



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** September 23, 2024  
**To:** Mayor and Council  
**From:** Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead  
**Report Number:** COU24-113  
**Attachments:** Grand Trunk Renewal Community Insights, Vision and Guiding Principles

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**Title:** Grand Trunk Renewal Community Insights, Vision and Guiding Principles

**Objective:** To provide an overview of recent community engagement activities seeking input on the draft project guiding principles prepared by the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee and share the revised version of the project vision and guiding principles based on this community input.

**Background:** At the April 22, 2024, Regular Council meeting, Council directed staff to initiate community engagement on the draft guiding principles prepared by the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee and return to Council with the final vision and guiding principles later in 2024. The process by which the draft guiding principles were developed, the principles themselves and purpose of community engagement is detailed in COU24-041.

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). 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.

**Analysis:** The City of Stratford engaged residents through community pop-ups and EngageStratford to gather input on the future of the Grand Trunk site. These insights were used to inform the draft vision and guiding principles for the project. This initiative involved both in-person and online participation, with 200 attendees at 10 pop-ups and 110 online submissions. Over 220 written comments were also received. Feedback was analyzed to understand community preferences for how the Grand Trunk site can

contribute to the city. Overall, respondents envision the Grand Trunk site as a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable space that balances economic growth with community needs. Residents are eager for it to become a central location for recreational, cultural, and educational activities, while providing much-needed housing and promoting sustainability. This feedback demonstrates a strong desire for the Grand Trunk to contribute to the overall well-being and vitality of Stratford. Appendix 1 includes a detailed report on the engagement process and findings. Highlights are included below:

### *Key Insights*

- Emphasis on sustainability and inclusivity
  - 32% of respondents identified creating a more sustainable and resilient community as the top priority.
  - 19% wanted a dynamic and inclusive downtown, while another 19% focused on building a range of new housing.
  - 14% expressed a preference for new community spaces.
- Importance of community spaces and amenities
  - 30% of respondents favored recreational facilities like a pool, and both formal and informal community spaces.
  - 20% preferred activities related to learning and cultural experiences, such as workshops and educational programs.

### *Key Themes:*

1. Community Spaces: Residents strongly supported the creation of green spaces, recreational areas, and community spaces for all ages.
2. Housing: There is a clear demand for affordable, accessible, and sustainable housing, including features like rooftop gardens and park space.
3. Cultural and Educational Opportunities: Calls for an expanded Stratford Public Library, cultural venues, and spaces for local artists were prominent.
4. Sustainability and Economic Viability: Respondents emphasized the importance of incorporating renewable energy, community gardens, and prioritizing local economic benefits over excessive commercial development.

### *Grand Trunk Renewal Vision and Guiding Principles*

The Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group reviewed the findings from the community engagement activities and incorporated these insights into a vision

statement and a revised set of guiding principles. Revisions included a consolidation of certain principles to reflect themes from the community insights, language was simplified for clearer communication, specific community preferences such as community spaces, recreational facilities, diverse housing, and the creation of a welcoming, inclusive atmosphere were emphasized, and the Working Group ensured a balanced focus on sustainability, community needs, and vibrant urban development across the principles. The engagement insights and revisions to the guiding principles were shared with the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee at their meeting on July 15, 2024. The Committee offered minor revisions, and the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group incorporated these into the vision and guiding principles presented in this report for Council’s consideration. Appendix 2 includes the vision and guiding principles document prepared by the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee.

While the vision and guiding principles included in this report reflect a significant amount of collaboration, consensus, and community insight, they will need to be reconsidered from time to time as the project evolves.

### *Vision*

The Grand Trunk Site is an unprecedented opportunity to build a sustainable legacy for Stratford by creating a distinct place that serves the community and responds to our city’s challenges – now and in the future.

The Site will provide places, services and amenities for residents and visitors through diverse uses such as housing, community space, parks and green space, education, and recreation – generating a dynamic centre of activity that serves the full diversity of Stratford’s population.

The revitalized Grand Trunk Site will create a strong identity, sense of place, and centre of gravity for the Grand Trunk Building, while expanding and connecting to the existing Downtown.

The Grand Trunk Site will be a place for all people, for all seasons. With places for people to live, work, play and exercise, learn, come together, celebrate, and create, the Grand Trunk Site will bring new energy into the downtown and help Stratford address our shared challenges and progress towards our goals.

### *Guiding Principles*

- SUSTAINABLE + FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE
  - Create a Sustainable, Resilient, and Fiscally Responsible Community
    - The Grand Trunk development will ensure environmental, social, and financial sustainability by:
      - Using sustainability measures and technologies to reach net-zero carbon emissions.
      - Designing the site to be resilient to climate change.

- Generating new revenue for the City through innovative uses of the site.
  - Pursuing partnerships and strategies that serve our diverse and evolving community and enhance public resources.
- CELEBRATE PAST + FUTURE FORWARD
  - Honour the Past, Address Current Needs, and Innovate for the Future
    - Our approach will balance respect for history with modern needs and future readiness by:
      - Celebrating the site’s history and heritage through adaptive reuse of the Grand Trunk Building.
      - Showcasing the social, cultural, and economic story of the Lands
      - Creating solutions that address contemporary needs and anticipate future challenges.
      - Developing spaces that are flexible and can adapt to changing community.
- INSPIRING + INCLUSIVE
  - Create an Inspiring, Inclusive, and Dynamic Community Meeting Point
    - Transform the Grand Trunk Site into a place that everyone can enjoy by:
      - Fostering a sense of welcoming and belonging for all community members.
      - Promoting playfulness, curiosity, and opportunities for social gathering.
      - Celebrating innovation, culture, and creativity
      - Designing vibrant spaces that are accessible and enjoyable in all seasons.
- DISTINCT, DIVERSE +MULTIFUNCTIONAL
  - Design Distinct, Diverse, and Multifunctional Urban Spaces
    - Create a vibrant and inclusive urban environment by:
      - Incorporating higher-density buildings to meet diverse housing needs for all ages and abilities.
      - Highlighting the unique attributes and history of the Grand Trunk site.
      - Plan for a mix of living, learning, recreation and gathering spaces across the site and within buildings
      - Creating public spaces that support recreation, culture, and community interaction.
      - Using the existing Transit Hub on site to create transit-friendly development and providing safe spaces for pedestrians and cyclists.

- CONNECTED + COMMUNITY-FOCUSED
  - Foster Connectivity and Community Wellbeing
    - Create a great place to live and support community wellbeing by:
      - Offering attainable and affordable housing options that foster community.
      - Including amenities for everyday life, such as vibrant public spaces, day care, access to shopping, community gardens and kitchens, services, and multiple transportation options
      - Building safe and inclusive environments that are welcoming to all.
      - Enhancing connectivity between the Grand Trunk site, downtown, surrounding neighbourhoods and adjacent development sites.
  
- THRIVING + VIBRANT
  - Cultivate Cohesive and Vibrant Community Spaces
    - Ensure the Grand Trunk site is active and engaging by:
      - Providing spaces for living, lifelong learning, health, wellness, recreation, and entrepreneurship.
      - Supporting social connections and inter-generational relationships.
      - Facilitating communal gathering spaces that foster a strong sense of community.

In addition to the vision and guiding principles, the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee has also articulated important considerations in the how the renewal project is undertaken.

The Grand Trunk Renewal should be undertaken in ways that honour our Truth and Reconciliation responsibilities and recognize that Renewal will occur in phases, over time. The Grand Trunk Renewal will:

- Adopt new and innovative approaches to building community
- Align with Stratford's priorities and strategies Build on Stratford's many strengths
- Contribute to Stratford's prosperity
- Cultivate positive relationships with partners
- Ensure the Grand Trunk site welcomes and inspires us
- Follow a sound business plan & financial model
- Leverage the City's existing infrastructure while seeking partnerships to deliver new investment to service proposed development

A vision and guiding principles are crucial for a redevelopment project because they provide a clear framework for decision-making, align the project with community values, and set long-term goals. The vision outlines the project's aspirations, while guiding principles ensure that decisions reflect priorities like sustainability, inclusivity,

and economic growth. They help mitigate conflicts, create accountability, and foster engagement by offering a consistent reference point throughout the process. In practice, these elements shape the design, community engagement, partnerships, and the balance between competing priorities, ensuring that the project not only meets immediate needs but also contributes to the long-term vitality of the community.

Staff extend gratitude and thanks for the work to date, of the Vision, Planning and Architecture and the Communications, Advocacy and Civic Engagement Working Groups and members of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee.

**Financial Implications:**

There are no financial implications to be reported as a result of this report.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Work Together For Greater Impact**

This report aligns with this priority as it supports The Grand Trunk Renewal project.

**Alignment with One Planet Principles:**

**Equity and Local Economy**

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

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the Grand Trunk Renewal vision and guiding principles as presented in COU24-113 be adopted to guide and focus the work on the Grand Trunk Renewal.**

**Prepared by:** Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead

**Recommended by:** Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer