

Mayor Jeff shares his 2016 memories and moments

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BarrieToday Staff



Barrie's first Mayor Willard Kinzie gives a high five to the cast of his hand while current Mayor Jeff Lehman looks on in this Dec. 6, 2016 file photo. Sue Sgambati/BarrieToday

From a visit by Primer Minister Justin Trudeau to the city's smokin' hot real estate market, Barrie's mayor reflects on the year that was

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BarrieToday received the following New Year's message from Mayor Jeff Lehman.

Over the holidays, I've been going through my photos from the past year. With a little time to reflect on the year that was, and hoping to bring a bit of good news in a year with too many depressing headlines, I decided a top 10 list was in order.

Herewith, as we close out the year, are ten things worth remembering from 2016 in Barrie (in no particular order):

1. Industrial building boom — we set a record this year for the value of new industrial building permits issued — with new manufacturing plants being built in Barrie by Innovative Automation, BurgerGruppe, and Galaxy Plastics among others, and a huge new mixed industrial development of 200,000SF at Veterans and Mapleview.

The City also sold almost all of its remaining industrial land.

2. Base Borden turned 100 — celebrations throughout the month of June culminated with a moving ceremony on June 9 at which the Borden Memorial Wall was dedicated by Prime Minister Trudeau. Quarterbacked by Honorary Colonel Jamie Massie, and paid for by donors from Barrie, the Wall and the associated 100th anniversary celebrations demonstrated the proud military history and the ties between the Base and Barrie.

3. An unprecedented real estate market. Homes in Barrie increased in value on average by more than 20 per cent in 2016. Though it was great news for anyone selling, buyers are finding affordability in Barrie tougher and tougher — so while this is a sign of economic strength, it makes affordable housing an even greater need.

4. And...some new affordable housing was built. On Brooks St. in Allandale, the County and the City partnered to build a new rent-geared-to-income building for seniors with 43 units, and the roll out of the City's other housing initiatives produced a total of 121 new affordable units through August.

5. Ferndale Drive Finally Got Finished. The “missing link” on Ferndale, between Dunlop and Tiffin — the worst road in Barrie in the CAA survey — was finally finished and opened.

6. We're Entrepreneurs! Barrie was named the third most entrepreneurial city in Canada by the Financial Post, reflecting strength in business formation and a business-friendly local climate. Barrie was 55th in the rankings five years ago.

7. The Sea Serpent Surfaces. Barrie got a new landmark on the waterfront as Ron Baird's Sea Serpent joined the Spirit Catcher in Heritage Park.

8. Willard's Trail Got Moving. A small project but one of my favourites, the first exhibits on the Waterfront Heritage Walking Trail were installed this year. The brainchild of former Mayor Willard Kinzie, the trail features a bronze cast of Willard's hand at its far-east end — where you can “high-five” our former mayor to celebrate finishing a beautiful and educational waterfront walk. More exhibits will come in 2017.

9. Courage for Gord. Gord Downie brought renewed attention to Canada's indigenous peoples and conditions in remote communities, speaking out before, during, and after an incredible concert in Kingston on August 20 that was viewed by Canadians across the country — and by thousands on an outdoor screen in Heritage Park (thanks to the Barrie Film Festival).

10. The Push for Change continued. Barrie's Joe Roberts inspired people across the country as he pushed a shopping cart more than 4,000km to raise awareness for homelessness, arriving in Barrie on Dec. 27, on his way to Victoria. And here at home, champions in our own community pushed for change to improve the lives of those who need a hand. Their own push for change will continue in 2017.

So I'll close with a special thank you to all those who in 2016 worked overnight at Out of the Cold, served meals at the Bayside Mission, gave out sandwiches from the Busby Centre's outreach van, or volunteered their time for a good cause, regardless of what that cause was. On behalf of your community – thank you for what you do. The best to you and your family for a safe, healthy, and prosperous 2017

- *Mayor Jeff Lehman*
