



# MUNICIPALITY OF THE MONTH



**April 2013  
The Township of Zorra**

### ***Where is it?***

Zorra Township is a rural municipality located at the north-west corner of Oxford County, in the heart of South-Western Ontario. The Township spans over 530 kilometres and is comprised of several rural clusters and two serviced villages, Embro and Thamesford. It is a predominately rural landscape and home to many farming communities, with small town charm. The population of Zorra Township is 8,125. The Township of Zorra maintains 85 kilometers of paved roads, 424 kilometers of gravel roads and has 74 bridges within the Township's boundaries.



### ***What are the biggest attractions?***

Harrington's historic grist mill was restored by a local community group and opened to the public in 2010 for viewings. This mill represents how rural communities operated and shows the kind of industry that was prevalent throughout the area many years ago. The mill was in continuous operation from 1846-1966. It was built with hand-hewn native pie timbers and topped with a split shingle roof. It was first powered by an overshot waterwheel which was later replaced by a more efficient water-driven turbine in the 1880's.

The Beachville District Museum was built in 1851 and currently houses many interesting artifacts, from a history of the limestone quarries to a baseball display describing the first ever recorded baseball game in North America which occurred in Beachville.

### ***What makes the municipality unique?***

The Township of Zorra hosts numerous events and festivals throughout the year which are always well attended and a lot of fun! A few of the great events include the Highland Games, Calithumpian, Wienerfest (Yes – a festival just for wiener dogs!), Lakeside Triathlon and the Embro Fall Fair! The Township is also home to numerous local farmers markets.

### ***What are the most common issues faced by the Committee of Adjustment?***

One of the common issues faced by Zorra's Committee of Adjustment is Variances to Minimum Distance Separation (MDS). These applications create a balancing act which the Township must perform between agriculture and the expanding livestock production and existing rural residential development.

### ***Urban Design Guidelines***

The Township of Zorra is in the process of reviewing design guidelines for the community. The purpose of the design guidelines is to guide new development within the Township, with a focus on the two services Villages; Embro and Thamesford. In general, good rural design will create a safe, functional and attractive built environment. Design guidelines can be used to review development proposals. Design guidelines are not used to determine land uses. Instead they provide direction on things like site design, building orientation and massing, architectural design, landscaping and public spaces.

The County of Oxford is working on an Official Plan update, as part of the Township's study we will recommend new design policies that may be incorporated into the updated Official Plan.



Sheep at a local Zorra farm.

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***OACA would like to thank Karen Graham, Clerk of the Township of Zorra, for submitting this information to "Municipality of the Month". More information can be found on the Township's website at [www.zorra.on.ca](http://www.zorra.on.ca)***

**Would you like your municipality to be featured on an upcoming "Municipality of the Month"? Go to the OACA Website at [www.oaca.info](http://www.oaca.info) for more information and to download the submission form. If your municipality is selected to be featured, you will receive a free one-year OACA Membership!**