



Entrance View on Jessie Street

FACELIFT BRINGS TLTI COMMUNITY BUILDING INTO THE FUTURE

By Lorraine Payette

In the 1970s, Lansdowne was a flurry of activity as they put up their brand new, all inclusive Community Building on Jessie Street in what would later become the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands. This building would be the centre of the village and house the library, meeting rooms, and even a large open space downstairs, where all kinds of events could be held when it wasn't being used as a gym. Bring on the charity events, the club dinners, special events and occasions – everyone would have a great central location to go to, a place that could serve every need.

As time moved on, however, the facility started showing its age. The changes were subtle, but they were there, and people started looking for ways to improve this great community focal point.

“Our community needs have grown and changed,” said Kim Goodman, Manager of Recreation and Community Partnerships. “There is more demand for space whether for meetings or leisure programming. In addition, the Township wants to ensure that it is providing a safe and accessible space for its residents, and the proposed renovations will ensure current code is being met. The Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands is proposing a major update to the Lansdowne Community Hall; this will include renovations to increase the library footprint, offer a range of community rooms and meeting spaces, house our archives and new gym space for fitness and recreational-based programming.”

Shoalts and Zaback Architects Ltd. of Kingston have been trusted with the final redesign and renovation plans. The project has been very

carefully studied with every aspect taken into consideration – cost, location, materials, use. Rather than replace the building, it will be enhanced, and great things are on the horizon. The firm was consulted in 2017, and different community members and facilitators worked with staff to help develop the ideal concept for the building.

“The community can expect to have a new, welcoming facility,” said Goodman. “It allows the library to double in size, which will support new resources and opportunities, such as business supports, a lounge area, enhanced programming and more. By moving Archives to a more central location, they will be accessible to more residents and visitors. Increased meeting space is necessary as we are often dealing with scheduling challenges to accommodate our current users. And a new recreation space will allow the Township to accommodate a range of new and existing programs.”

This project has been in the works since studies started in 2016. Expected to cost \$10.5 million, funding is coming in from a variety of sources.

“Council has allocated some capital funds toward this project, the majority of funds will come from upper levels of government (in the form of grants) and through community fundraising,” said Goodman.

In the end, the building will be new and accommodating while remaining comfortable and familiar. Updates will give it a more polished look and feel, while keeping everything in its original setting and location.

It is expected that with the renovations and improvements, as well its close proximity to features such as the water park, community garden, and the Lansdowne Fair Grounds, the community building will once again become the vibrant centre of the village, filled with activities and attractions for all residents of the Township. **LH**

Editor’s Note: In small rural communities a community center now, more than ever, remains a hub and need for the residents. As more and more services are cut to residents and even banks are closing in small communities forcing some residents to travel to other towns or cities for the services they truly need. By having an updated community center in Lansdowne with the potential to provide “one stop” services to residents such as Library, Archives, Meeting space for business or non-profit groups and an ever-growing need for recreation programs and much more will help retain residents to live in the community and attract newcomers as well.