



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 27, 2026
To: Mayor & Council
From: André Morin, Chief Administrative Officer
Report Number: COU26-050
Attachments: Appendix 1: Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building;
Appendix 2: Grand Trunk Master Plan;
Appendix 3: Exploring the Feasibility of a Community Complex as Part of the Grand Trunk Master Plan;
Appendix 4: Council Workshop #3

Title: Grand Trunk Renewal Project Implementation Strategy and Next Steps

Objective: To present Council with the analysis and recommendations required to advance the next phase of the Grand Trunk Renewal Project, including a proposed municipal capital contribution toward a shared community facility, an approach to downtown parking, and a market sounding process to assess private sector interest in the development of the site.

Background: At its meeting of November 24, 2025, Council considered report [COU25-152, Grand Trunk Renewal Project: Update and Next Steps Toward Market Readiness](#). Council's discussion reflected a desire for additional context before proceeding to the required implementation decisions, particularly around the shared community facility, the Grand Trunk superstructure, and the City's role as a funding partner.

In response, staff delivered a three-part workshop series between January and April 2026. Workshop 1 provided context on municipally led development and brownfield redevelopment. Workshop 2 focused on the project vision, community facility partnerships, and preliminary costing. Workshop 3 addressed the long-term financial strategy and project pathways. Workshop materials are available on the City's Engage Stratford platform.

Concurrently with the workshop series, staff facilitated the completion of the *Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building*, providing detailed

costing for community facility options and superstructure retention scenarios. The study is attached as Appendix 1.

On April 20, 2026, Council held a Special Meeting to provide the community with an opportunity to review the draft recommendations and delegate to Council in advance of Council's deliberations on April 27, 2026. That input forms part of the record Council is drawing on in considering the recommendations in this report.

Analysis:

1. Shared Community Facility

1.1. Policy Direction and Previous Council Direction

The inclusion of a community facility as a component of the Grand Trunk Renewal Project reflects a direction developed over several years of planning, community engagement, and technical analysis.

The *Grand Trunk Master Plan* (Master Plan) (Appendix 2) identified the site as an opportunity to deliver community, cultural, and civic uses in Stratford's downtown core. The Master Plan identified the YMCA of Three Rivers (YMCA) as a driver of the site's future, noting the importance of "relocating and upgrading the YMCA, replacing current facilities and including a day-care facility". The Master Plan envisioned the site as a Community Hub that would accommodate a range of complementary and shared uses, including library-related facilities, arts and culture space, community recreation, and housing, with existing users such as the YMCA and University of Waterloo anchoring the initial phases of redevelopment and providing ongoing activity and vibrancy to the site.

The Stratford Public Library (SPL) formally requested consideration as a partner in the Grand Trunk project through its delegation to Council in March 2024 ([COU24-035 Stratford Public Library Board—Grand Trunk Community Hub](#)), subsequently referred to the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee. The SPL commissioned a space needs study by Lemay in 2022 which found that its existing facility is undersized, with operational constraints, accessibility limitations, and insufficient capacity to meet growing demand ([Stratford Library: Final Report, 2022](#)).

City staff and staff from the YMCA and SPL explored the community facility concept. Those discussions addressed space requirements, potential operating arrangements, funding opportunities, and drew on input from the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee's Partnership Working Group. That process identified a preliminary program scope of 70,000 to 110,000 square feet, incorporating aquatics, fitness, childcare, library services, meeting and community rooms, an auditorium, café, and associated support spaces. The City undertook a study of funding and operating models for comparable facilities across Ontario. The report *Exploring the Feasibility of a Community Complex as Part of the Grand Trunk Master Plan* (Appendix 3)

analyzed ten case studies, assessed operating models and engaged key stakeholders through working sessions and a SWOT analysis.

This work was shared in report [COU25-019 Grand Trunk Renewal Project Key Recommendations](#) (February 2025). In response to this report, Council confirmed that a shared community facility is an intended use for the site and directed staff to advance the concept in partnership with the YMCA and the SPL.

1.2. Partnership and Program Considerations

The proposed community facility is based on program requirements developed in collaboration with the YMCA and the SPL. The YMCA has operated in Stratford for 150 years, providing recreation programming, aquatics, fitness, childcare, and community services. Its current facility is more than 60 years old and does not meet current standards for accessibility, programming capacity, or building performance. The facility houses Stratford's only indoor community pool.

The SPL's space needs study found that the existing library is insufficient to meet service demands of this growing city. The assessment identified fire safety concerns, limitations on technology service delivery, accessibility barriers, and constrained programming capacity as consequences of the current facility's size and condition.

Beyond the two anchor partners, a range of community organizations have articulated their space needs. The Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, in particular, has identified the need for both general community space and more specialized performance space that are not currently available in Stratford. Input from these organizations has reinforced the case for a multi-functional facility that serves a broad range of community uses.

The partners' and community organizations' requirements informed the development of facility concepts evaluated through the study. Program elements include aquatics, fitness and multi-purpose recreation space, childcare, library services, meeting and community rooms, shared common areas, and support spaces. The architectural concepts were developed through direct engagement with YMCA and SPL leadership to reflect actual operational needs and spatial requirements.

1.3. Technical Analysis and Costing

To support Council's consideration of a community facility, the City retained Svec Group to undertake the *Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building* (Appendix 1). The study addressed a central question: what would it cost to deliver a shared YMCA and Library facility, and what are the realistic options for doing so? The study was undertaken by an integrated team with expertise in architecture, cost planning, and environmental assessment, assembled specifically for the complexity of this project.

Three delivery approaches were evaluated. The first examines renovation and expansion of the existing YMCA building (approximately 70,000 square feet). The second and third examine purpose-built new construction on the Grand Trunk site at two scales: a larger 100,000 sq. ft. facility and a 75,000 sq. ft. option. Together, these three options allow for a comparison between the implications of investing in the existing asset against delivering a new facility, and to understand the cost and trade-off differences between them.

In addition to the community facility scenarios, the study examined options for the retention and treatment of the Grand Trunk superstructure. That analysis, along with staff's assessment of the cost implications of delivering the YMCA and Library program within the existing building, is addressed in Section 2 of this report.

The study was developed through a site-specific methodology, beginning with custom architectural drawings and pricing those drawings against actual site conditions rather than applying standard cost-per-square-foot benchmarks. The community facility costing was completed at a Class C standard for the renovation and 100,000 sq. ft. new build options, with the 75,000 sq. ft. option estimated on a pro-rated basis. Class C estimates carry a typical accuracy range of $\pm 15\text{--}25\%$. As a preferred option is selected and design advances, estimates will be refined.

1.4. Facility Scenarios

Each option considered in *Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building* (Appendix 1) was developed from custom architectural drawings and costed using current market pricing. The estimates include defined architectural scope, market-based construction pricing, rehabilitation, code compliance and accessibility requirements, environmental allowances, general conditions and contractor overhead, escalation assumptions, and contingencies appropriate to this stage of design definition.

- **Option 1: Renovation and Expansion of the Existing YMCA** (approx. 70,000 sq. ft., \$49.9M)
 - This option retains the existing YMCA building and introduces an addition to accommodate expanded programming and library integration. It offers the advantages of adaptive reuse by reinvesting in an existing community asset, preserving embodied carbon, and building on an established location. Considerations include disruption to YMCA operations during construction, site footprint constraints that limit future expansion, and the likely need for off-site parking solutions to support peak use.
- **Option 2: New Purpose-Built Facility on the Grand Trunk Site** (approx. 100,000 sq. ft., \$65.4M)

- A fully integrated new build combining YMCA and Library programs in a purpose-built facility. Designing from the ground up allows the building to be optimized for circulation, structural efficiency, mechanical systems, and shared programming space. The existing YMCA could remain operational throughout construction. Modern building systems would reduce long-term operating costs and support contemporary energy and sustainability standards.
- **Option 3: Right-Sized New Facility on the Grand Trunk Site** (approx. 75,000 sq. ft., \$47.3M)
 - A new build at a scale comparable to the renovation option, enabling a direct comparison between reinvestment in the existing asset and delivering equivalent program capacity through new construction. This option retains the operational and sustainability characteristics of Option 2 while aligning more closely in scale and functional capacity with Option 1.

1.5. Capital Cost Summary and Funding Considerations

The report *Exploring the Feasibility of a Community Complex as Part of the Grand Trunk Master Plan* (Appendix 3) identified a program scope of 70,000 to 110,000 square feet as the range needed to accommodate the YMCA, Library, and complementary community uses. Based on the partners' documented program requirements, staff consider a facility in the range of 75,000 square feet to be closer to what is needed at this stage. At that scale, the relevant comparison is between the renovation option (Option 1) (approx. 70,000 sq. ft., \$49.9M) and the right-sized new build (Option 3) (75,000 sq. ft., \$47.3M), two scenarios that are closely aligned in both scale and cost.

For funding strategy purposes, a working capital estimate of approximately \$55M has been used as the basis for the preliminary capital stack. The \$55M estimate reflects a conservative adjustment above the Option 1 and Option 3 estimates to account for items that are excluded or carried as provisional allowances at this stage of design. These include detailed geotechnical or structural redesign beyond current assumptions, finalized environmental remediation quantities pending intrusive testing, furniture, fixtures, and equipment beyond standard building allowances, servicing costs, and construction financing costs. Cost estimation is iterative, as a preferred option is selected and design advances, these items will be progressively resolved and the estimate refined accordingly. The \$55M should be understood as a prudent planning figure, not a final project budget.

1.6. Capital Funding Approach

A preliminary capital stack (*Council Workshop #3*, Appendix 4 p.19) (Table 1 below) was developed to test whether a funding strategy of sufficient scale is achievable. A capital stack, in this context, is a structured breakdown of the funding sources that

would collectively finance the project, identifying who contributes what, and in what amount. The capital stack presented at the April 9, 2026 Council workshop was developed in collaboration with project partners and reflects preliminary commitments and estimates for sources that will be refined as the project advances. It is structured around two scenarios, a lower funding scenario and a higher funding scenario, to illustrate the range of outcomes depending on the success of external funding outcomes.

This report contemplates a contribution of \$15M from the City for the community facility. The YMCA has indicated a contribution in the range of \$10M–\$15M, reflecting the organization's own capital commitment to the project. The SPL's contribution of \$4M–\$5M is based on a combination of reserves and the anticipated proceeds from the sale of its current building.

Development charge funding is shown across a wide range, \$2M to \$10M, reflecting genuine uncertainty around timing and amounts of development. The City is currently undertaking a Development Charge Background Study, the findings of which will provide greater clarity on what can reasonably be attributed to this project. It is also worth noting that recent announcements from both the provincial and federal governments have signalled reductions to development charge frameworks, which may affect the amount available from this source. Staff will provide updated figures for this component as the Development Charges Background Study progresses.

The childcare grant of \$1.2M reflects a specific funding stream available for licensed childcare facilities, consistent with both the federal and provincial governments' ongoing investment in childcare infrastructure. This funding has not been confirmed.

Fundraising is shown in the range of \$5M–\$8M. This range is considered reasonable based on the scale of the project and comparable community fundraising campaigns for similar facilities in Ontario. Further work will be undertaken to confirm the fundraising strategy and target range as the project advances.

Together, the higher funding scenario, which closes the gap to approximately \$800,000, illustrates what becomes possible when partner contributions, development charges, and fundraising are realized at the higher end of their ranges. The lower scenario, with a funding gap of \$17.8M, identifies the work that remains to be done through grant applications, partnership with senior levels of government, land transactions, and fundraising as the project advances.

Table 1: Preliminary Capital Stack

Funding Sources	Lower Scenario	Higher Scenario
City of Stratford	\$15,000,000	\$15,000,000
YMCA of Three Rivers	\$10,000,000	\$15,000,000
Stratford Public Library	\$4,000,000	\$5,000,000
Development Charges	\$2,000,000	\$10,000,000
Grant - Childcare	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Fundraising	\$5,000,000	\$8,000,000
Total Available Funding	\$37,200,000	\$54,200,000
Capital Need	\$55,000,000	
Funding Gap	\$17,800,000	\$800,000

1.7. Municipal Contribution

Based on the analysis presented in this report and through the Council workshop series, a municipal capital allocation of up to \$15 million toward the development of a shared community facility represents an achievable level of investment for the City.

A central question in the project to date has been whether the City can afford to participate as a funding partner in a community facility of this scale, alongside its other capital commitments. The long-term capital analysis presented at the April 9, 2026, Council workshop was developed specifically to address that question (Appendix 4 p. 4-14).

The analysis models the City's capital investment requirements over 20 years, incorporating the full range of the City's capital obligations, infrastructure master plans, asset management, community facilities, and other strategic priorities, alongside the proposed Grand Trunk investment. It is a planning tool and is grounded in the City's financial position and realistic assumptions about future investment needs. The purpose is grounded in not making decisions in a vacuum, but making decisions with the whole picture in mind, and ensuring that a decision today does not adversely impact a decision that may need to be made tomorrow.

The key finding is that the Grand Trunk investment (\$15M in 2027/28 and \$10M in 2030 from the property tax base) is achievable within a capital financing approach. The plan is structured around a consistent annual increase of \$1M to the capital tax levy, used to fund investment through a combination of reserves and debt (Appendix 4, p. 8-9). That steady, predictable approach, rather than large on

variations in necessary property tax increases, is what makes it possible to accommodate a significant investment like the Grand Trunk community facility while continuing to meet the City's other obligations. The \$15M Grand Trunk allocation in 2027 and a further \$10M in 2030 sit within that framework (Appendix 4, p. 7). The plan will become a living document that is continuously amended as new information, data, and decisions become available. Providing timely updates to senior management and Council will be crucial to ensure changes can be made if and when necessary. While the plan shows the City's long range capital plan is sustainable, it is not without risk – the City's debt-to-reserve ratio will be higher than desired in the years 2031 – 2033. As well, if the City needs to take on any other large projects, shifts and deferrals of current planned capital work will need to be considered. Staff will need to monitor and mitigate any risks as the actual revenues and expenditures become known.

The Annual Repayment Limit, the statutory cap on the City's annual debt servicing costs under Ontario Regulation 403/02 of the Municipal Act, 2001, provides an additional measure of the City's debt capacity. Based on 2023 financial data, available debt capacity within the ARL is approximately \$19.4M, with peak ARL utilization in the 20-year forecast projected at \$13.1M in 2028, within the statutory limit of 25% of own-source revenues (Appendix 4, p. 14).

Delivering a project of this scale requires partnership. The City's \$15M contribution is meaningful, but it is one part of a broader funding strategy that draws on YMCA and Library capital, development charges, grants, and fundraising. That shared funding model is what makes the investment manageable and what distinguishes this approach from scenarios in which the City would need to carry the full cost alone.

1.8. Operating Considerations

Preliminary operating analysis was presented at the April 9, 2026, Council workshop (Appendix 4, p. 21-22). For the SPL, the net estimated annual operating impact of participation in a new shared facility is approximately \$15,300, reflecting increased programming costs partially offset by efficiencies in facility maintenance and the Library's existing reserve transfer. This assumes that the current Library site is no longer owned or operated by the Library/City.

The YMCA has also completed preliminary internal projections for its operations at the facility. The YMCA has advised that, based on those projections and within the proposed square footage, it is confident its component of the facility would not operate at a deficit. The YMCA notes that childcare will continue to be a core service within the facility.

From the City's perspective, the asset management approach is structured to build reserve contributions progressively over the life of the asset, from a minimum of \$100,000 per year during the early debt-intensive period, through \$200,000 per

year in the middle years, to \$750,000 per year in the post-debt reinvestment phase (Appendix 4, p 23). This approach is designed to ensure that long-term reinvestment obligations are reflected in financial planning from the outset rather than deferred. This approach also works to match the property tax burden to the life of the asset and the users of that asset.

The full operating modelling for the facility will be developed through the next phase of work. Formal operating and governance models, including operating agreements with the YMCA and SPL, will be developed as part of the next phase of work and brought forward for Council consideration.

1.9. Next Steps

Subject to Council direction, the next phase of work over the next 12 to 18 months will be supported through the existing 2026 budget, with contributions from the YMCA and the Library. This work will include:

- Formalization of partnerships through Memoranda of Understanding with the YMCA and the SPL (targeted for Spring/Summer 2026)
- Determination of other partnerships
- Advancement of facility design including confirmation of program, size, and preferred site configuration; development of governance and ownership models
- Development of operating and financial models; including term scenarios and exit and default remedies.
- Advancement of a comprehensive funding strategy including applications to senior levels of government; and coordination of fundraising efforts in partnership with project stakeholders.

2. Grand Trunk Superstructure

2.1. Background and Council Direction

The Grand Trunk superstructure, the former Canadian National Railway shops building, is a defining feature of the site. Its scale, history, and presence have been central to community and Council discussions about the site's future. Preserving a meaningful connection to that heritage has been a consistent priority, reflected in the guiding principles developed by the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee.

In July 2025, Council considered three superstructure scenarios: Keep Most/All, Keep Part, and Keep None ([*COU25-084 Grand Trunk site update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations*](#)). Council directed staff to advance Scenario 2 (Keep Part) as the basis for further work. That direction reflected the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee and was informed by a weighing of heritage value, technical feasibility, cost implications, and site flexibility. The Keep Part direction contemplates preserving a portion of the superstructure as an open-air or

partially sheltered public space, drawing on precedents such as the Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto.

2.2. Technical Analysis

Since the July 2025 direction, detailed costing for four superstructure retention scenarios was completed through the *Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building* (Appendix 1). The analysis is based on custom architectural drawings, Class D cost estimates, and environmental remediation estimates. This work provides a picture of what each retention approach implies financially.

The four scenarios and their estimated costs are as follows:

Table 2: Grand Trunk Superstructure Options from *Grand Trunk Costing Report: Community Facilities & Grand Trunk Building*

Scenario	Retained Area	Description	Estimated Cost
1A – Open-Air Shell	~50,000 sq. ft.	Structural cleaning, slab remediation, demolition of remaining areas, parking reconfiguration (~300 spaces)	\$11.2M (\$9.5M building + \$1.7M remediation)
1B – Partial Shelter	~50,000 sq. ft.	As above, with non-insulated roof and skylights for weather protection	\$19.4M (\$17.5M building + \$1.9M remediation)
2A – Fully Enclosed	~75,000 sq. ft.	Full enclosure with insulated roof, rainscreen façade, curtain wall glazing, HVAC, plumbing, lighting; reduced parking (~200 spaces)	\$42.7M (\$37.7M building + \$5.0M remediation)
2B – Fully Enclosed	~100,000 sq. ft.	Expanded retention, full enclosure and services, comprehensive indoor programming potential; parking further reduced (~100 spaces)	\$53.0M (\$46.6M building + \$6.4M remediation)

These figures reflect base building retention, structural upgrades, envelope interventions, and environmental compliance. They do not include interior programming, tenant fit-out, or specialized uses. The costing for the superstructure scenarios was completed at a Class D standard, carrying a typical accuracy range of $\pm 25\text{--}40\%$.

The open-air scenarios (1A and 1B) are significantly less complex from an environmental and regulatory standpoint than the fully enclosed options. Once the building is enclosed and people are gathering indoors, vapour intrusion and Record of Site Condition compliance become central drivers of both cost and schedule. The fully enclosed options (2A and 2B) increase regulatory exposure, vapour mitigation requirements, abatement scope, and timeline risk relative to the open-air scenarios.

2.3. Implications for Community Facility Delivery

There has been a long-standing desire to see the Grand Trunk superstructure reused as a community facility. The Master Plan identified the YMCA as a key anchor for the site's redevelopment, and the superstructure has been part of that conversation since that time. The technical work completed through this process provides a detailed, site-specific cost picture.

Based on the technical work completed to date, delivering the community facility within the existing superstructure would carry a construction premium of approximately 25–30% compared to a new build on a clear site. That premium reflects the access and staging constraints of working within an existing structure, the complexity of integrating a pool, gymnasium, and library into a century-old industrial building, the difficulty of routing new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems, productivity impacts from confined working conditions, and code compliance requirements that are typically more costly to satisfy in existing buildings.

On that basis, delivering the YMCA and Library program within the Grand Trunk superstructure is estimated to cost in the range of \$59M to \$85M for the community facility component alone, before the separate cost of shell restoration. This compares to \$47.3M–\$65.4M for equivalent program delivery outside the superstructure. These are high-level figures that would require further refinement as and investigation of the existing structure advances; but based on the current estimates on the available capital financing stack, the enhanced cost may prove restrictive.

2.4. Next Steps

The question of what the superstructure ultimately becomes, what uses it could accommodate, what level of retention is viable, and what role the private sector might play, will be explored through the market sounding process. Direct input from experienced developers on how the superstructure could be integrated into a viable

mixed-use development will be considered in that process and will inform the recommendations brought back to Council on the next phase of site development.

3. Downtown Parking

3.1. Background

The Grand Trunk site currently accommodates approximately 437 surface parking spaces used by downtown employees, business patrons, and seasonal visitors. As development of the site advances, these spaces will be displaced. Managing that displacement and addressing the broader downtown parking needs, including the needs of the proposed community facility, requires a system-wide approach.

A standalone parking structure on the Grand Trunk site was identified as a potential solution in earlier phases of the project. However, advancing a site-specific parking solution before understanding current utilization, future demand, and the performance of the downtown parking system as a whole, risks producing an outcome that is unaligned with the broader downtown. The comprehensive downtown parking strategy will be able to address questions related to parking at the Grand Trunk site.

3.2. Downtown Parking Strategy

The City has initiated a Downtown Parking Study, with the RFP closing April 9, 2026. The study was scoped specifically to include consideration of the Grand Trunk site and the parking implications of future development, including the proposed community facility.

The study's key objectives include a review of zoning and parking standards in the downtown core; evaluation of current utilization, capacity, and demand across downtown parking lots; assessment of future parking demand; a comparative review of other municipalities' parking strategies and best practices; development of a competitive and sustainable pricing model; community and stakeholder engagement; and a 15-year capital renewal plan for existing municipal parking infrastructure.

The RFP identifies a target completion timeline of six months from contract award. A report to Council with findings and recommendations is anticipated in December 2026, subject to the schedule proposed by the successful proponent.

3.3. Financial Considerations

While the parking study will provide an analysis of revenue potential, preliminary modelling suggests that a downtown parking system incorporating the Grand Trunk site and future community facility uses could generate annual net revenues in the range of \$250,000–\$350,000 (Appendix 4, p 27). This provides early indication that

parking may contribute meaningfully to the project's long-term financial sustainability.

3.4. Next Steps

The parking needs associated with the Grand Trunk site, including the displacement of existing spaces and the demand generated by the proposed community facility and future development, will be addressed through the Downtown Parking Study. Site-specific parking decisions will be deferred pending the study's findings, with recommendations to be brought forward to Council following completion of the study.

This approach ensures that parking decisions are grounded in current data, informed by a system-wide analysis, and integrated with the City's broader downtown strategy.

4. Structure & Housing: Market Sounding

4.1. Purpose and Context

A market sounding is a structured process through which the City can engage directly with private sector developers to assess interest in a project, understand the parameters that would make partnership attractive, and gather intelligence that informs future procurement decisions. It is a common practice among municipalities and public agencies prior to issuing a formal Request for Proposals, and it is distinct from a procurement process as participation does not preclude respondents from bidding on future formal processes.

The Grand Trunk site represents a significant and complex redevelopment opportunity. Before the City advances to formal procurement, it is prudent to understand how the private sector views the project. That intelligence is valuable in the current market, which is quite dynamic.

4.2 Approach

The market sounding will be undertaken through an engagement with a small number of experienced development partners with expertise in mixed-use, multi-unit residential, and multi-phase revitalization projects. Prior to outreach, the City will prepare a concise document describing the Grand Trunk site, the City's vision and parameters, and the work completed to date. Legal counsel will be engaged to ensure the process is structured in a way that protects the integrity of any future procurement process.

The market sounding is not a commitment to a particular development partner, development approach, or procurement model. It is a research exercise. Its findings will inform the City's approach to the next phase of the project, but decisions about

procurement, partnership structures, and land disposition will be brought back to Council through future reports. Findings will be summarized and brought forward to Council.

4.3 Superstructure & Site Development

As described in section 2, the market sounding will seek input on private sector interest in the Grand Trunk superstructure as part of a broader mixed-use development.

4.4 Next Steps

The market sounding is intended to commence immediately following Council's direction at the April 27 meeting, with the following anticipated sequence:

- Late April/Early May: Preparation of overview document, legal review, identification of candidates, and outreach
- May/Early June: Market sounding meetings
- June/Early Summer: Summary of findings and report to Council

5.0 Conclusion

The analysis presented in this report supports three directions for Council's consideration.

- On the community facility, the technical and financial work completed to date demonstrates that a shared facility, delivering YMCA, library, and broader community space, is feasible, affordable in a capital financing framework, and best advanced through a partnership model with the YMCA and SPL. A municipal contribution of up to \$15M provides the foundation on which that partnership can be built.
- On parking, the interconnectedness of downtown parking needs is best addressed through the Downtown Parking Study currently underway, rather than through a standalone site-specific solution. That study will provide the data and analysis needed to make sound, system-wide decisions.
- On market sounding, the City is at the right moment to engage the private sector. Understanding developer interest, partnership parameters, and market conditions, including interest in the Grand Trunk superstructure, before advancing to formal procurement is a prudent and well-established practice that will strengthen the City's position when it does go to market.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The current work is included in the 2026 budget.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

The proposed \$15 million commitment will need to be included into the 2027 operating budget and capital forecasts. As has been noted in previous material, staff have considered this project in the context of the City's Asset Management Plan and preliminary figures indicate an annual impact of the asset management plan investments required of approximately \$1,000,000 on the tax levy annually. Any additional operating and lifecycle cost implications of the community facility will be determined through the next phase of work, including the development of formal operating agreements with project partners and detailed financial modelling. These will be brought forward for Council consideration through future reports and addressed through the annual budget process.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

The community facility will represent a new capital asset for the City. As design and partnership arrangements are confirmed through the next phase of work, the facility will be integrated into the City's asset management plan, including lifecycle planning, financial forecasting, and levels of service. The City's asset management plan is updated annually, providing a mechanism to incorporate the facility as it advances toward construction and ultimately into service.

Legal considerations:

Development and partnership agreements will all be considered in the next phase (s) of the project.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**Work Together For Greater Impact**

This report aligns with this priority by initiating the Grand Trunk Renewal project through formal development models.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:**Health and Happiness**

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Staff Recommendation: THAT Council commit a City of Stratford capital allocation of up to \$15 million toward the development of a shared community facility on the Grand Trunk site to advance the partnership with

the YMCA of Three Rivers and the Stratford Public Library to be included in the financial strategies of the 2027 and subsequent operating budget, capital forecasts and Asset Management Plan considerations;

THAT staff be directed to formalize partnerships with the YMCA of Three Rivers and the Stratford Public Library through Memoranda of Understanding;

THAT staff be directed to undertake the next phase of work on a shared community facility, including design, governance and ownership models, and operating and funding strategies, with details to be brought forward for Council consideration through future reports;

THAT following completion of the Downtown Parking Study, staff be directed to prepare a report with information and recommendations on parking at the Grand Trunk site;

AND THAT Council direct staff to undertake a market sounding process to assess private sector interest in the development of the Grand Trunk site and report back to Council on the findings.

Prepared by: Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead
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