by closure? Indeed this question is very complex and providing a complete answer is certainly outside of the scope of our newsletter. Nevertheless, I believe that it is important to understand this trend as symptomatic of the tension between high levels of urban sprawl and the continuation of a platform of 0% tax increase in Windsor. As residents of Windsor, we will not receive the same quantity and quality of public goods if we expect the municipality to build amenities outside of the city core to support the expansion of suburban living, which due to its low density costs the city more than if they were to develop in the core, and at the same time are unwilling to pay higher taxes. Conversely, it is the municipality's responsibility to take a leadership role by 'disincentivizing' urban sprawl through investing more heavily in our core. What I am saying is that both residents and city officials need to be moving toward a more socially responsible culture of new urbanism rather than keeping with the conservative status quo. I encour-

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# Volunteer Opportunities

There are many opportunities to get involved with the Our West End Neighborhood Renewal Strategy.

## Our West End Resident's Roundtable

We encourage residents with innovative new ideas for their neighborhood to apply to be a member of the roundtable. As the consultative body for OWE, the Roundtable generates new ideas and sets resident led priorities for OWE programming.

## Stakeholder Group

If you are a community member who has a vested interest in the economic prosperity of West Windsor, and who is interested in advocacy and policy work, this committee is for you! It is comprised of City of Windsor officials, business owners, not for profit leaders, and West End residents. This group sets strategic priorities for OWE's advocacy efforts.

## Safety and Security Committee

Safety and security is one of the pillars of the OWE strategy. It is an important issue for residents, especially those who want to lessen the myth of negative stigma associated with West Windsor crime rates. Together with Windsor Police Services this committee has organized Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Town Halls, neighborhood walk-throughs, and petitioned to improve public infrastructure including lighting.

## Parks Committee

This committee is dedicated to preserving parks and open space in West Windsor. Together we have adopted community parks, facilitated park clean-ups and beautification projects. This year the committee will be working on community garden projects, sports nights, and the adopt-a-park program.

## Communications Committee

Marketing and promotion is an important part of making any program successful. Among their many responsibilities, this committee sets priorities of OWE's media presence including social, print, and alternative forms of media. They also create and distribute the OWE newsletter.

## Volunteer Work

Our West End hosts a variety of events throughout the year and having a rich base of dedicated volunteers is integral to our success. Contact us to learn about upcoming events and volunteer training sessions.



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Windsor, ON N9B

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Stay Connected!  
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