



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
& EVENTS DEPARTMENT

MEET OUR TEAM

Get to know Fort Thomas Economic Development & Events Department



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RENAISSANCE BOARD

Our amazing board that brings the magic to each event.





Introduction

2023 IN REVIEW

The City of Fort Thomas had a vibrant 2023 offering more than 25 events around town and bringing in many new businesses.

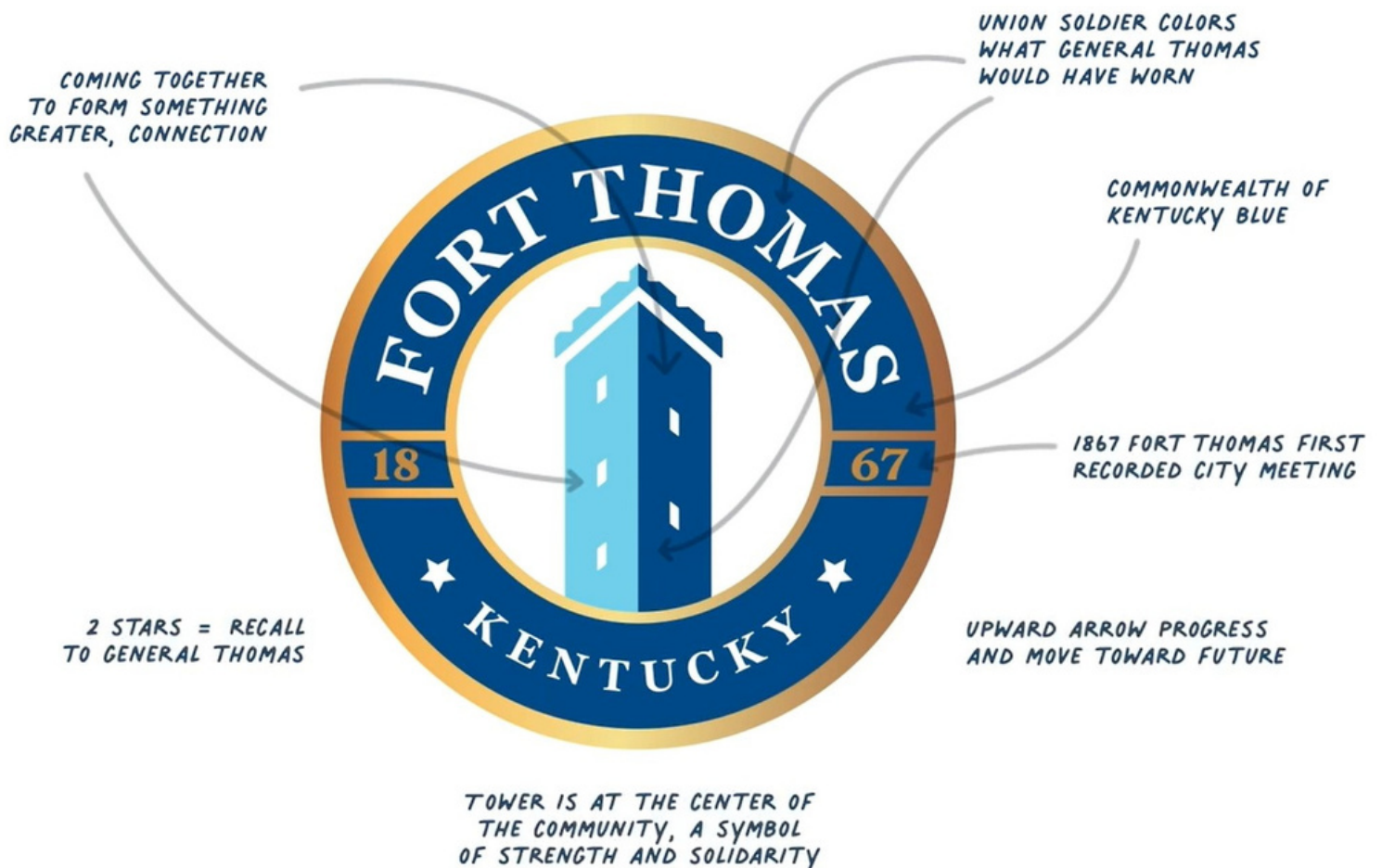
First, we would like to thank our amazing volunteers, the Renaissance Board. This board is the creative arm of events, and provides outreach/support for local businesses working to create a sustainable community where families enjoy life. Kim Rehtin serves as the Chairman of our board. Other members include Tracy Davis, Michelle Knight, Heidi Neltner, Holli Patterson, Susan Stewart and Nancy Schneider. We welcomed our newest member, Leticia Mesmer. The Renaissance Board meets on the Fourth Monday of each month at 5:45pm.

As we kick off our 2024 events, let's rewind and check out all that 2023 had to offer!

BRANDING A CITY

Staff, committees, and the public got the chance to brand our city.

We finished our rebranding efforts in July 2023 with the launch of our new user friendly website. This website features additional resources including a full downloadable calendar highlighting city events, board and council meetings with agendas. We updated our businesses, city staff, current news, and added special features connecting community partners, organizations and frequently asked questions.



We Exist To Champion a Thriving Community!

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Events encourage community growth, bonding, & lasting partnerships.

Through a partnership with muralist, Ben Harrison, we have a new mural behind 18 North honoring Colonel Cochran, former post commander at the Fort Thomas Military Barracks. Colonel Cochran was noted as an avid gardener and kept pristine flower beds including his favorite, Red Calla Lilly. This was created during a co-sponsored event with the Cultural Arts District. Other collaborations include Taking Root (Great Tree Summit, Feb 25), Fort Thomas Forest Conservancy, Meet NKY, Sam Scott Celebration of Life, CORA, Leadership NKY, Highland Plaza Pop-up Party, Cerberus Den, QUEST, Small Business Saturday and many more.



COMMUNITY OF BUSINESSES

The City partnered with the Fort Thomas Business Association offering free memberships to all 41075 businesses. We hosted meetings in the Mess Hall and worked together to create support between existing and new businesses. By the end of the year, our membership grew to over 100 businesses. This laid the groundwork for the new collaboration for the FTBA and NKY Chamber.



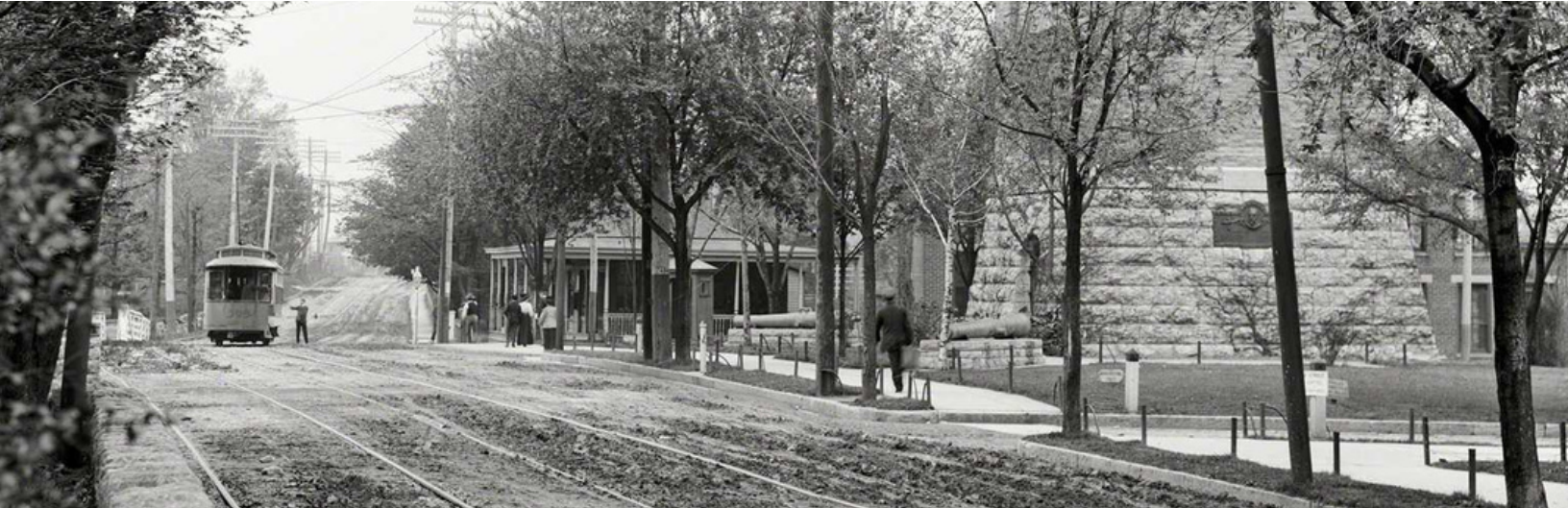
FARM FRESH

The Fort Thomas Farmers Market led by Tiffany Tomeo, had an exciting 2023! This year we were named the number 3 farmers market in the NKY/Cincinnati region by City Beat voters. We hosted over 80 vendors between our regular markets and holiday shows. Goat yoga was an enormous success, raising even more money than we did in 2022. Our partnership with Campbell County Extension and Woodfill Elementary was a wonderful opportunity for third graders to learn about growing and selling microgreens, which they did at the market in May. We also started hosting cooking demos and sampling events to showcase products. This helped boost vendor sales significantly. We are grateful for the sponsorships provided by Tracy Davis, State Farm Insurance and Derek Vater, Heartland Bank.



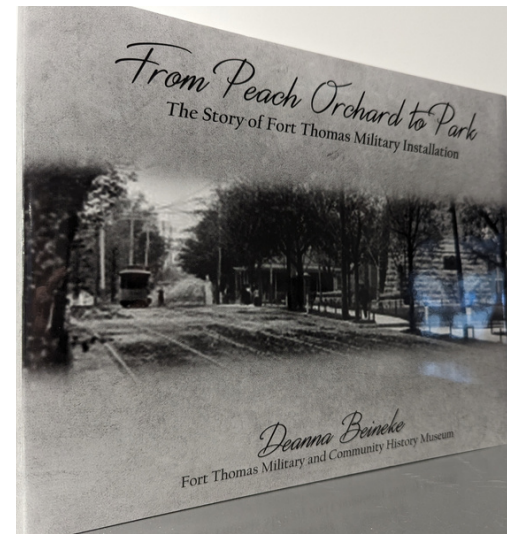
WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MUSEUM

The Fort Thomas Military and Community History Museum continues to build its collection and strengthen its connections to organizations and supporters in Fort Thomas. We provided resources and artifacts to both Samuel Woodfill and Robert D. Johnson Elementary Schools as they planned their centennial celebrations. A grant from the Kentucky Local History Trust Fund allowed us to purchase a second book scanner that enabled our volunteer staff to scan books and documents and save them in digital form. So far, we have nearly 50 years of HHS yearbooks saved in searchable PDF form. We continued with our ongoing commemoration of the Fort's role during WWII with our "War Stories" exhibit, sharing stories of some of the more than 250,000 soldiers and airmen who processed through the Fort Thomas Reception Center between 1940-1944.



NEW HISTORY BOOK DROPPING IN 2024

We will launch our new history of the military installation From Peach Orchard to Park, written by Director Deanna Beineke, during the opening weekend for the Museum on April 5, 2024.



CONCERTS & MOVIE NIGHTS

Our Summer Concert Series was well received. The Kentucky Symphony Orchestra provided 3 free family friendly concert series with some of the finest musicians led by J.R. Cassidy. They will be sharing music with our community again this summer in Tower Park at 7:30pm on July 9, August 6, and September 3, 2024. We were happy to host a new event, Movie Nights with the Brighton Center benefit "Share What You Can." We had a good turnout for each of the 3 movies and raised awareness of the wonderful work Brighton Center adds to our community and surrounding communities.



LEGENDS UPON LEGENDS

The Northern Kentucky Legends Hall of Fame was one of the largest turnouts to date. We honored David Rhodes Brown, Milford Foellger, Dee Felice, Scott Risner, Johnny Fink, Greg Mebs, The Drysdales and Ernie Brown. It was a night to remember!



HANDMADE AND UNIQUE

The fourth season of Flea in the Fort was one for the books. The Flea committee worked hard to bring about an atmosphere that was inviting for shoppers and to the 130 makers over our three shows. There was record turnout of shoppers that helped to support local artisans from across the region.



LIGHT UP THE SKY ON THE FOURTH OF JULY

The Independence Day Celebration was one of our best—you just can't beat great weather for a parade. Linda Slone, Jim Trauth and the volunteer parade committee did a wonderful job organizing the participants. The City of Fort Thomas showcased our new city logo, passing out t-shirts, frisbees, stickers, koozies and buttons. Rozzi's fireworks made the entire evening while The Sly Band played the soundtrack.



THREE HEADLINERS MAKE HISTORY

This was the first year Merchants & Music celebrated 3 headlines from the 90's; Sister Hazel, Tonic and Vertical Horizon. We hosted two high school reunions, and many new food vendors.. A special thank you to the city staff, volunteers. 2024 Sponsors including Executive Transportation, Campbell County, KHL Engineers, Highland Plaza, Fort Thomas Plaza, South Hill Professional Center, and our major sponsor, West Sixth Brewing. We might have stayed out a little too late, but it was worth it!



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Our Veterans Day was a huge success! We started off earlier this year, hosting Veterans and Friends in the Armory. Linda and Lonnie Slone tended to the coffee and dessert station welcoming community members to view more than 300 veteran banners displayed. Our program included community members Joe Ewald, Anne Klei, Linda Slone, Jim Chaney, Debbie Buckley, John Ranson, Rees Hardy, Jane Hlad, Amy Thompson Leigh, Tom Cecil, Ken Warden, and David Thiel honoring all veterans participating in our banner program. We were joined by Johnson School led by Alyssa Vanderpool, Father Ross from St. Thomas Church, Military Protocol Officer Eric Scherpenberg, Scout Troop 437, and Mayor Haas. Following our program, we congregated into the Gameroom to enjoy a delicious meal provided by Mission BBQ.



TINSEL & GRATEFUL

The Holiday Walk is always one of the highlights of the Christmas season. Tour de Tinsel kicked off the event with Santa and the Grinch leading the parade. The Inverness tree and landscape planters were decorated beautifully by the Fort Thomas Garden Club. The Inverness tree was donated by Mike Rice in honor of his wife, Maggie Rice. Our local businesses and organizations outdid themselves this year. We had more than 26 stops from Christ Church to Tickle Pickle including musicians, artisans, train display, beer, cookies, hot chocolate, candy canes, ornaments, arts, games, hotdogs, candy and more. Highlands Quest students led by Brianne McDowell, organized a Santa's workshop station creating community ornaments to be displayed on the community tree.



SO MANY MORE

There are many other notable events not mentioned such as Highland Plaza Pop-up Party, Village Players Arty Party, Holiday House Decorating Contest, CAD Parking Lot Art Party, and others. All of these events and partnerships bring our community together, highlight our businesses, showcases talent, and remind us why we LOVE living in Fort Thomas!



ECON. DEVELOPMENT

With a growing number of businesses in the Fort, that means more opportunities to #SupportTheFort.

It has been a good year for new businesses. This year we welcomed an eclectic group including Skin Esteem, Cerberus Den, Urban Design- Midwest, Hometown Mortgage, Monroe Studio, Inner Vision Pilates, Esthetics of Northern Kentucky, Monica's Chic Boutique, ADC Fine Art Gallery, Sheer Perfection Salon, Paymore, Honey Co., Highland Square Café, and the Little Art House.



GROW GRANT 2023

This year, the Grow Grant provided 9 businesses totaling \$60,000 grant money to make improvements in their spaces. The businesses awarded grants are; The Zimmer Group, Professional Pool and Spa, Affordable Housing LLC, Hilltop Laundromat and Apartments LLC, Springdale Title, ADC Fine Art, Salon 602, Tower Homes, and Uniquely Bold and Bridal.



CONNECT & ENGAGE

Staying up to date with socials, updated website, and community app.

Communication is key to community engagement and call to action. Our socials pushed out weekly content from upcoming events, department updates, and pictures the community sent in. Our socials grew tremendously since 2022 with 1500+ new followers across all our platforms. We are not just engaging residents, but showcasing to our neighboring cities in the region that there are amazing things happening here.

POSTS HIGHLIGHT FROM 2023



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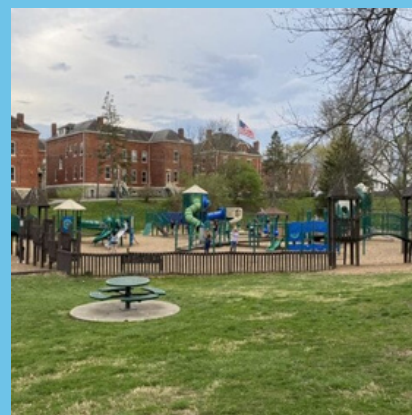
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❤️ 131 💬 8 ▼ 3



❤️ 409 💬 35 ▼ 26



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FOLLOWERS: 1,828 5,531 169 145 69

