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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** April 22, 2024  
**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead  
**Report Number:** COU24-041  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Grand Trunk Renewal Draft Guiding Principles

**Objective:** To provide an overview of the Grand Trunk Renewal project and seek Council's input on the draft guiding principles prepared by the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee in advance of community consultation.

**Background:** The Grand Trunk site presents an unprecedented opportunity for Stratford. Very few cities have large pieces of City-owned lands in their downtown within proximity to transit, residential neighbourhoods, and their park systems. The Grand Trunks site provides opportunities for much-needed housing, community spaces and services, public and green spaces, educational facilities, restaurant and retail spaces, and cultural space that equitable enhance the quality of life for residence in Stratford.

In October 2022, Council directed staff to develop terms of reference and composition for a Citizen's Advisory Committee to support the development of the Grand Trunk site, including its architectural design, development, and financing. Subsequently, staff returned to Council with management reports articulating the Terms of Reference (FIN23-009), the appointment of the committee Chair (COU23-075 and COU23-089), and the appointment of members and establishment of working groups (COU23-120).

At the February 12, 2024, Regular Council meeting, Council directed staff to implement a 6-month workplan (COU24-015 Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee Workplan and Update). This workplan aims to deliver a complete business case for the Grand Trunk Renewal project by early 2025. The business case will build on the 2018 Master Plan and provide recommendations and insights on key project components, including: vision and guiding principles, partnership models, financial models, community impact, financial implications, pro forma budgets, and phasing.

The initial focus of the Committee workplan is refreshing the vision and guiding principles proposed in the 2018 Master Plan. The vision and guiding principles will inform how the Grand Trunk site is developed and decisions related to partnerships, land disposition, financial contributions, operational models, and procurement. The vision and guiding principles can be used by Council for decision-making, by the public to understand the aims of the renewal project, and by partners to assess their interest and alignment with the project.

To date, the Ad Hoc Committee, through a series of discussions at their monthly meetings, has co-created a set of draft guiding principles. The Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group has revised the draft guiding principles several times based on the Ad Hoc Committee's discussions and feedback. Through this iterative process, the Ad Hoc Committee has prepared draft guiding principles which are the subject of this report.

**Analysis:** Since January 2024, the Ad Hoc Committee has worked together with the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group, and City staff to develop a set of draft guiding principles for the Grand Trunk Renewal project and to share with the community for input.

It is important to note that the Ad Hoc Committee used the 2018 Grand Trunk Master Plan as a departure point for the development of the draft guiding principles.

The 2018 Master Plan was developed through extensive community consultation. The process was designed to ensure maximum community participation through a variety of methods.

- Public Open House: Hosted at the University of Waterloo Stratford Campus kicked off the engagement, drawing approximately 100 participants who provided feedback on preliminary guidelines and expressed strong support for elements like a community hub, green spaces, and heritage preservation.
- Kitchen Table Kits: Asked residents to sketch and describe their visions for the site from the comfort of their homes. More than 50 kits were submitted, advocating for facilities such as a YMCA and performance arts spaces.
- Talking Wall: Chalkboards were installed directly on the site, where passersby could write suggestions. These were regularly photographed and analyzed, bringing forth ideas for a community center, entertainment options, and creative spaces.
- Community Roundtables: In-depth discussions with local groups and organizations that highlighted the need for a plan that supports connectivity to downtown, balances new development with existing downtown vibrancy, and ensures inclusive spaces for all age groups.

On September 11, 2017, Urban Strategies presented to City Council a synthesized summary of public feedback for the Master Plan, detailing several directives. These directives emphasized the adaptive reuse of the Grand Trunk building to preserve the

site's industrial heritage while transforming it into a vibrant community hub. The plan proposes the development of a central green space, mixed residential options including student and affordable housing, and the integration of a new bus terminal to enhance local mobility. Additionally, the plan aims to maintain essential parking spaces, leverage temporary uses for economic benefits, and ensure the area reflects Stratford's values and aspirations through design excellence.

While significant work was accomplished to deliver the Master Plan, it needs to be updated to reflect present challenges related to the housing crisis, affordability, and environmental stewardship.

To that end, in the development the draft guiding principles the Ad Hoc Committee referred to a variety of relevant strategies and planning frameworks from both Stratford and beyond. These included, but were not limited to:

- City of Stratford Corporate Energy Emissions Plan
- City of Stratford Housing & Homelessness Plan
- Stratford Attainable Housing Project
- Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- City of Stratford Strategic Priorities
- Jericho Lands, Vancouver
- River District Development, Calgary
- Bramm Yards, Kitchener
- UN Sustainable Development Goals
- One Planet Living
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The Ad Hoc Committee followed a consensus-based method to develop the draft guiding principles. This is a structured approach to gathering diverse perspectives, identifying themes that connect these perspectives, and agreeing on the outcomes of the process. Over three (3) committee and six (6) working group meetings, and work completed by small groups, members:

- Contributed their ideas on what aspects of the Grand Trunk Renewal project they felt were most important for the community
- Through discussions seeking clarity, members considered the diverse range of perspectives and ideas
- Identified themes connecting the individual ideas and summarized these connections
- Tested the themes and summaries through a series of revisions and discussions

While the Ad Hoc Committee set out to develop guiding principles, they also identified important aspects of how the work of the Grand Trunk Renewal should be undertaken.

The approach to the Grand Trunk Renewal will:

- Honour Truth and Reconciliation responsibilities
- Build on Stratford's many strengths
- Leverage the City's infrastructure investment
- Follow a sound business plan and financial model
- Contribute to Stratford's prosperity
- Ensure the Grand Trunk site welcomes and inspires us
- Adopt new and innovative approaches to building community
- Align with Stratford's priorities and strategies
- Cultivate positive relationships with partners

The work of the Ad Hoc Committee has resulted in seven (7) draft guiding principles for consideration by Council. To assist Council with providing input on the draft guiding principles, the following questions are being asked:

1. Do these principles establish a clear direction?
2. Do these principles prioritize the matters that are most important for our community?

With Council's feedback, these draft guiding principles will be taken to the community for consultation.

### ***Draft Principles for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project***

#### **1. Sustainable & Fiscally Responsible: Create a more sustainable and resilient community**

- The Grand Trunk development will ensure environmental, social, and financial sustainability by:
  - Adopting leading sustainability technologies to achieve net-zero carbon emissions
  - Generating new revenue for the City
  - Pursuing partnerships that serve the community

#### **2. Celebrate Past & Future Forward: Design with a focus on the past, present, and future**

- Our approach will encourage designs that honour the past, address current needs, and prepare for the future. The story of Stratford's community, resilience and reinvention will be reflected by:
  - Celebrating the site's history and heritage, including new uses for the Grand Trunk Building
  - Responding to current needs with forward-looking solutions
  - Creating benefits for the entire community, Downtown, and Grand Trunk site
  - Ensuring that buildings and spaces can adapt to changes in both our community and the climate

### **3. Inspiring & Exhilarating: Create a dynamic new place and experience in Stratford**

- The transformation of the Grand Trunk Site will harness the energy of this community to create a new place for all to explore and enjoy by:
  - Fostering a sense of welcoming and belonging
  - Promoting playfulness, curiosity, and gathering
  - Celebrating and inspiring innovation, culture, and creativity
  - Creating new energy, experiences, and opportunities

### **4. Distinct & Diverse: Design distinct urban spaces and places**

- Utilize the site to offer a new and exciting urban environment by:
  - Incorporating higher-density buildings to provide for diverse community needs, such as housing for all ages and abilities
  - Celebrating the distinct attributes of the Grand Trunk site and its history
  - Designing outdoor spaces to be enjoyable in all seasons and for all people
  - Creating transit-friendly development that makes safe spaces for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages

### **5. Inclusive & Connected: Create a great place to live and support wellbeing**

- Within the Grand Trunk site, create new urban housing options that foster community by:
  - Offering suitable, attainable, and affordable housing options
  - Including amenities for everyday life, such as vibrant public spaces, access to shopping, services, and multiple transportation options
  - Building safe and inclusive environments that are welcoming to all
  - Connecting the Grand Trunk site to the downtown and surrounding neighbourhoods

### **6. Integrated & Multi-Functional: Create integrated, multi-purpose spaces and places**

- Optimize this public land with a vibrant mix of uses across the Grand Trunk Site, within buildings, and in each phase of development, including:
  - Residential, commercial, retail, and institutional spaces
  - Community spaces for recreation, culture, health and wellness, and collaboration
  - Public spaces that encourage community gathering and celebration

### **7. Thrive & Vibe: Create cohesive and vibrant spaces**

- Ensure spaces are vital, vibrant, and active by:
  - Offering options for living, learning, health, wellness, recreation, and entrepreneurship

- Creating spaces that support social connection and inter-generational relationships
- Facilitating communal gathering spaces

**Next Steps:** With input from Council, these guiding principles will be taken into the community for consultation and feedback. All input received will be provided to the Ad Hoc Committee, the Vision, Planning, & Architecture Working Group and City Staff to assist them in developing a vision and set of guiding principles, to be brought to Council for a decision later this year.

The engagement strategy will include community pop-up events, online engagement opportunities through EngageStratford, and on-site activations (including signage and tours). The aim of this strategy is to engage a wide range of Stratford residents to gain as much diversity of perspectives as possible.

### **Financial Implications:**

#### **Financial impact to current year operating budget:**

In the 2024 City Budget, there is approximately \$12,000 allocated to support the work of the Ad hoc Committee. The Ad Hoc Committee is proposing to develop the vision and guiding principles by engaging the community as outlined in this report. This budget allocation will be used to support expenses related to community engagement activities, such as venue rentals, advertising, engagement materials, speaker honorariums etc.

#### **Financial impact on future year operating budget:**

No future impact at this time with respect to this report update.

### **Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

#### **Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships**

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

#### **Developing our Resources**

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

#### **Widening our Economic Opportunities**

Strengthening Stratford's economy by developing, attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses and talent.

### **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 the Grand Trunk Renewal draft guiding principles, combined with Council feedback, be used as the basis for community consultation;**

**AND THAT staff report back with the final vision and guiding principles for approval later in 2024.**

**Prepared by:** Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead  
**Recommended by:** Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer