



Winchester Downtown Revitalization
Committee
Winchester, Ontario

Evolution of Sweet Corner Park

For many years, the downtown core of the village of Winchester was in decline.

Residents often complained about the lack of greenery or 'beautification' around the main area of the village and many storefronts were empty.

A few years ago, a Committee of nine local business owners and residents volunteered their time and energies to revitalizing the area and creating a healthier, more vibrant environment in the downtown area.



The vacant lot at the main intersection of Main and St. Lawrence Street has had a long history.

It was the location of the Sweet Family store, owned by former Mayor Aaron Sweet.

The corner was devastated by fire in the early 1980's which destroyed the historical building.



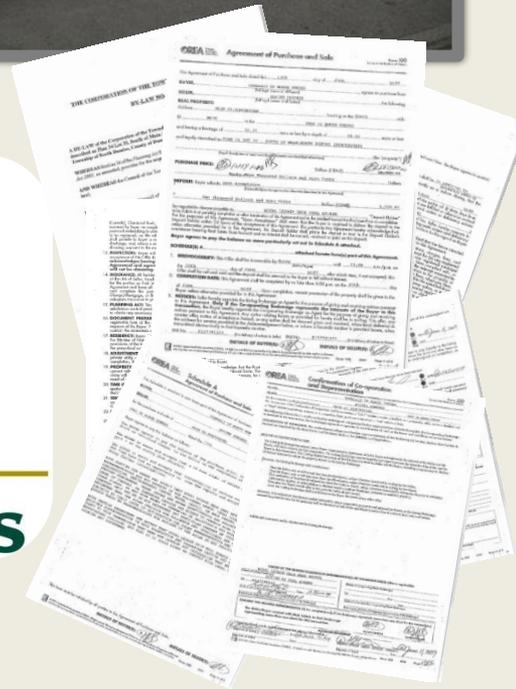
After a short stint as a park area, the corner became a privately owned gravel parking lot.

With potholes, weeds, and no real plan for development, the lot remained in rough condition for over a decade.



The Committee's first major partnership was with the Township of North Dundas.

Council purchased the vacant corner lot for \$55,000 and delegated the Committee with the responsibility of designing, fundraising, and promoting the revitalization.



The second partnership was formed with the Community Futures Development Corporation. The Committee received a \$20,000 grant through the Eastern Ontario Development Program for the creation of a large mural to add colour to the corner.



Ta da!

The downtown mural honouring the Winchester District Memorial Hospital was unveiled on Sun., June 13. After the cover came down, the public was invited to the Old Town Hall for speeches and refreshments.

The volunteer committee in charge of developing the new Sweet Corner Park will continue its fundraising to beautify the corner.

Press Photo — Smith-Millar

Observers line streets for unveiling

Mural honours WDMH's role in local community

by Amanda Smith-Millar
Press staff

WINCHESTER — Last Sunday, the public caught a glimpse of all the work performed on Winchester's downtown corner lot thus far — but more importantly, everything that's left to be done.

Supporters lined the intersection of Main and St. Lawrence streets last Sunday (June 13) for the mural unveiling at the newly christened Sweet Corner Park.

It was named in honour of the late Aaron Sweet, the first reeve of the village, who also owned a store at the corner more than a century ago.

However, after the last business to occupy the property — a hardware store — burned in the 1980s, the lot has remained vacant and casually used as a parking lot.

That is, until the Township of North Dundas purchased the dusty corner last year, and volunteers with the Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee began transforming the small property into a park. Part of the beautification process was funded through a \$19,000 grant from the Community Futures Development Corporation. That chunk of change paid for custom-made artwork, which depicts various individuals who, over the years, have played a major role with Winchester District Memorial Hospital (WDMH). It was finally unveiled last Sunday, as bagpipes played and the crowd applauded.

There's still plenty of work to be done on the park. Cosmetic improvements will come next. Eventually, Sweet Corner will have a clock tower, fountain, benches, landscaping, and more, according to organizers.

"It is a work in progress, and we look forward to having [an] opening later this year," said Councillor Eric Duncan, a revitalization committee member who also served as MC on Sunday.

Dignitaries who lowered the tarp included North Dundas Mayor Alvin Runnalls and Deputy-Mayor Estella Rose; Lorna Dixon, a retired WDMH nurse; Bea Elliott, one of the original WDMH Auxiliary members, whose family owned the corner lot store at one time; Diane Crummy, vice-president of the WDMH Foundation; Peter Sorby, chair of the WDMH Board; and Dr. Duane Justus and his wife, Charlotte, whose family played a major role in the hospital's development.

After the mural cover came down, the public was invited back to the Old Town Hall for speeches and refreshments.

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The educational mural was unveiled at a large community ceremony in June 2010 commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Winchester District Memorial Hospital.

COMMUNITY

The Winchester Press Wednesday, June 16, 2010 3



Winchester Video and Padditales paid for a legend, now installed at the park in a display case, which explains who everyone is in the mural. The podium will light up at night.



Mural unveiling

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"Really, this mural is a celebration of the hospital," said Justus, before adding that, more importantly, the art acknowledges the human element that was the driving force behind the hospital.

Justus said he was impressed with how life-like the many portraits on the mural were, as drawn by artist David Yeatman.

"I think that is a great accomplishment, sir," Justus said to Yeatman, who was sitting in the audience.

Duncan told the crowd that Yeatman came on a recommendation from the Township of South Dundas. North Dundas' neighbour has many murals — which have endured the Canadian winters to varying degrees of success — and Duncan was looking for an artist who could create something that would stand the test of time.

Yeatman was the recommendation, along with a durable new material called Bungee Banner.

In fact, the artist himself provided a few comments at the Old Town Hall that day. Despite the fact that the

Ontario resident was scheduled to start treatment for throat cancer the next day, he still wanted to be at the opening.

Yeatman praised Winchester and the surrounding region for its warmth and sense of community.

"You have a wonderful town. The whole region is terrific," said Yeatman. "I'm very proud that you picked me to be the artist, Eric."

According to the committee, more than \$11,000 has been spent so far on the corner. Much of the expenditures came in the form of gravel, foundation work, electrical wiring, and the backing for the mural.

There's another \$13,500 in the bank, according to revitalization committee member Owen Shortt.

He said the committee eventually plans to reimburse North Dundas for the \$11,000 in start-up expenses.

Shortt said the benches, fountain, clock tower, and other additions will only appear when an "as-we-have-the-cash" basis," said Shortt.

Most of the funding is expected to come from engraved walkway bricks (which cost \$100 for a small stone, or \$150 for a large one). Dairyfest organizers kick-started the initiative when they bought 10 bricks about a month ago.

Some of the other items available for sponsorship and engraving include planters (\$350 each) and lamp posts (\$2,700). As for the \$600 park benches, while all four are technically sold, one has been reserved by an unnamed committee member, who will gladly allow another business or individual to pay for it if they step forward.

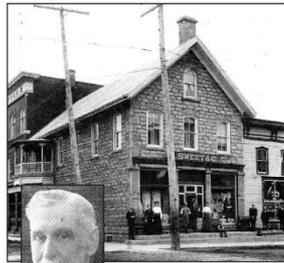
Miniature replica mural prints are also available to take home, at \$25 for a small picture and \$50 for a large one.

"We believe we've got a price point for everyone here at the park," said volunteer Vince Zandbelt, who gave a digital slide show presentation at the Old Town Hall detailing the history of the park, as well as plans for the future.

New vista

The downtown mural honouring the Winchester District Memorial Hospital was unveiled on Sun., June 13. Taking part in the ceremonies were volunteer Vince Zandbelt (at left), Emcee Eric Duncan (below left), and artist David Yeatman (below right).

Press Photos — Smith-Millar



Winchester's downtown lot has been named Sweet Corner Park in honour of the late Aaron Sweet, the first reeve of the village, who also owned a store on the site starting in the late 1800s.

Dad's SPECIALS

TREAT DAD ON FATHER'S DAY, JUNE 20,
TO A MEAL FEATURING ALL OF HIS FAVOURITE FOODS.
WE HAVE PLENTY OF TASTY OPTIONS TO CONSIDER!

It might look messy now...

... but the Winchester downtown beautification project is underway

by Amanda Smith-Millar
Press staff

WINCHESTER — It's hard not to notice big changes are underway in downtown Winchester.

Construction at the corner lot at the intersection of St. Lawrence Street and Main Street has begun, clearing the way for a park.

What were previously just sketches and design drawings for the property have been put into action. Starting last week, township crews roped off the property and started digging.

A ceremony has been scheduled for Sun., May 16 at 12:30 pm — just after church — to unveil a mural that will hang on the bare wall of the adjacent building (home of Crazy Loonies).

A reception will be held in the park afterwards if the weather is good, or at the nearby Old Town Hall if Mother Nature doesn't cooperate.

The mural — designed to honour the role of the Winchester District Memorial Hospital in the village — was funded through a \$19,000 grant from the

Community Futures Development Corporation.

Before May 16, organizers of the initiative hope to have other parts of the park completed, including the walkway, a podium, and a "legend board" detailing what the final project will look like. Plans call for interlocking brick and a water fountain.

However, volunteers say fundraising dollars have to be in place before these additions come about.

"Nothing will be done without money in hand," said Owen Shortt, president of the North Dundas Chamber of Commerce, through which the Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee operates. "It's not a project that we're going to dump on the Township of North Dundas with a huge bill."

So far, the township has paid \$55,000 for the corner lot, used casually as a parking lot by local shoppers in recent years.

Shortt said there are a number of fundraising initiatives on the horizon.

• continued on next page

The community support was overwhelming, which allowed for the first two phases to be completed and unveiled in May 2011.

Over \$100,000 and counting of private donations have been raised for Sweet Corner Park.

Hundreds of community donations flowed into the campaign to revitalize this healthy environment in the heart of the village.

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New fundraisers on horizon

• continued from previous page

For example, organizations, businesses, and general members of the public will be invited to buy bricks for the project engraved with the name of the donor, or in honour of a loved one.

The committee also plans to have a table at Winchester's community garage and sidewalk sale on Sat., May 29.

The committee previously raised money by selling ice sculptures during the North Dundas Country Christmas Parade of Lights back in December.

As well, "mini-mural" keepsakes replicating the full-scale version are for sale at some merchants' shops.

Shortt said the committee is putting together a comprehensive order form for the public to use for donations.

"We're hoping to be able to have one piece of paper," said Shortt.

"There are lots of opportunities there to contribute."



Gettin' messy

Over the last week, the downtown corner lot in Winchester has totally transformed. The former property, once casually used as a parking lot, will become a park. A walkway (right) is already taking shape. These photos were taken shortly before press time on Tues., May 4. Press Photos -- Smith-Millar



RibFest, park opening Sweet (Corner) success

by Matthew Uhrig
Press staff

WINCHESTER — The continued threat of rain may have hampered the village's planned sidewalk sale, but there wasn't a seat to be had during the first-ever RibFest.

Main Street's newest addition, Sweet Corner Park, was a hub of activity during the first of what's expected to be many celebrations

at the greenspace in Winchester's core.

"We're distilling pride back into this community," said Eric Duncan, Township of North Dundas mayor and member of the Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee. "Events such as this can only work to boost community confidence."

• see RIBS on page 3

Stellar Saturday

Sat. May 28 was a busy day in Winchester. Between the RibFest, and the village's annual sidewalk sale, visitors and residents alike had plenty of activities to choose from and some to take advantage of at local businesses.



At left: Local musician Don Little provided entertainment throughout the afternoon.



Walker Baldwin dressed the part at RibFest.



Ribs, cake, and bargains

In all, 300 tickets were sold in advance of the pork barbecue, meaning some unlucky customers who were hoping to grab some hunch were out of luck, even though organizers initially expected that tickets would be available the day of. With many months to go, John Probst of The Tin Kiosk had his work cut out for him. (He those missing the chance to taste Probst's culinary creations, the North Dundas Lions were at the ready with hamburgers and hot dogs available in the parking lot at Andy's Feedland.)

"Our goal was 100 [tickets]," said Duncan. "For a first-ever event, this has been a great success."

Park is open
Sweet Corner not only played host to the RibFest event, but the site, which has been on public display for months now, was officially opened.

The west corner lot at the intersection of Main and St. Lawrence Streets bears the name of Winchester's first tree following incorporation — Anon Sweet Sweet operated a shop on the site, which changed hands several times throughout the years, before a fire ravaged the structure, leaving a vacant space in the downtown core.

Three years ago, the Township of North Dundas purchased the

space, and since then the revitalization committee has been working away bit by bit, piece by piece to bring the corner to life.

"In those three years, approximately \$100,000 has been fundraised or donated," said Duncan. "A lot has been accepted here, but there is still much to do."

Throughout that time, Duncan estimated, more than 200 different donors and sponsors have come forward to help add various elements now incorporated into the park's design, such as flower pots, benches, the stage, and each mentioned brick that makes up the walkway.

Going forward, he added, one anticipated addition is a permanent viewing over the stage, to which the Dunstaff committee has already donated funds. Other items include a water fountain and a four-sided clock, similar to the piece in Chesterville.

"We [the committee members] have been very fortunate, and appreciate all the support," said Duncan.

Treasure trove
The site over Winchester were grey for much of the morning, which had virtually all of the downtown merchants keeping their products indoors. However, the chance of rain didn't stop the droves of shoppers from stopping by.

Many curious onlookers also got involved in the day, having game sales that dotted various parts of the village.

As well, Vince Zandbell, who has been



William Zandbell had a number of his wood carvings on display inside his son Vince's store adjacent to Sweet Corner Park.



Tina Williams baked a cake in a dessert following RibFest. The donut-like treat was a replica of the downtown greenspace.

Sweet Corner Park was officially opened on May 28th, 2011 with a major fundraising and community event; the 1st Annual Ribfest.

Over 300 tickets were sold (sell-out) and nearly 300 people were turned away that day. A huge community pride and traffic generator!



North Dundas Lions members (clockwise from back left) Amanda Carleton, Meghan Gruch, Hayley Trumpick and Lance Hodson.

WELCOME TO CLOVERDALE ESTATES

All 3 models under construction and available for viewing. June/July occupancy starting at \$299,000 including HST



The High Ranch Cathedral
Two models currently under construction on Lot 15 Elizabeth Street, 1,300 sq. ft., 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, cathedral ceilings in living room, dining and kitchen, raised panel oak cupboards, in kitchen, hardwood in living, dining and hallway, finished family room with laminate flooring (100 sq. ft.), double garage 22 x 22 ft., located on a 1-acre lot.



The Cloverdale
WILL BUILD TO SUIT: 1,450 sq. ft., 3 bedrooms, on-site bath off master bedroom, one other full bathroom, multi-floor luxury cathedral ceiling in living room, hardwood in living room and hallway, raised panel oak cupboards in kitchen, double garage 22 x 22 ft., located on a 1-acre lot.



The Sprucedale
WILL BUILD TO SUIT: 1,400 sq. ft., 3 bedrooms, 2 full baths, cathedral ceilings in living, dining and kitchen, hardwood in living, dining and hallway, finished family room (100 sq. ft.) finished with laminate flooring, raised panel oak cupboards in kitchen, double garage 22 x 22 ft., located on a 1-acre lot.

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Specializing in custom homes built on your lot

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Dr David Flowers (back, left) and his wife, Valerie, are two of the many sponsors of Sweet Corner. Here, the Flowers are pictured with Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee members Eric Duncan (front, left) and Vince Zandbell.

1st Annual RIBFEST
Saturday, May 28
12 p.m. - 2 p.m.
Sweet Corner Park (Corner of Main & St. Lawrence Street)

Join us for the official opening of Sweet Corner Park at 12 noon. Please help us celebrate this wonderful addition to Downtown Winchester!

Live Musical Entertainment
\$12.00/plate

- 1/2 Rack of Ribs
- Coleslaw
- Baked Beans
- Roll
- Drink
- Dessert

Hot dogs are given away to children.

Made by Tic Tac Ribs, cooked by John Williams

ONLY \$12.00

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT:
Winchester Travel
Sewing Shop
The Village Store

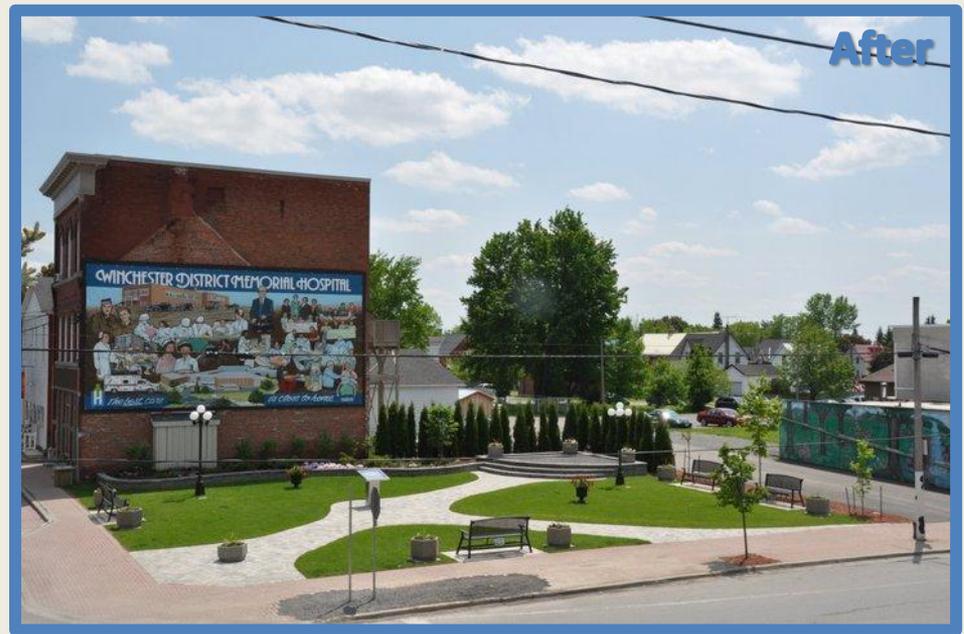
g is limited.

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The revitalization of the main corner in the village has had great results. The area is more vibrant and provides a space for community events to generate more traffic for local retailers.



Community pride in the village has increased and a confidence has been developed to create more momentum for beautification efforts.

Several events have been held at Sweet Corner Park, with plans now to have regular concerts and events throughout the summer months.

Partnerships were key in making this project a success. Partners included:

- Township of North Dundas
- Chesterville & District Rotary Club
- Winchester District Memorial Hospital
- Community Futures Development Corporation
- Tree Canada
- North Dundas Chamber of Commerce
- BMR
- Winchester's United and Presbyterian Churches
- Hundreds of local businesses and families
- Many other local service clubs and organizations



STORMONT, DUNDAS & GLENGARRY
Community Futures Development Corporation
Société d'aide au développement des collectivités



The nine members of the Winchester Downtown Revitalization Committee



- The Sweet Corner Park project is an ideal nominee in the Healthy & Safe Environment Category
- With the area transformed from a rough, unappealing gravel parking lot, Sweet Corner Park has become a focal point of the downtown core, and a community meeting place. Concerts and events are now held several times a year, which draws in traffic to retail businesses
- Partnerships were developed to bring the project to fruition. Dozens of community organizations and public and private sector donors stepped forward.

• The project is affordable, realistic, and innovative (through ‘owning a piece of the park’), and can be easily replicated in other small, rural communities.

• The completion of the project will include a four-sided clock and a stone water foundation in May 2012.

• The Committee, Township, and community members are now expanding their efforts to more areas throughout the downtown core (flags, benches, garbage receptacles)

