



# Appendix 1 Grand Trunk Renewal Engagement Insights

## Abstract

This report contains community engagement data focused on the future development of the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) site. This data was collected in May and June 2024 through Community Pop-Up events and through online engagement at EngageStratford.

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## About the Community Engagement Approach

### Community Pop-Ups

Community pop-ups are a dynamic and interactive methodology used to engage with residents directly in their own environments. This approach involves setting up temporary, informal spaces or in various locations throughout a community, often in conjunction with existing activities or venues, to gather feedback, share information, and foster dialogue. The key advantage of community pop-ups is their flexibility and accessibility; they can be tailored to fit different contexts and can reach diverse groups of people who might not typically participate in more traditional engagement methods.

Pop-ups are strategically placed in locations that are frequented by various community members, such as parks, community centers, and local businesses. This methodology allows for real-time interactions and discussions, providing immediate insights into community needs, preferences, and concerns. It also creates opportunities for engaging with individuals in a relaxed and familiar setting, which can lead to more open and honest feedback.

Additionally, community pop-ups often incorporate a virtual component, to facilitate asynchronous participation and make the engagement process more accessible. By combining in-person interactions with digital tools, such as QR codes and online platforms, this methodology ensures broad reach and inclusivity, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of community perspectives.

Overall, community pop-ups offer a versatile and effective way to engage with residents, gather diverse input, and build stronger connections between the community and project developers.

### Community-Pop Up Implementation

From May 31st to June 24th, 10 community pop-ups were held in various locations across Stratford. These locations and events were intentionally selected to engage a broad cross-section of Stratford residents. Approximately 200 people participated in the community pop-ups, and 225 comments were gathered. The pop-ups took place on the following dates and locations:

- May 31 at SLAAA's Pepperama Tournament
- June 2 at Stratford Perth Pride
- June 4 at the Sing of the Joy of it Concert
- June 5 at an ESL class
- June 11 at House of Blessing
- June 13 at Jobsite Brewery
- June 15 at the Anne Hathaway Splash Pad
- June 17 at The Local Dinner & Community Access Market
- June 19 The SDSS Eco Club
- June 24 at Stratford Public Library's Whale-of-A-Tale program

## EngageStratford

In addition to the in-person pop-ups, a virtual version of the engagement activity was available online through EngageStratford, which ran concurrently with the physical events. Participation in EngageStratford was encouraged through QR codes on the pop-up materials and through the City's social media channels. The online platform received 110 submissions and 86 comments.

## Analysis Methods

The results from both the community pop-ups and EngageStratford were aggregated to create a comprehensive data set. Each engagement question was analyzed separately. For the question, "The best way the GTR can contribute to our community is by...", 580 votes were analyzed. For the question, "I would enjoy being at the Grand Trunk to...", 599 votes were analyzed. All written comments from both the in-person and online engagements were aggregated and analyzed using discourse analysis, assisted by AI, to identify themes and insights.

## Findings

### Pop-up/ Survey Questions

*Question 1: The best way the GTR can contribute to our community is by...*

Sustainability and inclusivity are key priorities for the community, along with the desire for new housing and public spaces. The top answers to this question include:

- 32% of respondents indicated that creating a more sustainable and resilient community is the best way the GTR can contribute, making it the top choice.
- 19% of the community supported creating a dynamic and inclusive new place in the downtown area.
- 19% indicated that building a range of new houses as an important contribution.
- 14% of respondents expressed a preference for creating new spaces for community use.

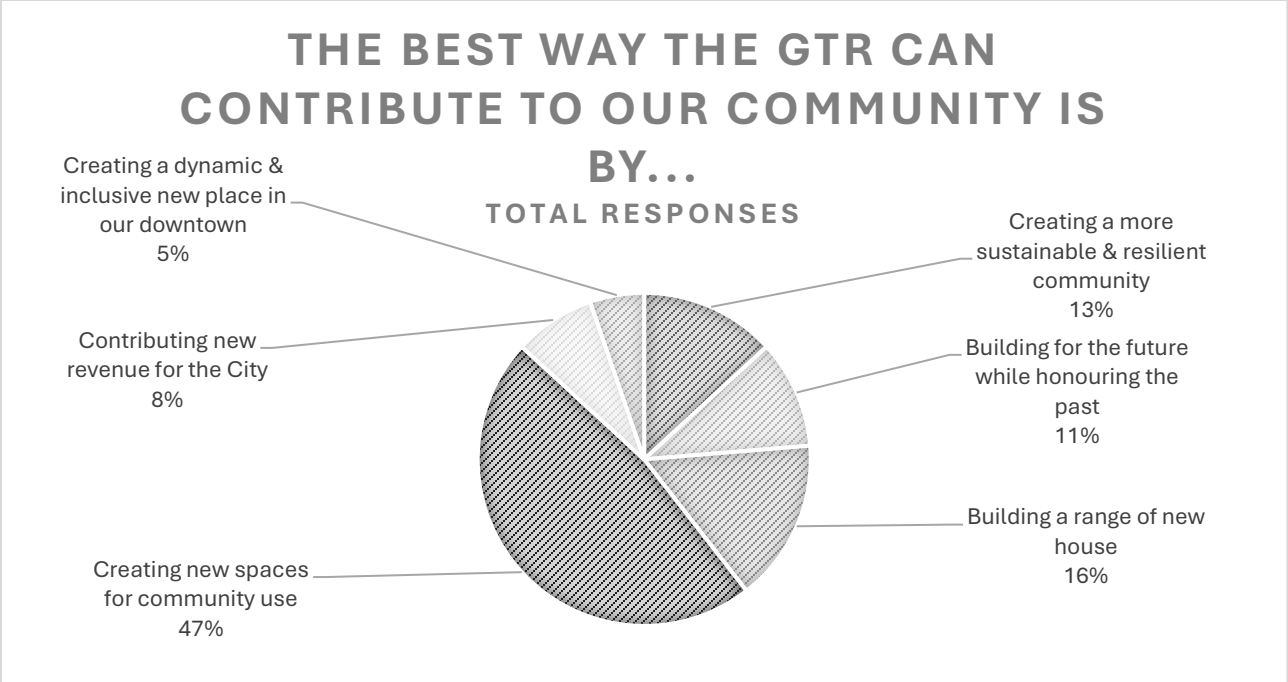


Figure 1 Analysis of Total Responses to Question 1

*Question 2: I would enjoy being at the Grand Trunk to...*

The largest proportion of respondents prefer recreational and experiential activities, with fewer expressing interest in residential or commercial opportunities. The top answers to this question are as follows:

- 30% of respondents indicated they would most enjoy using recreational facilities, making this the most popular response.
- 20% of people expressed interest in learning, experiencing, and celebrating at the Grand Trunk.
- 16% would enjoy playing and exploring, reflecting a strong desire for outdoor or interactive activities.

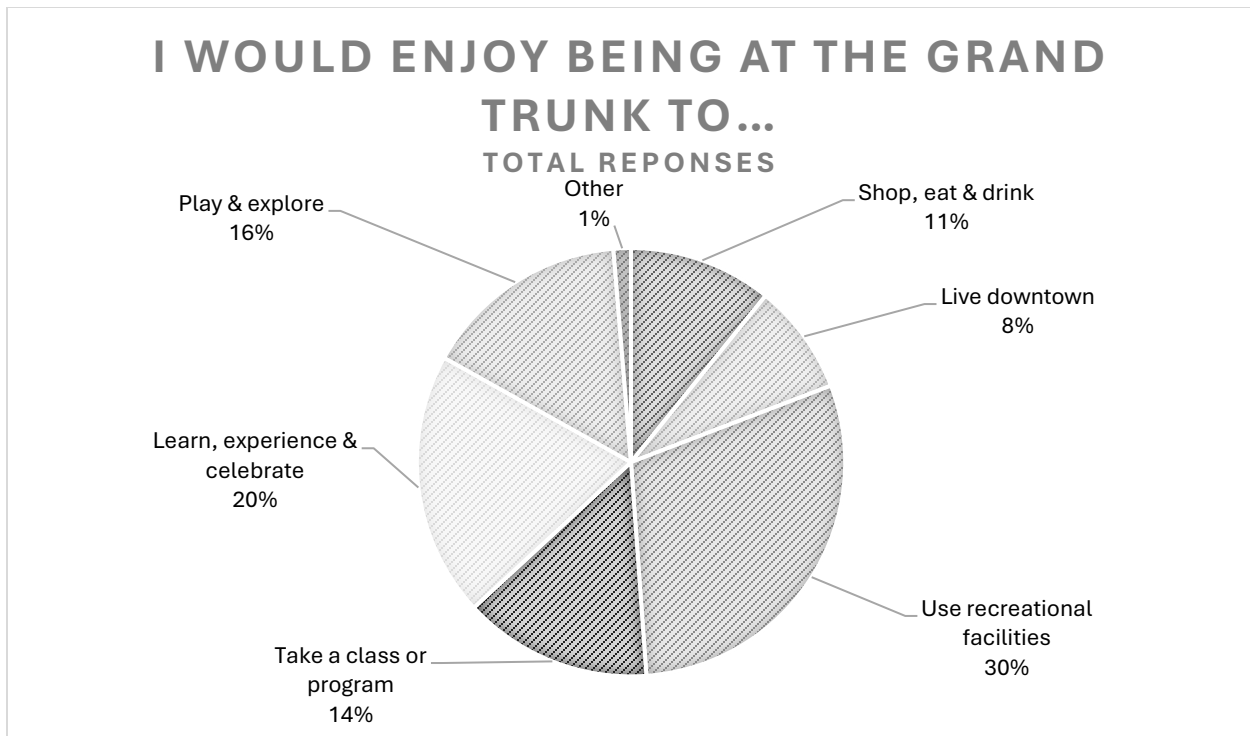


Figure 2 Analysis of Total Responses to Question 2

## Key insights and themes from Comments

The comments received through the Community Pop-ups and EngageStratford reveal a strong community interest in creating vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable spaces that cater to various needs, from recreational facilities and green spaces to housing and accessibility. The feedback highlights the importance of incorporating cultural and educational components while ensuring economic viability and environmental responsibility. Additionally, concerns about maintenance, timely action, and prioritizing community benefits over commercial interests are emphasized, reflecting the community's desire for a balanced and thoughtful approach to development.

### 1. Community Spaces and Activities

#### 1.1. Green Spaces and Outdoor Areas

- Emphasis on creating green spaces for younger people, including gardens, memorials, and urban farms.
- Suggestions for sustainable features such as solar panels and soil remediation.
- Quotes:
  - “We need a community garden or urban farm to teach kids about sustainability.”
  - “Solar panels should be integrated into the design to promote renewable energy.”

#### 1.2. Recreational Facilities

- Proposals for diverse recreational facilities such as swimming pools, sports complexes, indoor playgrounds, waterparks, amusement parks, and public skating.

- Interest in facilities that cater to different age groups, including play zones for all ages and senior programs.
- Quotes:
  - “An indoor playground or waterpark would be fantastic for families.”
  - “A public skating rink that is free or low-cost would be great for all ages.”

### 1.3. Community and Social Spaces

- Desire for mixed-use community center that integrate courtyards, libraries, and makerspaces.
- Ideas for shared art workshops, studios, and spaces for small concerts and local events.
- Need for inclusive spaces that support the LGBTQ community and various social services.
- Proposals for a variety of amenities including gyms, cinemas, Latin markets, community kitchens, and mental health centers.
- Specific interest in creating spaces for intergenerational interaction and activities that cater to both youth and seniors.
- Quotes:
  - “A community kitchen would be great for hosting events and cooking classes.”
  - “Mental health centers are necessary to support community well-being.”
  - “A mixed-use community center with spaces for art workshops and small concerts would benefit local artists.”
  - “An inclusive space that supports the LGBTQ community is essential.”

## 2. *Housing and Accessibility*

### 2.1.1. Affordable and Sustainable Housing

- Advocacy for affordable, accessible housing options including tiny houses and mixed-income residences.
- Inclusion of housing with sustainable features like rooftop gardens and hydroponic systems.
- Quotes:
  - “Affordable housing with rooftop gardens could address both housing and environmental concerns.”
  - “We need more accessible housing options for people with disabilities.”

### 2.2. Accessibility and Walkability

- Focus on making the area walkable and bikeable.
- Ensure spaces are accessible for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Quotes:
  - “The area should be walkable and bikeable, with reduced reliance on parking.”
  - “Ensuring the spaces are accessible for seniors and those with disabilities is a must.”

## 3. *Library, Cultural and Educational Components*

### 3.1. Library & Educational Spaces

- Strong support for relocating and expanding the Stratford Public Library, providing more space for community programming and activities.
- Ideas for incorporating educational spaces such as adult schools, resource centers, and workshops.
- Quotes:
  - “The Stratford Public Library needs more space for community programming and activities.”
  - “Educational workshops and adult schools would be a great addition.”

### 3.2 Cultural Heritage and Art

- Emphasis on maintaining and celebrating the historical significance of the site, through a museum or historical displays.
- Incorporation of art installations and affordable studio spaces to foster local creativity.
- Quotes:
  - “A museum or historical display to honor the site’s significance is important.”
  - “Affordable studio spaces for local artists would foster creativity.”

## 4. *Economic & Environment Considerations*

### 4.1. Economic Viability

- Suggestions to ensure the development is economically viable and benefits the local community, through markets, small businesses, and local food vendors.
- Concerns about excessive developer involvement and the need to prioritize community benefits over commercial interests.
- Quotes:
  - “Markets and small businesses could make the area economically viable and benefit locals.”
  - “We should prioritize community benefits over commercial interests to avoid overdevelopment.”

### 4.2. Sustainability Initiatives

- Ideas for sustainable development, including the use of solar energy, soil phytoremediation, and community gardens.
- Proposals for a carbon sink and other environmental projects to enhance the ecological footprint of the area.
- Quotes:
  - “Including solar energy and soil phytoremediation in the development is crucial for sustainability.”
  - “A community garden could serve as both a green space and an educational tool.”

## 5. *Concerns and Challenges*

- Concerns about the area becoming an eyesore if not properly maintained.
- Calls for timely action and decision-making to avoid prolonged stagnation.
- Quotes:
  - “We don’t want the area to become an eyesore if not properly maintained.”



- “Timely action and decision-making are crucial to avoid stagnation.”

## Conclusion

The consultation data and survey findings show that the community is really excited about transforming the Grand Trunk site. Here is what people are looking forward to the most:

**Community Spaces and Activities** are important, with 32% of survey respondents saying they want new spaces for the community to use. This lines up with the feedback from the consultation, which talked about green spaces, recreational areas, and community hubs. People want places where they can spend time together, relax, and enjoy social, cultural, and recreational activities.

There is also a strong desire to **Use Recreational Facilities** which matches up with the community’s interest in having a new pool, indoor playground, and public skating rink. These facilities are seen as fun and beneficial for everyone’s health and well-being.

**Creating a Dynamic & Inclusive New Place in Our Downtown.** The consultation also highlighted the need for inclusivity and accessibility, aiming for a lively, welcoming space for everyone, including families, artists, seniors, and the LGBTQ community. This vision includes mixed-use community spaces, educational spaces, and cultural hubs that celebrate local heritage and support local artists.

**Building a Range of New Housing.** There is a strong push for affordable and sustainable housing options, with features like rooftop gardens and solar panels. People want housing that is both affordable and environmentally friendly.

**Learning, Experiencing & Celebrating.** The consultation data includes many calls for the Stratford Public Library, educational workshops, museums, and cultural displays. These elements help foster a sense of belonging and pride in the community’s history and cultural diversity.

The community is looking for the Grand Trunk site to become a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable space. They want it to balance economic growth with community benefits, creating a lively hub that meets the diverse needs and aspirations of Stratford’s residents. This approach will ensure that the Grand Trunk site not only contributes to the vitality of downtown, but also enhances the quality of life for everyone.