



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 24, 2025
To: Mayor & Council
From: Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead
Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford
Report Number: COU25-019
Attachments: Appendix 1: Exploring the Feasibility of a Community Complex as Part of the Grand Trunk Master Plan
Appendix 2: Sample Loan Costs

Title: Grand Trunk Renewal Project Key Recommendations

Objective: This report provides an update on the Grand Trunk Renewal Project and presents four key recommendations for Stratford City Council's consideration. These recommendations aim to advance the project by addressing interim activation, partnership development for a shared community facility, and the exploration of both residential development, and mobility and parking solutions for the site. Each recommendation is grounded in insights derived from community engagement, research, and subject matter experts.

Background: The Grand Trunk Renewal Project aims to revitalize the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR) site into a vibrant, sustainable space for Stratford, addressing key community needs like housing, recreational and community spaces, and sustainable development.

The Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee has been instrumental in guiding the project, engaging with the community, and developing a comprehensive work plan to move the project forward. After a year of foundational work, several critical actions have been identified to propel the Grand Trunk Renewal into its next phase. These include activating the site, determining the scope and financial structure for a community recreation facility, exploring the market opportunity for residential development, and addressing mobility and parking challenges.

Areas of Critical Action:

1. *Activate the Grand Trunk Site on an Interim Basis*

The site, currently secured due to safety concerns, needs temporary activations to engage the community, raise awareness, and generate excitement for the long-term revitalization. Suggested activities include art installations, community events, performances, and small-scale tours, aligning with the vision of revitalizing the site. In order to use the Grand Trunk building for events and other gatherings, staff need to determine what interventions are needed to ensure the public's safety and the cost of these interventions for all or a portion of the building and/or site.

2. *Determine the Scope, Funding, and Design for a Shared Community Recreation Facility*

There is a strong need for a new community facility to serve the community, recreational and cultural needs of Stratford's residents. The YMCA, Stratford Public Library and the City of Stratford's Community Services Department have worked together to assess their individual and collective space needs and conduct research on financial and operational models. To determine the scope, scale, and partnership model for new community facility, the City of Stratford must determine its level of investment in this new amenity. With Council's direction, staff and partners can work together to develop a specific proposal for a new facility, including space design, programming, capital costs, maintenance estimates, and operational costs and model.

3. *Develop an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Housing Development on the Grand Trunk site, including Parcel 2D*

The Grand Trunk site is in a prime location for residential development, which is crucial to address some of Stratford's housing needs. The development of Parcel 2D will bring new residents and energy to the site and downtown, aligning with the community's demand for accessible, walkable housing options.

4. *Develop an Expression of Interest (EOI) for Parking and Mobility Solutions*

The loss of 437 parking spaces at the Grand Trunk site, due to anticipated construction and development, necessitates a parking and mobility solution to accommodate the needs of new residents, businesses, and visitors. A well-designed parking structure or alternative mobility options will be essential for managing the site's growth.

About the Approach

The recommendations outlined in this report are based on a strategic approach to redevelopment that prioritizes municipal leadership in shaping the future of the Grand Trunk site. The Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee has consistently emphasized the importance of the City maintaining a central role in the site's development, rather than divesting the property outright. This approach aligns with long-term community-building objectives and ensures that development reflects the City's vision and priorities. Historically, private sector ownership of the site has not resulted in meaningful progress toward redevelopment. Over the past 15 years, the City has taken deliberate steps to regain control of the site, underscoring the importance of maintaining municipal oversight moving forward.

The preferred strategy is an approach that balances community benefits and long-term economic returns with strategic land disposition. This model envisions significant public assets on the site, including within the main building, funded through staged partnerships with private developers that align with clearly defined municipal outcomes. Maintaining municipal leadership in the development process will allow Stratford to maximize community impact, ensure long-term site viability, and position the Grand Trunk site as a transformative asset for future generations.

About the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee & Recent Project Work

In October 2022, Council directed staff to establish a Citizen's Advisory Committee to advise on the development of the site, including architectural design and financing. This led to subsequent reports detailing the Terms of Reference (FIN23-009), the appointment of the committee Chair (COU23-075, COU23-089), and the appointment of members (COU23-120). The committee held its first meeting in November 2023.

At the February 12, 2024, Council meeting, Council directed staff to implement a 6-month workplan (COU24-015). The initial workplan focused on refining the 2018 Master Plan's vision and guiding principles. These principles guide decisions on development, partnerships, financial contributions, and procurement. The Ad Hoc Committee worked through a collaborative, iterative process to develop a draft set of guiding principles. The Ad Hoc Committee hosted two large public events to familiarize the community with the project, built out an enhanced web presence, and offered over thirty answers to frequently asked questions about the project on EngageStratford.

On April 22, 2024, Council considered the draft guiding principles created by the Ad Hoc Committee and directed staff to engage the community on the draft principles and return with a final version (COU24-041). This process reflects Council's goal of ensuring

the project aligns with current community needs, including sustainability and inclusivity. The committee and staff conducted ten community pop-up events and launched a campaign on EngageStratford to seek input on the guiding principles.

On August 12, 2024, Council reviewed the Committee's workplan for Q3-Q4 2024, which emphasizes the preparation of a business case (COU24-086). This case will inform decisions about land disposition, procurement, and municipal investments. The recommendations contained within the report below move key aspects of the workplan forward.

On September 23, 2024, Council considered a revised version of the project vision and guiding principles that incorporated insights from community engagement activities (COU24-113). The updated vision and principles reflect the community's preferences for a space that balances economic growth with inclusivity, sustainability, and community uses.

Analysis:

Key Action #1: Activate the Grand Trunk Site on an Interim Basis

The GTR site, a partially restored industrial structure, has been secured and is currently restricted from public access due to safety considerations. Following the removal of the roof decking and treatment of the steel trusses, the City is exploring temporary uses to activate the site. These activations aim to foster community engagement, align with long-term revitalization goals, and increase public awareness of the site's potential.

The Communications, Public Engagement, and Advocacy Working Group of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee recommended that the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee request City staff to review temporary use concepts and feasibility. This direction was provided at the August 29, 2024, meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee.

Proposed activations include a range of activities such as art installations, historical tours, community events, live performances, and public markets. Additionally, small-scale tours led by Ad Hoc Committee members were suggested at the October 21, 2024, meeting to allow residents to safely explore the building and engage with the site's potential.

Placemaking during the interim period is crucial to build momentum for the site's future development. Temporary activations such as art installations, community events, performances, and historical tours have been proposed to draw residents, visitors, and prospective developers to the site.

Progress and Current Work

Public use of the building faces several challenges due to compliance requirements under the Ontario Building Code (OBC). Public assembly will require a change of use

from industrial to assembly occupancy, triggering specific structural and operational standards. Staff are currently working to determine the physical and operational interventions necessary to meet these requirements.

Key actions and consultations include:

- **Building Code Compliance:** An architect and engineer are assessing the interventions needed to apply for occupancy. The Chief Building Official (CBO) has provided guidance on compliance requirements and will review the findings.
- **Health and Safety:** A report by Sellery Health + Safety (October 2024) outlines safety measures, such as securing hazardous areas, improving egress, and enhancing emergency response capabilities.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Staff from DestinationStratford, Stratford Summer Music, City of Stratford Community Services Department, as well as subject matter experts have provided feedback and insight on the approach.

Guided Tours

Guided tours are possible under current conditions without a change of use, provided appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and safety protocols are in place. These tours could offer opportunity to further engage the community and showcase the site's potential while more comprehensive activations are being developed.

Next Steps

1. **Initiate Tours:**
 - Complete health and safety protocols
 - Procure personal protective equipment
 - Finalize content and format
2. **Building Assessment:**
 - Complete an assessment to identify compliance measures, alternative solutions, and associated costs for a change of use.
 - Use these findings to support CBO review and prepare a cost-benefit analysis.
3. **Chief Building Official Consultation:**
 - Submit the assessment to determine if temporary occupancy for public assembly can be granted.
4. **Costing and Reporting:**
 - Develop detailed cost estimates for compliance requirements, including structural and safety adjustments.
 - Conduct a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate the financial implications and community impacts of enabling temporary public use.

- Prepare a follow-up report to Council with options, solutions, and recommendations for phased site activation.

Conclusion

The activation of the GTR site during this interim period is an important step in fostering community engagement and demonstrating the site's potential value. While the complexities of achieving assembly occupancy require significant effort, staff and members of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee are actively working to identify practical solutions. A follow-up report will be presented to Council outlining detailed options and recommendations to advance this critical placemaking initiative.

Recommendation

THAT Council direct staff to conduct background research on temporary and interim uses for the GTR site, including associated next steps and cost estimates, and report these findings back to Council for consideration.

Key Action #2: Determine the Scope, Funding, and Design for a New Community Facility

The City of Stratford has a unique opportunity to address critical community needs by advancing the development of a new community facility at the Grand Trunk site. The YMCA and the City of Stratford have an MOU to explore the potential for a new community recreation facility at the Grand Trunk site. In March 2024, the Stratford Public Library (SPL) delegated to Stratford City Council, requesting to be considered as a potential partner at the Grand Trunk site. Council referred this request to the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee, which received a presentation from SPL in April 2024. Separately, SPL has completed a feasibility study articulating their need for a new, larger facility.

Over the past year, staff from the City of Stratford's Community Services Department the YMCA, and SPL, have discussed space requirements, potential operating arrangements, municipal investment, and funding opportunities. These conversations are part of an exploratory effort to determine the feasibility and community benefits of a new shared facility. This exploration aligns with the numerous successful partnerships between YMCAs, libraries and municipalities elsewhere, highlighting the potential benefits of a collaborative approach.

Each organization brought their unique perspective and shared the variety of community space and programming needs communicated to them by community members and groups. This includes insights from the Partnership working group of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee, and the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective. The community facility would provide multi-functional spaces that supports recreation, culture, and social well-being. While no detailed space design was undertaken, based on the needs of the YMCA, Stratford Public Library, City of Stratford Community

Services, and the needs articulated by various community organizations, the following potential size and amenities were identified:

- 70,000-110,000 square feet
 - Pool
 - Gym
 - Walking Track
 - Childcare
 - Library
 - Meeting Rooms
 - Café
 - Community Spaces
 - Auditorium
 - Communal Spaces
 - Communal Kitchen
 - Lounge
 - Changerooms
 - Washrooms

The City retained Peggy Vacalopoulos, a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Scholar and recent Masters' graduate in the Department of Recreation & Leisure Studies to investigate the potential municipal investment required for developing a new community facility of this scale. The research examines various operating models and levels of municipal investment, providing critical insights to guide decision-making on the feasibility, design, and partnership opportunities for the facility. The full report can be found in Appendix 1: Exploring the Feasibility of a Community Complex as Part of the Grand Trunk Master Plan.

The research employed a case study approach, analyzing ten comparable facilities across Ontario to assess funding and operational models. Data was gathered through municipal records, government announcements, and third-party resources. Stakeholder engagement included working sessions with representatives from the YMCA, Stratford Public Library, and the City of Stratford, as well as interviews with municipal and YMCA staff in the case study communities. A Strengths/ Weaknesses/ Opportunities/ Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted to evaluate the different models.

Key Insights from Research

Importance of Partnerships

While partnerships with community organizations to develop and operate community facilities can reduce operational burdens on municipalities and leverage external expertise and funding sources, municipal investment is essential to ensure community needs are addressed. Examples of successful partnerships between YMCAs, public libraries and municipalities demonstrates the importance of combining municipal

contributions with external funding sources (e.g., federal and provincial grants, private donations, and community sponsorships).

Three Facility Models & Ranges of Municipal Investment

From the case studies, the research identified three models for community facilities, each representing a different level of municipal involvement and financial commitment. The Third-Party Facility model involves operations managed entirely by a third-party organization, such as a YMCA or library, with the municipality playing a limited role and contributing between 3.7% and 62.2% of the total project cost. In contrast, the Shared Facility model features multiple partners, including the municipality, jointly designing, developing, and operating the facility. Here, the municipality assumes a leadership role and contributes between 65.6% and 78.7% of the total cost. The Municipally Owned and Operated Facility model places full responsibility for design, development, operations, and programming on the municipality, resulting in the highest financial contribution, ranging from 72.4% to 94.5%. The table below highlights how the level of municipal involvement increases across the models, directly correlating with a greater share of the project cost.

Model	Description	Role of Municipality	Municipal Investment as % of Total Project Cost
Third-Party Facility	Operated entirely by a third-party organization, typically a YMCA and/or a library.	Municipality plays a limited role in design, development, operations and programming.	3.7%-62.2%
Shared Facility	Multiple partners, including the municipality, jointly design, develop and deliver operations and programming.	Municipality plays a leadership role along with leaders from partner organizations in the design, development, operations and programming. Municipality may operate their own space within the facility and deliver direct programming.	65.6%-78.7%

Municipally Owned and Operated Facility	Municipality owns and directly operates the facility.	Municipality is solely responsible for the design, development, operations and programming.	72.4%-94.5%
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Case for a Shared Community Facility in Stratford

Based on this research, the shared facility model offers the best balance of financial feasibility, operational efficiency, and community impact for the YMCA, Stratford Public Library (SPL), and the City of Stratford. By co-locating services, this model reduces costs through shared investment and operations while ensuring that Stratford residents benefit from a diverse range of programs and amenities in one accessible location. This approach allows the City to retain influence over public spaces while leveraging the YMCA’s expertise in recreation, the SPL’s leadership in public programming, and the City’s Community Services Department, which delivers a range of public programs. These partners already collaborate, and this facility would build on that relationship to create a more integrated and effective service model. Successful shared facilities in other municipalities demonstrate that this approach fosters sustainable community hubs, strengthens long-term partnerships, and enhances service delivery. As Stratford continues to grow, this model provides a scalable and strategic solution that meets evolving community needs while maximizing resources.

Conceptual Costing Exercise

The research estimates that developing a 70,000 to 110,000 square-foot community facility at the Grand Trunk site—including an aquatic centre, fitness facilities, childcare, library, auditorium, and community spaces—would cost \$48.5 million to \$76.5 million, based on current construction costs of \$695 per square foot.

The level of municipal investment required for a new community facility depends on the operational model selected. The table below outlines the estimated range of municipal contributions under three different models: Third-Party Facility, Shared Facility, and Municipally Owned and Operated Facility. The municipal investment varies based on the extent of the City’s involvement in design, development, and operations, with greater investment providing increased control over programming and facility management. The municipal investment ranges were calculated by applying the percentage of municipal contributions observed in comparable facilities to Stratford’s estimated project cost. This approach provides a realistic projection of the financial commitment required under each model.

Model	Municipal Investment Range
Third-Party Facility	\$1.83M - \$47.59M
Shared Facility	\$31.88M - \$60.15M
Municipally Owned and Operated Facility	\$35.08M - \$72.29M

Financial Analysis

The table below provides a simplified summary of the financial impact on the City’s tax levy under different borrowing scenarios for each facility model: Third-Party Facility, Shared Facility, and Municipally Owned and Operated Facility. The borrowing amounts reflect the range of municipal investment required for each model, based on total project cost estimates. Tax levy impacts are calculated for a 30-year repayment term at an interest rate of 6%. Additional details are available in Appendix 2: Sample Loan Costs.

The analysis highlights the third-party and shared facility models as preferred options, offering both financial feasibility and operational efficiency. Notably, the borrowing ranges for these two models overlap, providing flexibility in investment levels while maintaining fiscal sustainability.

Model	Investment Range	Total Principal	Approx. Increase to Levy @ 6% Interest Rate
Third-Party	Low	\$ 1,850,000	0.19%
	High	\$ 47,600,000	4.94%
Shared Facility	Low	\$ 32,000,000	3.32%
	High	\$ 60,000,000	6.22%
Municipally Owned and Operated	Low	\$ 35,000,000	3.63%
	High	\$ 72,000,000	7.47%

This information is presented as a conceptual exercise to help Council understand the potential range of financial impacts associated with each model. These scenarios aim to inform Council of the future fiscal implications of borrowing and ensure alignment between the City’s financial capacity and the vision for the Grand Trunk site.

Conclusion

The development of a new community facility at the Grand Trunk site offers Stratford an opportunity to address critical community needs while fostering partnerships with organizations such as the YMCA and Stratford Public Library (SPL). The research and conceptual exercises conducted to date have provided a comprehensive understanding of the potential scope, financial implications, and operational models for this facility.

These findings underscore the necessity of municipal investment to realize the community benefits associated with the project.

To move forward, Council's direction is required to determine whether further exploration of the shared facility model is desired. The decision to proceed will allow staff to refine the project scope, identify funding opportunities, and engage stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan that aligns with Stratford's strategic goals.

Recognizing the overlapping financial ranges between the third-party and shared facility models highlights the potential to balance investment levels with operational efficiency and fiscal sustainability. Council's willingness to consider these models, along with their associated investment ranges and tax levy impacts, will set the stage for next steps.

Council's decision at this stage is about direction, not a final financial commitment. The recommendation is for Council to indicate whether they support further exploration of a shared community facility model rather than approving funding now.

Next Steps:

1. Refined project scope and cost estimates: Conducting further financial analysis, including external funding opportunities and potential operating models.
2. Partnership negotiations: Formalizing discussions with partners to clarify roles, commitments, and risks.
3. Community demand validation: Ensuring the project meets Stratford's long-term needs with data-driven insights.
4. Exploring Funding Opportunities: Pursue grants, private donations, and external partnerships to offset municipal contributions.
5. Decision timeline: Outlining the process and key milestones for future Council decisions.

Recommendation

THAT staff be directed to pursue the shared community facility option which includes investment from the City as outlined in this report, in addition to funding from external sources and operational partners;

AND THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the exploration of the design, development, and operations of a shared community facility, and report back with a detailed plan outlining the project scope, a range of potential costs, and funding options for Council's consideration.

Key Action #3: Advance Housing Opportunities on Parcel 2D of the Grand Trunk Site

Parcel 2D, a 2.5-acre section of the Grand Trunk site, is positioned along Downie Street, historically home to industrial buildings and rail spurs. As Stratford continues to grow,

addressing housing needs remains a key priority. Future residential development on this site presents an opportunity to support walkability, public transit connections, affordability, accessibility, and intergenerational living, accommodating both students and seniors.

Preliminary environmental investigations indicate the presence of heavy metals and hydrocarbons, though early findings suggest these impacts are shallow. To facilitate a transition from industrial to residential use, a Record of Site Condition (RSC) will be required, and remediation will need to adhere to Site Condition Standards.

To assess the best approach for development, procurement strategies have been reviewed in alignment with Policy P.3.1 Sale and Other Disposition of Land and Policy P.5.1 Purchasing Policy. An Expression of Interest (EOI) is a strategic first step in exploring housing development for Parcel 2D, allowing the City to gauge market interest, assess potential partners, and refine the project scope before committing to a formal process. Unlike a Request For Proposals (RFP), an EOI offers flexibility by gathering insights on viable development models, funding opportunities, and industry challenges, helping the City shape a project that aligns with market realities. It also positions Stratford for provincial and federal funding, demonstrating readiness for investment in housing solutions. By identifying potential partners and procurement pathways early, an EOI reduces risk, informs future decisions, and ensures a competitive, well-aligned approach to development.

Key Findings and Considerations:

Developing Parcel 2D for housing presents several considerations, including environmental remediation, servicing, student housing needs, and potential government funding opportunities.

- Environmental Due Diligence
 - Consultant costs for further environmental assessment are estimated at \$250,000, though costs may rise if additional boreholes or monitoring are required.
 - Soil remediation to site-specific standards is projected to exceed \$2 million.
 - Anticipated timelines to secure a Record of Site Condition range from 1.5 to 3 years.
- Servicing Considerations
 - Alternative servicing options from Downie Street may be available, reducing reliance on the internal road network for connections.
- Student Housing Potential
 - Stratford is home to four permanent post-secondary institutions and private learning centres, creating an ongoing demand for student accommodations.
- Government Funding Opportunities
 - Housing and housing-enabling infrastructure remain priorities for both provincial and federal governments.

- With upcoming elections, shovel-ready projects will be more competitive for available funding programs.

Conclusion

Parcel 2D represents a significant opportunity to address Stratford's housing needs while aligning with broader growth, accessibility, and sustainability objectives. While environmental remediation and servicing require further due diligence, advancing this project will position the site for future investment and government funding opportunities. Council's direction is needed to proceed with detailed analysis, procurement planning, and development exploration.

Next Steps

1. Define the Scope of the Development: Assess the density, return on investment, and servicing requirements to determine the site's overall feasibility.
2. Evaluate Procurement and Partnership Options: Explore various models for developing and delivering housing solutions, including potential partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders.
3. Report Back to Council: Prepare and report back to Council on the Expression of Interest process, including market interest, feasibility assessments, financial implications, and recommended next steps.

Recommendation

THAT Council direct staff to develop an Expression of Interest to solicit proposals for housing development on the GTR site, with a focus on the parcel known as 2D.

Key Action #3: Explore a Parking and Mobility Solution for the Grand Trunk Site

The Grand Trunk site (GTR) consists of a partially restored industrial structure and surrounding lands totaling 18 acres. Currently, the site includes 437 unpaid parking spaces, commonly referred to as the Cooper Site, which are primarily used by downtown employees, business patrons, and seasonal visitors during the Stratford Festival. The City of Stratford is responsible for the maintenance and repair of this lot.

As construction and development advance on the site, the loss of these spaces will create a significant parking challenge in the downtown core, with no existing plan in place to replace them. The most recent Parking Study (2014) provides insights into usage trends and is included as a supplemental report.

Additionally, with the anticipated development of new residential and community facilities (e.g., YMCA, Stratford Public Library, and City-operated spaces), future parking demand is expected to increase. To proactively address these challenges, an Expression of Interest (EOI) is proposed to explore potential solutions for a parking and mobility structure at the Grand Trunk site.

Addressing parking capacity at the Grand Trunk site requires careful consideration of existing demand, anticipated growth, and potential locations for structured parking.

Key Considerations:

- Replacement of Existing 437 Spaces
 - There is currently no strategy or plan to accommodate the loss of parking once construction begins.
 - Existing usage is primarily by downtown employees, business patrons, and seasonal visitors.

- Accommodating New Development
 - An estimated 300 new residential units will require 375 additional parking spaces, based on an average ratio of 1.25 spaces per unit.
 - Proposed community facilities, including the YMCA, City spaces, and the Stratford Public Library, could require an additional 50–100 spaces.
 - Strategies for replacement parking may need to be considered in the broader context of the downtown.

- Cost and Location of a Structured Parking Solution
 - Modern above-ground parking structures are estimated to cost \$40,000–\$50,000 per space, resulting in a total cost of \$29M–\$36.25M to replace existing parking and accommodate new demand.
 - A site review has identified the west side of the Grand Trunk site as the most suitable location for a structured parking/mobility hub.
 - This space could accommodate approximately 150 vehicles per level, requiring a minimum of three levels to replace existing parking.
 - Future expansion potential should be incorporated into the design to support long-term growth and evolving transportation needs.

Conclusion

As development progresses at the Grand Trunk site, addressing parking and mobility needs is essential to supporting downtown businesses, residents, and community users. The introduction of a structured parking and mobility hub would help mitigate parking pressures, ensure continued accessibility, and accommodate future development on the site. An Expression of Interest (EOI) would allow the City to explore potential solutions, engage industry partners, and assess feasible procurement models before making further commitments.

Next Steps

1. Define the Scope of the Parking and Mobility Solution: Assess the scale of the parking/mobility structure required and its implications for downtown parking capacity.

2. Evaluate Procurement and Partnership Options: Explore available procurement models and potential partnerships for the development, funding, and operation of the parking facility.
3. Confirm Feasibility and Explore Delivery Models: Conduct further feasibility studies to determine site suitability, cost implications, and long-term expansion opportunities.
4. Report Back to Council: Prepare and report back to Council on the Expression of Interest process, including market interest, feasibility assessments, financial implications, and recommended next steps.

Recommendation

THAT Council direct staff to develop an Expression of Interest to solicit proposals for the development and operation of a parking and mobility solution on the GTR site.

Closing Statement

The Grand Trunk site presents a unique opportunity to support Stratford's economic growth and deliver community benefits. These initial actions will advance the process of transformation through interim activation, community partnerships and a shared facility, housing development, and a parking/mobility solution. Advancing these initiatives requires strategic investment, partnerships, and alignment with Council's direction.

Council's direction on these key items is needed to proceed with the next phase of work, including due diligence, market engagement, and financial analysis. These steps will ensure that decisions align with Stratford's long-term priorities and position the City to maximize funding opportunities and community benefits.

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

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

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority by bringing City-owned lands to market for residential development.

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority by developing a partnership model for the development and delivering of a new community facility.

Intentionally Change to Support the Future

This report aligns with this priority as it considers the current and future needs of residents.

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 direct staff to conduct background research on temporary and interim uses for the GTR site, including associated next steps and cost estimates, and report these findings back to Council for consideration;

THAT staff be directed to pursue the shared community facility option as outlined in this report, which includes investment from the City in addition to funding from external sources and operational partners;

AND THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the exploration of the design, development, and operations of a shared community facility, and report back with a detailed plan outlining the project scope, a range of potential costs, and funding options for Council's consideration;

THAT Council direct staff to develop an Expression of Interest to solicit proposals for housing development on the GTR site, with a focus on the parcel known as 2D;

THAT Council direct staff to develop an Expression of Interest to solicit proposals for the development and operation of a parking and mobility solution on the GTR site.

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