

GTR FAQs

Version 5, Feb 12

NOTE: These questions are aimed at raising and addressing questions from residents about the Grand Trunk site, its development and the Ad Hoc Committee's work. It is written in plain language and attempts to be clear about what is happening on the site and what could happen there.

Where possible, these FAQs link to documents and websites, including City reports, the Grand Trunk Master Plan, minutes of Council, and other information that will help the reader understand what is happening on the Grand Trunk site.

THE GRAND TRUNK SITE AND BUILDING

1. What's new with this site? It's been empty for decades.

Understandably, there might be some frustration at seeing the site still undeveloped after all this time.

Last year, the City ended a decade of legal battles around additional compensation claimed by the previous owner of the site. During this time, any large-scale development of the site was delayed until the completion of the legal process and appeals. Although the City expropriated the site in 2009, not until last year was it able to start moving forward on how to develop it in the public interest.

Now that the additional compensation claim is settled and there is an existing [Master Plan](#) to guide its development, it's time for action. That's why Council appointed the [Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee](#) to support and advise Council on the execution of the Master Plan and the redevelopment of the site – using the Master Plan as the framework for development.

2. Who actually owns or controls the Grand Trunk Site?

The City of Stratford is the sole owner of the site and has responsibility for its development.

3. What's going to happen to the Grand Trunk building?

It is a unique historic building superstructure that was used for steam locomotive repair from the 1870s to the 1960s and that played a key role in Stratford's growth and prosperity. The building itself and its superstructure is a flexible space of around 160,000 ft² that can accommodate a wide variety of uses.

Despite the building's long history in the community, the building itself is not heritage designated.

In 2012, consulting engineers Read Jones Christoffersen [assessed the physical condition of the GTR building](#), specifically the steel frame of the building. Its report outlined some steps to be taken to preserve the building frame for future use.

In 2015 City Council asked Ventin Group Architects to study the options for the Grand Trunk Building. [Those findings](#) were presented to Council, stating that the building was an asset that the City could consider preserving for adaptive reuse at potentially lower cost than a new building.

On this basis the City prepared the 2018 Master Plan for the Grand Trunk Renewal Site which provides a framework for phased reinvestment of the building and the site. The Master Plan calls for the building to be adapted for new uses and not be demolished.

The next steps of this revitalization project include working with partners from both the non-profit and for-profit sectors to assess potential uses for the building and develop designs for the building in partnership with tenants.

You can read more about past assessments of the GTR Building [here](#)

4. Is the Grand Trunk building structurally sound?

The Grand Trunk building was inspected by structural engineers. It was found to be in very good condition. The steel frame of the building will last for a very long time and meets the standards for a stand-alone building of its type. Anything additional that will be built in, on or around the structure will require additional supports.

5. How much money has the city spent on the GTR site, and what was it for?

To date, the City has spent approximately \$27 million on the building and the site, which is detailed [here](#).

This money has primarily been spent on securing the site for the City and assessing the site and the GTR building for future development through:

- Reducing the unknowns on the site
- Reducing environment and safety risk
- Assessing the structural condition of the old shops building
- Adding more certainty to future project costs

The work approved by Council to prepare the site for future development included:

- The restoration and rehabilitation of 100,000 square feet of the historic steel truss roof structure which included:
 - Complete Removal of Leaking Roof Over Historic Steel Trusses
 - Removal and Storage of Some Historic Skylights

- Removal and Storage of Some Original Wooden Roof Planks
- Removal and Disposal of all Asbestos Containing Felt/Tar Roofing
- Cleaning/Repair/Priming of Historic Steel Trusses
- Bracing and Stabilization of All Salvageable Trusses

This work was funded through the Grand Trunk Community Hub Reserve Fund. This fund was established with the proceeds of the sale of the Fairgrounds and Tom Patterson Theatre site and is intended to be used to support the development of the Grand Trunk site.

6. What budget does the City have for work on the GTR site, and what can that budget do to prepare the site for development?

Work on the site is funded through the Grand Trunk Community Hub Reserve Fund. This fund was established with the proceeds of the sale of the Fairgrounds and Tom Patterson Theatre site and is intended to be used to support the development of the Grand Trunk site.

The City's 2024 budget, which is not yet approved by Council, includes \$1.9 million in spending from the Reserve Fund that advances the Grand Trunk Master Plan:

- Environmental, site servicing
- Engineering Project management
- Design services
- Climate | Net Zero Study
- Implementation planning

7. Is the site contaminated?

Some soils at the site have been partly contaminated by the previous industrial use.

A [2009 report](#) for the City on the site's soil conditions says, "although there is historical hydrocarbon and heavy metals contamination in the soil on the Site and some hydrocarbon impacts to the shallow groundwater, there was no conclusive evidence to indicate that contamination on the Cooper Site is causing an adverse effect on human health or the environment."

You can read more about the City of Stratford's water service here:

<https://www.stratford.ca/en/live-here/water.aspx#Drinking-Water-Source-Protection>

There are certain areas, such as the western portion of the site, where the contamination would require what is called remediation – which could involve, for example, either replacing contaminated soil or putting a clean soil cap on top of the contaminated soil – to meet current environmental standards and to protect human health and the environment.

This type of contamination and remediation is not challenging to do and is very common on post-industrial sites. The bottom line is that the GTR site is developable for many different

uses, with some areas impacted by past industrial use that will need to be addressed before development.

8. Are there concerns that contaminated groundwater from the site could be a problem for neighbouring properties – as was observed in the 2009 report?

The [2009 report](#) acknowledged that there are contaminants in the soil that can get into groundwater. As the site gets closer to development, more work will need to be done to assess the soil and groundwater conditions at specific areas on the site to determine if any remediation is needed.

This type of contamination and remediation is not challenging to do and is very common on post-industrial sites. The bottom line is that the GTR site is developable for many different uses, with some areas impacted by past industrial use that will need to be addressed before development.

9. What can be built at the Grand Trunk site? What is the existing zoning for the site?

(See also: “**What uses are appropriate for the site?**”)

The [City of Stratford’s Official Plan](#) permits the following uses at the Grand Trunk site:

- Residential (e.g. apartments, retirement home)
- Commercial (e.g. offices, galleries, clinics, day cares, hotels, parking lots, restaurants, retail, short-term accommodations, fitness centres, performing arts space, etc.)
- Institutional (e.g. cultural institutions, library, innovation incubator, park, schools etc.)
- Parks and open spaces

Development of the site could provide benefits to the city through residential, recreational, educational, institutional, community, commercial and cultural uses.

This means the Grand Trunk site could be home to apartments or a senior’s residence, a school or post-secondary institution, a community centre, a gym or recreation centre, offices, innovation spaces, a hotel, restaurants and cafes, a library, a day care centre, an art gallery or a performance space.

The City’s Official Plan is undergoing a review, which will include looking at other potential uses, future opportunities for the Grand Trunk site and how the site fits into the overall plan for the city.

In 2018, a [Master Plan for the Grand Trunk](#) site that would shape its growth and evolution was completed. It outlines potential uses and objectives for the site: “The Grand Trunk site... is envisioned to be a convergence of education, community, health, culture,

entrepreneurship and innovation; will aim to strengthen and diversify the Stratford economy, and provide spaces, places, services and amenities for residents, students, businesses and visitors.”

More questions on the Master Plan can be found below in this document.

10. Why did it take so long for the city to get control of this land and do something with this site?

Since 2009, the site has been the subject of a very lengthy legal process following the expropriation of the site from its previous owner.

During this legal process, the previous owner initiated challenges to the expropriation decision, and the value of the property. During this time, any large-scale development of the site was delayed until the completion of the legal process and appeals.

As of June 2023, all appeals and challenges related to the additional compensation were completed.

11. What are the opportunities the site presents?

The site presents unprecedented opportunities for Stratford and its residents. It is the biggest undeveloped site in the downtown – by a considerable amount.

Very few cities in North America have this opportunity: a large piece of city-owned land in the downtown area that is close to transit hubs (bus station, train station) and within walking distance to many residential neighbourhoods and Stratford’s river and park system.

The Grand Trunk site will not be developed without understanding how it can best serve the interests and needs of the City. With a Master Plan that provides a framework, and the work of the Ad Hoc Committee to move forward on a business plan and potential partners, the stage is set for the development of the Grand Trunk site.

The site provides opportunities to provide Stratford with much-needed housing, community space and services, public and green space, educational facilities, cultural space and more.

More specifically, the site offers the chance to build on:

- 18 acres or 7.3 hectares of underutilized city land (including the parcels of land occupied by the University of Waterloo and YMCA)
- Significant cultural and historical heritage within the building and the site
- Two key partners with current and future interest in the site
- A transit hub on-site and a train station within a five-minute walk

Development of the site could provide benefits to the city through residential, recreational, educational, institutional, community, commercial and cultural uses.

This means the Grand Trunk site could be home to apartments or a senior's residence, a school or post-secondary institution, a community centre, a gym or recreation centre, offices, innovation spaces, a hotel, restaurants and cafes, a library, a day care centre, an art gallery or a performance space.

12. What are the site's constraints?

There are some constraints on the site:

- An active rail line along St. David Street, which currently requires certain setbacks and other measures for new residential, commercial and institutional buildings on the site; the rail line also presents challenges in connecting the south side of the site to the surrounding neighbourhood
- A burned-out section of the Grand Trunk building
- A significant amount of free surface parking currently in use, representing 40 per cent of the city-owned parking spots
- Some soil contamination
- A minor elevation difference on the northwest side (Cooper St.) of the site.

These constraints pose challenges for the development of the site, but solutions are in hand to deal with them – either in the current Master Plan or future designs for the site.

13. How can the GTR site be used to address some of the City's challenges and achieve its goals, like to build more housing?

The site presents unprecedented opportunities for Stratford and its residents. It is the biggest undeveloped site in the downtown – by a considerable amount.

The Grand Trunk site will be developed with an understanding of how it can best serve the interests and needs of the City.

City Council has recently approved plans and strategies to address Stratford's challenges and achieve important goals related to:

- Building more housing
- Supporting Stratford's tourism economy
- Providing more opportunities for arts & culture
- Strengthening social services
- Addressing homelessness
- Responding to climate change

The Master Plan for the Grand Trunk site aligns with these priorities and can play a strong role in achieving them.

14. What uses are appropriate for the site?

Following the completion of the 2018 Master Plan, the City adopted a new [Zoning By-law](#) in early 2022 that included updates that affect the Grand Trunk site. Following the completion

of the 2018 Master Plan, the City adopted a new [Zoning By-law](#) in early 2022 that included updates that affect for the Grand Trunk site. These updates were based on the extensive public consultation and the work conducted through the Master Plan process and the Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan.

The updated provisions for the Grand Trunk site are contained in the City's new (current) [Zoning By-law](#) under Section 8.0, "Grand Trunk Anchor District Zone". The possible uses listed are extensive and include residential, recreational, educational, institutional, community, commercial and cultural uses. This means the Grand Trunk site could be home to apartments, a senior's residence, a school or post-secondary institution, a community centre, a gym or recreation centre, offices, innovation spaces, a hotel, restaurants and cafes, a library, a day care centre, an art gallery or a performance space.

15. What existing agreements does the City have for the site? With whom? What special rights do they have for the site?

The City has two main partners for the Grand Trunk site: the YMCA and the University of Waterloo—both own facilities on the site.

The YMCA's existing building on the Grand Trunk site needs major renovation to make a more accessible and efficient building. A new YMCA for Stratford is envisioned to be located on the Grand Trunk site, specifically in the Grand Trunk Building. Feasibility studies and some design work are currently underway for this. The existing YMCA building could then be demolished, and the site used for new development.

The City has an agreement with the University that established the existing Stratford Campus and provides for a total of 8 acres to accommodate future academic buildings and a student residence.

16. Can that 8 acres be used for something else, or does the University have the exclusive rights to it?

The University of Waterloo currently occupies approximately 1.3 acres.

Under the current agreement with the City, the University of Waterloo is entitled to another 6.3 acres on the site. How much of the remaining 6.3 acres committed to the University of Waterloo and its specific location on the site are yet to be determined. Should the University of Waterloo not wish to use the remaining 6.3 acres committed in the agreement, the land can be used for something else.

17. What about the railway line that runs along the side of the site on St. David St? Can it be moved? Does the railway line limit what can happen on the site?

That railway line along St. David Street is active but has limited activity (about two trains a day).

That rail line currently requires certain setbacks and other measures for new residential, commercial and institutional buildings on the site. The rail line also presents challenges in connecting the south side of the site to the surrounding neighbourhood.

Given the large scale of the site, this setback from the rail line can be accommodated along with future development.

18. How much will it cost to develop the Grand Trunk site? Who will pay for it?

It is estimated that the total investment in the project – in the future buildings, services, infrastructure and other elements – could certainly be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. This represents investment from private developers, organizations like the YMCA and University, and other levels of government.

The cost of the project to the City is difficult to estimate at this stage, but its contribution would be small, and would mostly for building the needed infrastructure work (roads, water, sewers) to unlock the site for development. In this way, the City's costs for infrastructure can be seen as an investment. Once new buildings such as housing or commercial spaces are in place on the GTR site, the City earns new property tax revenue.

Most of the estimated development value of the GTR site will come from developers and other private and public sector partners who would buy or lease the land and construct and operate new buildings. The development of the site is likely a long-term project – composed of many separate development projects – lasting 10-20 years before it is fully built out.

For a look back at past City costs related to the Grand Trunk Site, please go [here](#).

To date, the City has spent approximately \$27 million on the building and the site, which is detailed [here](#).

This money has primarily been spent on securing the site for the City and assessing the site and the GTR building for future development.

19. The City has spent a lot of money on this site. When are we going to see some real progress?

It's understandable that there might be some frustration at seeing the site still undeveloped after all this time.

The City's spending on the site to date – in assessing the site and the building, in legal costs to ensure the City owns and controls the site, in removing old and hazardous materials and stabilizing the GTR building and in developing a Master Plan – can be seen as an investment in this remarkable community asset and have made the site closer to development.

Now that the City owns the site outright and there is a Master Plan to guide its development, it's time for action. That's why Council appointed the [Ad Hoc Grand Trunk](#)

[Renewal Committee](#) to support and advise Council on the execution of the Master Plan and the redevelopment of the site. You can read Council's direction to the Ad Hoc Committee [here](#).

You may not be able to see it but work on the site and on the future development of the site is happening. While the Ad Hoc Committee does its work, the City is making sure that it is advancing work that will allow development on the GTR site to happen.

Currently, technical work on the site is underway, including engineering investigation and preliminary designs needed to prepare the site for development of infrastructure, such as water, sewage and roads. The Master Plan provides a framework for these preparatory works. It also outlines the block plan for the site, including potential uses for each block.

20. Does the city have any budget for this project?

The City has a budget for preparatory work on the site, such design for the road network and services, and technical work for the proposed blocks.

On July 26, 2021, Council [approved a redevelopment strategy](#) for the GTR Site consistent with the 2018 Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan. The purpose of this strategy was to undertake work that would prepare the site for whatever development was determined to be most important by Council in the future. This site work aimed to:

- Reduce the unknowns on the site
- Reduce environment and safety risk
- Assess the structural condition of the old shops building
- Add more certainty to future project costs

The work approved by Council to prepare the site for future development totalled approximately \$2.5 million, and included:

- The restoration and rehabilitation of 100,000 square feet of the historic steel truss roof structure which included:
 - Complete Removal of Leaking Roof Over Historic Steel Trusses
 - Removal and Storage of Some Historic Skylights
 - Removal and Storage of Some Original Wooden Roof Planks
 - Removal and Disposal of all Asbestos Containing Felt/Tar Roofing
 - Cleaning/Repair/Priming of Historic Steel Trusses in Community Hub/YMCA Area
 - Bracing and Stabilization of All Salvageable Trusses

In January of 2023, to continue preparing the site for future development and to mitigate risk on the site (such as environment contamination), Council approved \$2.5 million to support site servicing, the development of a fundraising plan, environmental work, and preliminary engineering and design of site services including roadways.

The details can be found on pages 6-9 of the [2023 Expansion Budget Requests document](#).

- The City's 2024 budget, which is not yet approved by Council, includes \$1.9 million in spending from the Reserve Fund that advances the Grand Trunk Master Plan:
- Environmental, site servicing
- Engineering Project management
- Design services.
- Climate | Net Zero Study
- Implementation planning

The details can be found on page 8-14 of the [2024 Expansion Budget Request document](#).

This work is funded through the Grand Trunk Community Hub Reserve Fund. This fund was established with the proceeds of the sale of the Fairgrounds and 48 Water Street and intended to be used to support the development of the Grand Trunk site.

THE MASTER PLAN

21. What is a Master Plan? What does it do? Why do we need one?

The [Grand Trunk Master Plan](#) was commissioned by City Council in 2017 to guide development of the Grand Trunk site. The Master Plan was [then approved and adopted by City Council on March 26, 2018](#).

Council's Commitment to the Master Plan was reaffirmed when it [adopted a process to re-start the project](#) after the height of the pandemic. It is now the key document that will drive development of the Grand Trunk site.

A master plan is a high-level plan that shows the overall direction and objectives of developing a site. It outlines how the land will be used and what infrastructure and services are needed, such as public spaces, the street and transportation network. It also defines where the development blocks could be located and the size, shape and use of buildings on each block.

A master plan also identifies the urban development challenges that need to be addressed and goals and policies that a city has outlined; for Stratford, those high-level challenges are described by the Grand Trunk Master Plan as a growing population, economic diversification, a need for additional community spaces and services.

A master plan is a framework for how the site could develop over time; it addresses key planning and design issues and provides an overall vision and planning principles that will shape and impact future development. A master plan can change and adapt over time in response to changing circumstances, contexts and the needs and goals of the city. It provides a consistent and clear path for development, rather than having the site developed in a piecemeal way.

More specifically, the Master Plan identifies Stratford's need to:

- Restore a sense of purpose and vibrancy for the site
- Include spaces for the past users of the Tom Patterson Theatre

- Provide spaces for housing, culture, education and training
- Create new green and open spaces in the heart of the city
- Support ways to increase active transportation as an alternative to car use, such as walking and cycling.
- Celebrate the history of the site.

The Grand Trunk Master Plan has already been put into action: it planned for the relocation of the municipal bus terminal to the site, which has happened. The Master Plan's proposed road network, in addition to other servicing like sewers, is currently in the design phase.

Recent work on the site have been documented in status updates provided to Council through a series of reports:

- December 2021 (page 105)
<https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings/Detail/2021-12-13-1500-Regular-Council/8091f323-d659-4127-9450-adfa0138692e>
- October 2022 (page 174)
<https://calendar.stratford.ca/meetings/Detail/2022-10-11-1900-Regular-Council2/53053864-0c58-46a6-b82b-af27014c878c>
- January 2023
<https://pub-stratford.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=3093>

22. What are a vision and planning principles? How do they shape what will happen to the Grand Trunk site?

A vision is way of articulating what should be achieved by the development.

Guiding principles are goals and values that should guide decision-making in developing the site.

The Grand Trunk Master Plan outlines the following vision for the site:

“The Grand Trunk site... is envisioned to be a convergence of education, community, health, culture, entrepreneurship and innovation; will aim to strengthen and diversify the Stratford economy, and provide spaces, places, services and amenities for residents, students, businesses and visitors.”

The Master Plan also provides a vision for a proposed “Community Hub”: a cluster of uses and services located in the Grand Trunk Building. This name was used to make the cluster align with and be eligible for funding with the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program. The “Community Hub” name may no longer be used in the future, but the objective of co-locating a variety of local services and amenities will not change.

You can find the Vision and Guiding Principles in the Grand Trunk Master Plan [here](#), on pages 2-22. These were developed with input from the public in 2017.

These Guiding Principles include:

- Adaptive reuse of the GTR building
- Create a place that reflects Stratford's community values and aspirations
- Establish a range of green public spaces for all seasons
- Encourage complimentary land uses, such as student and senior living spaces, community recreation spaces, and cultural uses
- Demonstrate excellence in design and sustainability

You might notice that what is not in the Vision is also valuable in understanding what could happen on this site. For example, the Vision is not to prioritize selling the land to the highest bidder for any use, nor is it to turn the entire site into a park or put a new industrial use into the Grand Trunk building.

Through the Winter and Spring of 2024, the Ad Hoc Committee will be undertaking an effort to review and refresh the project's vision and Guiding Principles, which will include public consultation. More details on this will be available on the [Grand Trunk Project's Public Engagement page](#).

23. Stratford has a housing shortage – particularly affordable housing. What does the Master Plan say about housing, and will there be housing on the site?

The site is an excellent opportunity to build needed housing for Stratford.

The current zoning for the site allows for residential buildings of up to 22m or approximately six-to-seven floors.

The Master Plan also originally included housing as a potential use on the site. Student housing associated with the University of Waterloo and the potential for seniors housing were highlighted, as was affordable and market-priced rental units.

As Council and the Ad Hoc Committee continue their work, housing will continue to be a key consideration for the site.

InvestStratford recently completed a study on [attainable housing in Stratford](#). [The Stratford Attainable Housing Project](#) identifies solutions to support attainable housing locally.

24. Will there be taller buildings on the Grand Trunk site?

The Ad Hoc Committee will shortly be starting a process to review and update the Vision from the Master Plan. This process will consider the appropriate size and scale of buildings on this large site.

There is potential to accommodate buildings that would be taller than the 22 metres (approx. six-to-seven storeys) currently permitted. The City's [Official Plan](#) and [Zoning By-law](#) already provide direction for increased building height for the Grand Trunk site, however the

precise height and scale of buildings can be explored through the Ad Hoc Committee process.

In considering buildings of higher than six-to-seven storeys, there are other considerations, such as how taller buildings on the site relate to the size of surrounding buildings, and how compatible taller buildings on the site would be with nearby public facilities such as park space. As well, it is important to understand how taller buildings could make it easier to create a range of new housing – rental, affordable and market – and how taller buildings on the site can free up more land for open spaces.

25. Will the transit terminal stay there?

Yes, the existing transit terminal will remain. Its location is complimentary to the train station, and it allows access to the site for all future users, which could reduce vehicle usage and related carbon emissions.

The Master Plan addresses sustainability considerations on pages 36-37.

You can find the Transportation Master Plan [here](#)

26. Are there any similar developments that could be good examples or inspiration of how the Grand Trunk site could be developed?

There are many good examples of developments (some of them on post-industrial land) that provide lessons, inspiration and precedents for the Grand Trunk Site.

The Master Plan provided several examples that informed and inspired it:

- [Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto](#)
- [Wychwood Barns in Toronto](#)
- [The Tannery in Kitchener-Waterloo](#)
- [Lansdowne Park in Ottawa](#)
- [Market Square in Guelph](#)

A few other projects that are in progress are worth keeping an eye on:

- [Jericho Lands in Vancouver](#)
- [River District Development in Calgary](#)
- [Bramm Yards in Kitchener](#)

THE AD HOC GRAND TRUNK RENEWAL COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK

27. What was the process to select the members of the Ad Hoc Committee? Why were they chosen?

[In 2023, Stratford City Council established the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee](#) to provide support and a forum for input and exchange of ideas on the renewal of the Grand

Trunk building, as well as to advise Council on the execution of the Master Plan and the redevelopment of the site.

Citizens interested in being a member of the Committee, as well as the position of Chair, were asked to apply the positions to be considered by Council. In addition to asking about their qualifications and experience, applicants were asked about their approach to ensuring that the Committee's work reflects the interests of all of Stratford's diverse population.

Council outlined the composition of the Ad Hoc Committee as follows:

Council member:

- Mayor and/or designate of the Mayor

Public members:

- One Citizen-at-Large
- One Economic Development – e.g. BIA member, Chamber of Commerce representative, business owner, manufacturing
- One Development – e.g., construction or building industry
- One Accounting – accountant, financial planning
- One Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association member
- One Youth – e.g. aged 13-25
- One Education – e.g. Teacher, principal, professor, director
- One Arts & Culture – community or professional theatre
- One Design – e.g. architect, engineer
- One Legal – e.g. lawyer, insurance
- One Land use planning – e.g. planner

City Staff (non-voting members):

- One Chief Administrative Officer
- One Corporate Initiatives Lead
- One Director of Community Services and/or designate
- One Recording Secretary

On July 24, 2023, Council Council appointed Dan Mathieson be appointed as the Chair of the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee for a two-year term to September 30, 2025.

At the October 10, 2023, Regular Council meeting, Council adopted the following appointments to the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee for a two-year term to September 30, 2025

- Citizen-at-Large - Barb Cottle
- Economic Development - Franklin Famme
- Development - Andy Bicanic
- Accounting – Stephen Mitchell
- Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association Member - Trudy Jonkman
- Youth – Georgia Neely
- Education – Mark Vandenbosch

- Theatre – Ron Dodson
- Design – Nic Flanagan
- Legal – Paul Parlee
- Land Use Planning - Melanie Hare

Council also voted to appoint the following members to the Ad Hoc Committee's Working Groups. Working Group members – some of whom are not members of the Ad Hoc Committee – are as follows:

Partnership Working Group

- Co-Chair - Karen Haslam
- Co-Chair - Herb Klassen

Vision, Planning, and Architecture Working Group

- Chair - Melanie Hare

Real Estate, Legal and Finance Working Group

- Chair - Franklin Famme

Communications, Advocacy, and Civic Engagement Working Group

- Co-Chair - John Kastner
- Co-Chair - Andrew Hilton

Infrastructure and Environmental Working Group

- Chair - Steve Cooper

Working Group Coordinator - Ray Harsant

Working Group Coordinator - Alan Kasperski

28. What's its mandate and scope and Terms of Reference?

As approved by Council, [the purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee](#) is:

- To support the Grand Trunk Master Plan adopted by City Council.
- To act as a sounding board to the City on matters dealing with the renewal of the Grand Trunk building, including building designs and architectural plans.
- To identify fundraising opportunities and support fundraising initiatives.
- To advise and assist with the development of a public engagement program and promote the activities of the Grand Trunk renewal.
- To liaise with other committees or organizations with overlapping roles and responsibilities.

The Ad Hoc Committee has asked Council to approve of some changes to its Terms of Reference. When and if those changes are approved, this document will be updated.

29. What are these Working Groups for?

[Council established working groups](#) to focus on specific issues. They play a crucial role in the committee structure by allowing members to delve into more detailed aspects of the committee's work. Working groups often consist of members with expertise in a particular area, and they conduct in-depth discussions, research, and analysis related to their assigned tasks.

Partnerships Working Group:

Purpose: To identify and collaborate with various groups involved in the project, including the University, the Y, the City, Provincial and Federal governments, housing developers, heritage groups, environmental groups, and other special interest groups.

Vision, Planning & Architecture Working Group

Purpose: To map out the optimal use of the entire site and surrounding neighbourhoods, incorporating the new precinct into the Official Plan and Zoning.

Real Estate, Legal & Finance Working Group:

Purpose: To identify the project's scope and explore various funding sources, including support from all levels of government, public-private partnerships (P3s), private and corporate investment, municipal bonds, etc.

Communications, Advocacy & Civic Engagement Working Group:

Purpose: To engage with stakeholders, including the public, from the project's inception. Foster public participation in city building to minimize conflicts and enhance cooperation.

Infrastructure & Environmental Working Group:

Purpose: To identify risks and opportunities related to the development and plan for eco-friendly practices, sustainability, and environmentally conscious construction.

The Ad Hoc Committee has asked Council to approve of some changes to its Terms of Reference that would also impact the Working Groups. When and if those changes are approved, this document will be updated.

30. What are the rules and obligations for the Committee and its members?

Committee members are subject to the same rules and obligations that apply to Council. Its meetings must be public, as defined in Section 239 of the [Municipal Act](#) and is subject to the City's [Procedural By-law 140-2007](#)

Members of the Committee must also declare [pecuniary interests](#) and abide by the [Municipal Conflict of Interest Act](#).

Member of the Committee are subject to the City's [Code of Conduct](#).

31. When does the Committee meet?

You can find meeting schedules at the [Council Calendar page](#), and minutes at the Ad Hoc Committee's initial webpage [here](#) or on the Council Calendar page.

32. How to stay updated on developments?

You are encouraged to get informed and join in the public discussion and engagement activities around the future of the GTR site. You can subscribe to updates [here](#).

33. Public engagement will be done on the next steps and plans for the site? What will the public's role be in the site's development?

Public engagement is critical for a project like the renewal of the Grand Trunk site.

Such a large and potentially impactful project must be planned with the understanding and engagement of the community. This type of engagement makes projects better, makes its benefits clearer and give the community a role in shaping the spaces and facilities that they will benefit from and informing decisions made by City Council.

The public was engaged during the creation of the Master Plan; you can read the report to Council on that public engagement [here](#).

Plans are being made now to engage the public on reviewing and refreshing the working draft Vision and Guiding Principles for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project. Building on the Vision from the 2018 Grand Trunk Master Plan, and directions from key City strategies and plans, a clear, concise vision statement will be drafted which captures the future intent and principles that will guide redevelopment of the Grand Trunk site.

Updates on public engagement activities will be provided through this website.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW? WHAT'S NEXT FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT?

34. What work has been done and is planned for the site? When will I see something happening on the site?

You may not be able to see it but work on the site and on the future development of the site is happening. While the Ad Hoc Committee does its work, the City is making sure that it is advancing work that will allow development on the GTR site to happen.

Currently, technical work on the site is underway, including engineering investigation and preliminary designs needed to prepare the site for development of infrastructure, such as water, sewage and roads. The Master Plan provides a framework for these preparatory works. It also outlines the block plan for the site, including potential uses for each block.

The Ad Hoc Committee is currently working on updating the Master Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles – which were originally shaped by research, planning work and [public consultation done in 2016-2017](#).

The Committee is also working on the business case for the development of the site.

35. How would development work on the site? What would be built first?

There are several different development models for the Grand Trunk site, but a conventional process would see the City build the basic services to unlock development (such as roads, water supply and sewers), and then lease or sell each development block to public- or private-sector organizations which will build needed and approved buildings and facilities. These agreements can include a “use it or lose it” condition, which means developers cannot buy the land and sit on it – they must build what they have promised within a certain period.

The city could recover some of the costs of its infrastructure work (roads, water, sewers) from purchase. In this way, the City’s costs for infrastructure can be seen as an investment. Once new buildings such as housing or commercial spaces are in place, the City earns new property tax revenue.

How the development of site is phased is important to make sure that investment can happen at a realistic and flexible pace – taking into consideration economic and real estate market conditions, available funding, the needs of the various users and the time needed to do the needed planning and development approvals.

The Master Plan proposes a phasing strategy for the site’s development on pages 38-39.

36. How sustainable is this going to be? The city has recognized we are in a climate emergency and has set goals for energy use, carbon emission reductions, etc.

In 2020, City Council declared a Climate Emergency and set overarching targets to achieve the greenhouse gas reductions required to limit global temperature increases below 1.5°C. Stratford joined a number of other Canadian municipalities and committed to reducing GHG emissions by 30% from 2017 levels by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

Since this declaration, the City has committed to taking action within its municipal operations and aligning decision-making with our climate targets. Mitigation and adaptation strategies for the near-term and longer-term are being established for both the corporation and the community. The City has adopted a [Corporate Energy Emission Plan](#), which outlines actions that will help to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

It is still early in the development timeline, but there are substantial opportunities to make the Grand Trunk site as sustainable as possible and as impactful on the City’s climate policy and goals. For example, the location of the transit hub on the site is complimentary to the train station and it allows access to the site for future users, which could reduce vehicle usage and related carbon emissions.

The Master Plan addresses sustainability considerations on pages 36-37.

City Council's 2024 Budget deliberations included ideas and suggestions on sustainability and resilience goals for the development of the GTR site:

- Redevelopment of a former industrial brown site, instead of developing a greenfield site is intrinsically connected to environmental sustainability, and directly contributes to reducing the need for urban sprawl and preserving greenspace.
- Aligning with the recommendations of the Corporate Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP), any new developments/builds should be commissioned to near-zero or net-zero construction.
- Considering that the Grand Trunk site has not been accounted for in Citywide energy usage and emissions generation (2022), it is prudent to apply a stringent climate lens into this future development. A discernible spike in emissions is expected at the completion/handover of the project; with a near-zero or net-zero approach, it is anticipated that annual operational emissions will still positively impact our emission reduction trajectory and climate goals, on track to 2030 (30% emission reduction), 2040 (60% emission reduction) and 2050 (net-zero) targets.
- Low-carbon buildings and infrastructure that rely on electricity (rather than fossil fuels for operation) need to be future-proofed and future electrification requirements planned for (e.g., alternative transit modes, parking spaces being EV-ready with electric vehicle supply equipment or EVSE).
- Consider developing high-performance, energy-efficient buildings that meet or exceed green building rating systems or standards (e.g., LEED Building Design + Construction, Passive House, Zero Carbon Requirements etc.), and for neighborhood scale (LEED Neighborhood Development, LEED Cities and Communities) with or without certification, to embody sustainable design principles with energy, operations tracking. • Reusing or salvaging existing elements on site will retain embodied carbon and contribute to overall emissions savings (Scope 1, 2 and 3), without the need to procure virgin materials with additional GHG emissions from raw material extraction, processing and production, transportation, construction and end-of-life disposal.
- Planning for renewable energy generation on-site (e.g., through solar photovoltaic cells, district energy, geothermal system) will also translate to less dependence on the existing electrical grid, and support the project being self-reliant in terms of energy requirements. • At this time, most federal/provincial funding grants are awarded to projects that will contribute to Canada's net-zero ambitions. Recognizing this criterion to attain stable, guaranteed funding, designing and constructing the Grand Trunk site to near-zero or net zero will be an important consideration for the City.

37. What needs to happen from a planning approvals perspective before anything can be built?

Depending on the ultimate vision of the Ad Hoc Committee, it may become necessary to make amendments to the City's Official Plan and/or Zoning By-law in accordance with the Planning Act. These amendments would be supported by the work and consultation completed by the Committee and would ensure that the ultimate vision is not only recognized but also enforceable.

Although the process of amending either or both the Official Plan and Zoning By-law is governed by specific statutory requirements, it provides Council and the public the opportunity to realize and refine the vision in a way that promotes balanced development and enhances the quality of life for all residents.

More information on the Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment processes can be found on the Province of Ontario's "Citizen's guide to land use planning" websites here:

- [Official Plans](#); and,
- [Zoning By-laws](#).

Provided any development proposal is in accordance with the City's Zoning By-law as amended, the actual development of the site could proceed under several possible scenarios.

38. When do you expect building to actually happen? A year? Five years? How long will it take for this site to be fully developed?

The development of the site is likely a long-term project – composed of many separate development projects – lasting 10-20 years before it is fully built out.

39. Will there be a PeopleCare seniors home on the site?

PeopleCare has government approval for a 160-bed long-term-care home in Stratford. While PeopleCare was considering locating on the site, timing constraints related to provincial funding caused the developer to shift efforts to a different property within the City. Two sites were suggested for this home: a city-owned lot on Vivian Line 37 or a block on the Grand Trunk site.

40. Will you consult with residents on how the site will be developed? What are the plans for public engagement?

Public engagement is critical for a project like the renewal of the Grand Trunk site.

Such a large and potentially impactful project must be planned with the understanding and engagement of the community. This type of engagement makes projects better, makes its benefits clearer and give the community a role in shaping the spaces and facilities that they will benefit from and informing decisions made by City Council.

Already, the GTR site has been the subject of public engagement in 2016-17 as part of the development of the Master Plan. The Ad Hoc Committee will also be undertaking public

consultation to advance the work already done. The first stage of its public engagement will be to review and refresh the Master Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles to make sure they are relevant and respond to the city's needs and the current context. As well, it is important that engagement reflects the voices of the entire community – including those who are not typically represented or who have challenges participating in public engagement events.

A series of community events (in person and digital) will be hosted to share the initial Draft Vision and Guiding Principles and seek public input.

A vision is way of articulating what should be achieved by the development and guiding principles are goals and values that should guide decision-making in developing the site. The next round of public engagement will shape how the vision and principles will be applied to the development of the GTR site.

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