



## The Corporation of the Town of LaSalle

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council

**Prepared by:** Dale Langlois

**Department:** Finance

**Date of Report:** October 31, 2024

**Report Number:** FIN-28-2024

**Subject:** Historical efficiencies gained and service level enhancements

### Recommendation

That the report of the Director of Finance dated October 31, 2024 (FIN-28-2024) regarding Historical efficiencies gained and service level enhancements be received.

### Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of projects that have been completed by the Town over the past decade that have created both financial and operational efficiencies. In addition, this report will outline service level enhancements that the Town has rolled over the past decade. This report will be presented to Council every so often moving forward with new information as it becomes available.

In addition, it is important to note that over the past decade, LaSalle has implemented a significant amount of new services relative to new services implemented by the other municipalities in the region while keeping tax rate increases relatively low compared to the other municipalities in the region (as outlined in the chart below). This is due to the operational efficiencies that have been gained over the past decade as outlined throughout this report.

Municipality	2014 Municipal Tax Rate	2024 Municipal Tax Rate	% Change
Kingsville	0.0060314	0.0082555	36.88%
Lakeshore	0.0054137	0.0068299	26.16%
Essex	0.0077510	0.0095210	22.84%
Amherstburg	0.0088197	0.0108174	22.65%
LaSalle	0.0090280	0.0110710	22.63%
Leamington	0.0093776	0.0112978	20.48%
Tecumseh	0.0075264	0.0084077	11.71%

## **Operational Efficiencies**

Over the past decade, there have been several hundred efficiencies gained throughout the Town. The following lists some of the more significant efficiencies gained by the Town.

### **Water meter / transmitter replacement**

In 2016, the Town took the utility billing function in-house. As part of this project, a large portion of municipal water meters were replaced, and transmitters were installed on all water meters throughout the Town. As a result, electronic meter reads are now performed electronically (rather than manual reads) and the Town has saved over \$200,000 annually. In addition, the service level to residents has been enhanced as the meter read software identifies unusual water usage trends, which allows the Town to inform the property owner that they may have a leak.

### **Streetlight conversion to LED**

In 2015, all the Town's streetlights were converted to LED, which reduced the hydro usage by approximately 75% and resulted in approximately \$209,000 of annual hydro savings and approximately \$98,000 of streetlight maintenance savings annually. The payback period of this project was 8 years.

### **UKG time and attendance system**

In 2020, the UKG time and attendance system was rolled out, which allows management to appropriately schedule staff, and allows staff to electronically scan in and scan out of work each day and request time off (vacation, bereavement, sick, etc.). This software also keeps track of all accrual balances. Previously, scheduling and timecards were manually tracked and reviewed, which took a significant amount of time and resources to complete each week. This software has created significant efficiencies as there are no longer manual calculations and it has eliminated multiple layers of data input. In addition, staff no longer must physically bring timecards and summaries to payroll department at Town Hall as it is all transmitted electronically through the UKG system.

### **Accounts payable workflow system**

In 2021, the Town's accounts payable workflow system was created and rolled out. Prior to this system, physical invoices would be picked up by managers, brought back to their work location (various buildings throughout the Town), reviewed, manually coded, signed off, physically brought back to Town Hall and entered into the accounts payable system by the accounts payable / receivable clerk. Since the new system has been rolled out, all invoices are entered into the system by the accounts payable / receivable clerk and electronically sent to the appropriate supervisor or manager for approval. As a result, this has eliminated manual coding errors, travel time between buildings to pickup and drop off invoices, eliminated the ability to lose invoices, and invoices are always

paid on time (eliminating penalty and interest). This has created significant number of efficiencies throughout the Town.

### EFT Payments

Ten years ago, nearly all payments were made by cheque. Today, over 80% of payments are made through EFT (electronic funds transfer). Every month, this percentage continues to grow as vendors are setup on EFT. This has resulted in significant cost savings as the cost of the physical cheque, envelope and postage are eliminated with EFT. This saves the Town tens of thousands of dollars each year. In addition, this reduces the risk of fraud, and speeds up the rate of payment (eliminating the risk of penalty and interest on late payments).

### Building permit system

Until recently, building permits were submitted by paper means and all inspections were documented on paper. Now, permit applications can be submitted online and building permit tasks are scheduled and allocated through citywide building software. Building inspections occur on tablets out in the field and automatically filed electronically. This creates efficiencies as many manual processes (such as notifications and filing) are now performed automatically, which eliminates various steps in the entire building permit process.

### Public Works work order system / residential request portal

Approximately eight years ago, the residential request portal and work order system was rolled out. This has created efficiencies as well as enhanced the level of service provided to Town residents. Prior to this portal, residential requests were received by several means, such as phone calls, emails, and in-person meetings with various staff throughout the Town. There was often miscommunication and some of these requests may have gotten lost. Currently, the majority of requests and bylaw enforcement complaints are now through the resident request portal. This ensures that all requests are appropriately prioritized and tasks are input into the work order system for staff to complete. Residents receive confirmation that their request has been received and are notified when the task has been completed. It is important to note that over 50,000 workorders have been completed since the workorder system was rolled out.

### IT ticket system

Within the last decade, an internal IT ticket system has been implemented. This system has created several efficiencies as Town staff are able to provide IT with a ticket, should there be an issue or a future project which needs to be completed. These tickets are ranked in order of importance and tasks are allocated to the IS administrator staff to complete. This system ensures that all requests are completed in a timely manner and high priority tasks are completed quickly.

### Municipal Building enhancements for energy efficiency

Over the past decade there have been several enhancements to our Municipal buildings, which have resulted in reduced hydro consumption. Some of these improvements include 1) Replacement of HVAC units at the Vollmer recreation complex with new energy efficient units, conversion of lights at several facilities to LED lights, and installing variable drive motors at pump stations (controls pump speed through the amount of power the motors are using). These initiatives have saved the Town over \$100,000 annually.

#### Other Laserfiche workflow and online payments projects

In addition to some of the workflows mentioned throughout this report, there have been many other Laserfiche works which have created significant efficiencies including payroll employee onboarding, employee offboarding, security deposit releases, FOI processing, automatic notification when policies require review and updates, automatic timing for records destruction in accordance with the records retention bylaw requirements, property cleanup process, council conference and training reimbursement process, along with many other workflows.

#### Right of Way Permits

Right of way permits have been implemented to approve and keep track of work being completed in right of ways through the Town (ie. Driveways, fibre, utilities). This allows the Town to hold the contractor or resident responsible for damages so that the repair costs are not paid for by the Town.

#### New Budget Software

In 2022, the Town rolled out the new FFM budget software. This software has allowed all departments to submit their budgets electronically and allows the finance department to create automatic budget reports for the annual operating and capital budget document. This software has saved weeks of manual input that was previously performed through Microsoft word and excel software.

#### Planning Act Application transitioning to form builder (in process)

There is a new form currently being created in laserfiche form builder, which will allow developers to submit their planning act applications online. In addition to improved customer service, this will create efficiencies as it will create tasks related to the application form and keep track of progress towards completion.

#### Scanning of documents and records

The majority of all Town documents have been scanned to a digital copy and organized appropriately. This creates significant efficiencies as hard copies are no longer stored, which reduces the space required in filing rooms. In addition, all documents can now be easily looked up and accessed, which reduces the time previously spent trying to find older documents.

### Office 365 Teams

In early 2020, when the COVID pandemic began, there was an immediate need to allow office staff to work from home. As a result, Microsoft office 365 was rolled out, which resulted in the ability for staff to work from home through the use of VPN and the teams application. Since the pandemic has ended, the Town continues to use teams for meetings between staff, developers, consultants, etc. This has created significant efficiencies as meetings do not need to occur in person and staff do not need to drive between buildings. Also, meetings with out-of-Town consultants and developers can now be setup quickly over teams rather than having to wait several weeks or months to meet in person as was done in the past.

It is important to note that there are several other modules that have been rolled out as part of the office 365 suite, that have created several efficiencies by allowing Town staff to become very organized and communicate effectively (ie. lists, planner, sharepoint, onenote, etc.)

### Infolasalle GIS system

Enhancement and creation of additional information layers in the GIS system has created efficiencies through sharing these layers with developers so that they can obtain information themselves rather than relying on Planning to get them the information. Internal efficiencies have been created as well due to the ease of looking up information.

### Optimization of snow removal electronic controls

Salt distribution technology has been installed on the Town snowplows in recent years. This technology has significantly reduced the cost of salt that the Town purchases each year as this technology controls the amount of salt released by the snowplow.

### Implementation of hootsuite Software

This software creates significant efficiencies as it allows the Town to post information across all social media apps at the same time rather than posting separately on each app. In addition, this software allows the Town to preschedule posts, respond to questions and track post statistics.

### Hiring of graphics designer position

Historically, the majority of the Town's graphics and designs were outsourced to various companies, which cost a significant amount of money. The Town reached a point, where it is more cost effective to create a position that can do all of the Town's graphics internally and consistent with the Town's branding. In addition, this position is able to perform other communication related tasks.

### ActiveNet Recreation Software

There have been a significant amount of efficiencies gained since moving to the ActiveNet software. Some of the more significant improvements include:

- 1) Moving from a printed activity guide to an online model, which has saved over \$15,000 of printing costs and reduced a significant amount of staff time required to produce the activity guide
- 2) Introduction of online ticket sales and accepting credit, cash and mobile payments, which requires less staff time processing manual payments and reduces the amount of cash handled.
- 3) Transition from paper-based attendance tracking to system-based tracking (on tablets). This reduces the use of paper and time required to file records.
- 4) Various automated processes (setup instructions to facility operators, financial reports, insurance reports, etc.). This saves significant time as these reports were previously created manually.
- 5) Independent customer booking functionality allows for customers to automatically book birthday parties, pool rentals, private swimming lessons, etc. online. Historically, this was done in person or over the phone. Staff time can now be reallocated to perform other tasks.
- 6) Automatic customer notification through bulk texts can now be performed by ActiveNet software. Previously, staff had to reach out to customers individually over the phone (ie. if the pool was closed)

#### Various preventative maintenance programs

In the past decade, a fleet preventative maintenance program has been rolled out, which ensures that all Town vehicles and machinery are inspected on a regular ongoing basis and appropriate maintenance is performed. This initiative has prolonged the life of the vehicles, machinery and equipment and has ultimately saved the Town significant money in the long run.

Approximately five years ago, a road crack sealing program was implemented. As small cracks start to occur in roads throughout the Town, their cracks are filled, which prolongs the time required until a mill and pave needs to occur. This initiative will result in significant cost savings in the long run.

#### Event Centre Virtual Tours

A virtual tour of the LaSalle Landing Event Centre has been created, which allows potential event organizers to view the space online and reduces staff hours spent on in-person tours.

### **SERVICE LEVEL ENHANCEMENTS**

Over the past decade, there have been several service level enhancements implemented throughout the Town. The following lists some of the more significant service level enhancements.

### LaSalle Landing

Event Centre – The Event Centre offers a premium indoor event venue and provides indoor space for the pickleball community in the fall, winter and spring months, filling a previous gap in the community.

Multi-purpose skate trail and splash pad – The “LaSalle loop” is set to open to the public the end of 2025. This initiative consists of a 400 meter trail that can be used during the winter months for skating and the summer months for walking. In addition, there will be a splash pad that can be used in the summer months and various sitting areas and gardens that can be accessed throughout the year.

Continuous improvement and enhancements will occur at the LaSalle Landing for years to come.

### Sidewalk and Pathway snow removal

Within the past ten years, the Town has rolled out a program to clear snow and salt major sidewalks, pathways and trails throughout the Town. There is a priority list that clearing occurs on first, as there are a significant number of sidewalks, pathways and trails throughout the Town. This has allowed residents to continue to safely walk on Town trails and high use sidewalks throughout the winter months.

### Continuous cyber security enhancements

Over the past decade, there have been continuous cyber-attacks on the public sector. As a result, the Town has hired consultants to perform two full reviews of our system over the past decade. The Town has implemented several initiatives and enhancements identified in the reviews to protect our system from hackers. In addition, the Town continuously educates staff on the importance of cyber security and performs annual external penetration testing to ensure procedures are being followed.

### Fire master plan initiatives

There are many different initiatives identified in the fire master plan that will enhance the level of service of the fire services department and protect Town residents. Some of the larger initiatives include construction of the second substation, which is set to open the beginning of 2025 and the hiring of additional firefighters to always have two full time firefighters on duty at each station. These initiatives will enhance response times and ensure that there are enough firefighters on site as we continue to move towards a full-time force.

### Creation of the Strategy and Engagement Department

The recent creation of the Town’s Strategy and Engagement department has enhanced communication with the public through various means including social media,

accessible website, placespeak software, media, flyers, etc., It has also enhanced internal communication through staff newsletters and sharepoint on the Town's intranet.

### New website

Within the last decade, the Town has created a new website, which uses a modern platform. The website is interactive, accessible, user friendly, and provides up to date information to the public.

### Placespeak software

Placespeak is a community engagement platform which has allowed the Town to engage with the community. This software allows residents to ask questions and provide feedback on various topics such as the Town budget, LaSalle Landing, etc.

### Streamed Council meetings

During the Covid pandemic, changes were required to allow Council and Committee meetings to occur virtually. As a result, Council meetings were held over teams and broadcast on the Town's youtube channel. Since the pandemic ended, the Town has chosen to continue to broadcast Council and Committee meetings live and allow for delegates, consultants, and Councillors to attend meetings virtually. This also allows for the public to view the meetings virtually and view previously recorded meetings.

### Various new festivals and events

There are continuous additions of new and improved events each year, which take a significant amount of staff time to plan for and run. Some of these new festivals and events include truck or treat, last call before fall, spring fling, Sean Kenney's animal super powers made with lego bricks exhibit, and night markets which occur throughout the year.

### Roadside and Roadside ditch cutting

Over the past decade, roadside and ditch cutting has occurred on a more frequent basis throughout the Town.

### Street sweeping

In 2023, the Town purchased its own street sweeping truck. This has allowed for the Town's roads to be swept more often as the new truck is always available.

### New Recreational Capital Projects

In addition to the LaSalle Landing projects, over the past decade there have been a significant number of recreational capital projects that have been constructed for enhanced public enjoyment. Some of the more significant projects include construction of pickleball courts at Heritage park and Vince Marcott park, construction of new tennis



courts at the Vollmer Recreation Centre and the rehabilitation of the tennis courts at the LaSalle Landing. There has also been the construction of a new fully accessible playground with a rubber base at Heritage park and the Vollmer Recreation Centre, along with the construction of a splash pad at the Vollmer Recreation Centre.

### Safety initiatives

Over the past decade, there has been a significant enhancement in safety initiatives, both externally and internally. Some of the public safety initiatives include enhanced crosswalks, enhanced sidewalk inspection and repairs, various speed reduction initiatives, a municipal ticketing system, and safety / emergency plans created for each festival and event. Some of the internal safety initiatives include rolling out the systems 24/7 training software (to ensure staff receive appropriate training each year), creation of health and safety committees and various health and safety inspections continuously occur throughout the Town.

### Transit system

In 2017, the Town rolled out the LaSalle transit service to residents. This transit system does a loop around Town and provides access to over 70% of Town residents (residents who are within 400 meters from the route). This transit system also connects with the Transit Windsor system.

### Active transportation master plan initiatives

Since the latest active transportation master plan was created approximately six years ago, the Town has continuously rolled out various new trails throughout the Town. As a result, the Town's trail network is more connected as gaps in the system are continuously being addressed.

### Holiday lights display and continued enhancement

The Town was successful in receiving a grant to pay for a large portion of the Civic Centre holiday lights display. In addition, to this project, the Town has allocated \$10,000 annually through the capital budget to continuously enhance the holiday lights displays throughout the Town.

### Sports field maintenance enhanced level of service

In recent years, the Town has enhanced sport field maintenance throughout the Town due to resident demand. These enhancements include overseeding, aerifying, fertilizing, turf maintenance, etc. Field conditions have significantly improved in recent years as a result.

### Emergency Alerts system through Everbridge software

Approximately five years ago, the everbridge mass notification alert system was implemented. This software is tested multiple times each year and there is continuous

resident registration. This system prepares the Town to appropriately communicate with residents, should there ever be an emergency or event that requires mass notification.

### Other Recreation initiatives

- In 2024, the culture and recreation department introduced priority registration for LaSalle residents, which has allowed early access to programming without affecting overall registration numbers.
- During the COVID pandemic, the culture and recreation department rolled out virtual fitness programming. This initiative has continued to allow members to join programming from their homes if they are unable to make it to the Vollmer Complex.
- Over the past couple of years, the Town has outsourced the operation of the concession as well as outsourced skate sharpening services at the Vollmer Complex.

## **Consultations**

All Town Departments

## **Financial Implications**

Not applicable

## **Prepared By:**



Director of Finance/Treasurer

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## **Link to Strategic Goals**

1. Enhancing organizational excellence - Yes
2. Strengthen the community's engagement with the Town - Yes
3. Grow and diversify the local economy - Yes
4. Build on our high-quality of life - Yes
5. Sustaining strong public services and infrastructure - Yes

## **Communications**

None

**Report Approval Details**

Document Title:	Historical efficiencies gained and service level enhancements.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 18, 2024

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Chief Administrative Officer

Joe Milicia