

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** July 14, 2025  
**To:** Mayor & Council  
**From:** Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford  
Emily Robson, Strategic Initiatives Lead  
**Report Number:** COU25-084  
**Attachments:** Master Plan to Business Plan by NBLC (Conway report)

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**Title:** Grand Trunk Site update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations

**Objective:** To update Stratford City Council on the progress of the Grand Trunk Site project and to receive Council direction for staff and the consulting team with respect to the most appropriate scenario for the Superstructure (former Shops building) which will inform further development strategies and considerations.

**Background:** At the February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting of City Council the following direction was given:

**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 Council direct staff 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;**

**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;**

**AND 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.**

Upon receipt of that direction, staff engaged with the development consultant, The SvecGroup who are working closely with members of the Grand Trunk Renewal (GTR) Ad Hoc Committee, working groups, and staff to establish high-level development scenarios for the Grand Trunk site.

The consultant's workplan includes:

- Phase 1: Input Stage (complete, February 2025)
- Phase 2: Scenario Development (complete, June 16 Ad Hoc Committee meeting)
- Phase 3: Presentation of Scenarios (July 14, meeting of Stratford Council)
- Phase 4–6: Pre-RFP development discussions, Expressions of Interest/Request for Proposals preparation, evaluation and alignment (Quarter 3 2025 – Quarter 2 2026)

These scenarios consider how different uses such as housing, a shared community facility, public space, and structured parking, could be arranged across the site. They also consider the implications of those arrangements and inform the next stages of work related to development marketability and future procurement.

Upon completion, each scenario will consider:

- Site configuration and land use mix
- Capital and lifecycle cost implications
- Market viability and private sector delivery models
- Phasing and implementation strategies
- Impacts on value generation, infrastructure needs, and community benefit

Additionally, SvecGroup's phased research will provide detailed, cost-referenced context for strategic decisions by Council by weighing the trade-offs between desired site options. For example:

- How to have the most community impact using the superstructure following remediation
- Housing and shared community facility locations that optimize the value of those parcels and impact development returns.
- Outlining parking location considerations, economic benefits, and costs to develop

At this point in the workplan receiving direction on how to treat the superstructure is a key focal point of discussions.

## Analysis:

Exploring the scenarios leads to some overarching considerations for Council, including:

- Acknowledging the significant cultural heritage and value to the community and City which should be celebrated in the redevelopment. This value is also a primary attraction for developers in the long term.
- Integrating a shared community facility somewhere on the site is critical in the redevelopment. However, Council must decide its investment scope for the facility in partnership with the key service providers like the YMCA and the Library.
- The transformative nature of the project for long-term outcomes means needing a solid vision moving forward from the outset.
- The scenarios align with the accepted project guiding principles and values.
- Full development may take decades, with some initial buildings breaking ground soon.
- Engineering results show the adaptive reuse of the superstructure is a significant challenge because of environmental impact, structural, constructability and therefore cost.
- The fire-damaged western end of the superstructure will need demolition regardless of the scenario chosen.
- The *Cooper Block: Master Plan to Business Plan* market report by Mark Conway of NLBC Toronto, presented to the Ad Hoc Committee on December 16, 2024 complements the scenario findings by SvecGroup (see attachment).

With these considerations in mind and input from the Grand Trunk committee through May and June, SvecGroup offered three main scenarios for the superstructure.

## Scenario 1: KEEP MOST/ALL

Enclosing most of the superstructure, fully remediating it, and renovating it from within presents the highest cost. This is due to construction constraints to preserve the remaining material and work around the restored parts throughout construction. It also results in the highest cost for clean-up and modernizing the space inside for mixed use. Even if the cost can be managed, the viability of creating a structure within a structure is not likely, as construction constraints and fire safety measures are still significant concerns.

**INITIAL IMPLICATIONS:** This scenario proposes a new, shared community facility inside the full, rehabilitated structure and an adjacent parking garage. However, housing is not included. Integrating housing into the restored structure requires added environmental remediation to make it safe for long-term residency.

An order of magnitude budget starts at \$126 million and ultimately may not be practical due to structural and safety concerns.

Note that costs and sizes are preliminary in nature and are to provide for contrast purposes only.

### Shared Community Facility New Build

Remediation for structure within a structure	\$	10,000,000
75k YMCA	\$	52,500,000
40k Library	\$	26,000,000
4 Level Parking Garage Structure	\$	21,000,000
Additional Construction Premium	\$	16,425,000
Total	\$	125,925,000

## Scenario 2: KEEP PART

Preserving the middle third of the superstructure is a moderate choice. This part of the structure needs the least rehabilitation. However, for safety, this adaptation is restricted to making it an open-air space, using the renovated sides to create partial shelter. This follows the example of the Evergreen Brickworks in Toronto.

**INITIAL IMPLICATIONS:** This scenario frees more land outside the renovated structure so housing can be safely built nearby. It also provides flexibility for nearby parking solutions (surface or garage). The shared community facility would also be placed elsewhere on the site; potentially updated in its current spot depending on partnership agreements.

An order-of-magnitude budget starts at \$43 million. Note that costs and sizes are preliminary in nature and are to provide for contrast purposes only.

### Shared Community Facility Renovation

Open-Air Enabling Remediation	\$	5,000,000
YMCA Renovation	\$	25,000,000
20k Library	\$	13,000,000
Total	\$	43,000,000

### Scenario 3: KEEP NONE

Demolishing the entire structure creates an opportunity for a simplified, full clean-up plan, capping contamination costs and creating a blank pad to build on. New housing and other buildings become practical options in that cleared footprint. Plus, metals and materials can likely be salvaged for some recycling revenue recoveries. This potentially means dollars returning to the project purse. However, these metals will need testing to verify resaleability. The demolition costs and removing debris are estimated to be “nominal”. The variable costs of building on top of the pad depend on those future building specifications.

INITIAL IMPLICATIONS: This scenario provides the most flexibility for housing in the vacant, cleaned footprint. However, it’s not aligned with Council and resident desires to keep as much of the structure as possible.

It is important to note that Council’s direction for SvecGroup does not mean the structure is therefore slated for construction. It gives the consultants the guidance needed to provide deeper costing and market data for the project, in a redefined scope, for phase 4 of their reporting.

With these considerations in mind, at their June 16 meeting, the Ad-Hoc Committee adopted the recommendation that Council supports the second scenario put forward by SvecGroup. Specifically:

*THAT the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee recommend Council support Options 2A Place Community Uses Within the YMCA Parcel and 2B Place Community Uses Outside the YMCA Parcel, along with the continuum of options within, and to preserve the majority of the building as feasible.*

## **Financial Implications:**

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

There is no financial impact of this report to the current year operating budget. All costs associated with the development strategy and site design are included in the \$1.9 million allocated for 2025. Procurement processes are part of the next phase of the development plan and will be considered at that time.

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

The impacts in future year operating budgets will be determined based on the superstructure scenario chosen, potential partnership agreements with the YMCA and Stratford Public Library, development strategies and external development partners.

### **Link to asset management plan and strategy:**

Regardless of which scenario Council chooses to proceed with, there will be implications for the City's asset management program.

If Council proceeds with Scenario 1 or 2, the rehabilitation of the structure or the creation of a shared facility within the structure will introduce additional assets and asset components to the City's inventory. These assets would need to be integrated into the City's asset management framework, including lifecycle planning, financial forecasting, levels of service, and risk assessment.

Future versions of the AMP require the City to define levels of service and establish financial strategies for the next 10 years. A project of this scale would represent a significant addition to the City's asset base and would therefore need to be considered in both the levels of service and long-term financial planning components of the AMP, likely materially increasing funding required for sustainability.

Given the timelines for both the potential construction and the City's upcoming asset management plan (AMP) update, this project would likely be incorporated into a future version of the AMP. Starting in 2027, the AMP will be updated annually, allowing for the phased integration of new infrastructure from this project as it comes into service.

If Council proceeds with Scenario 3, the impact on the asset management program would be minimal, limited primarily to the disposal of the existing asset from the inventory. Any future plans for the site post removal would be captured in a subsequent AMP update.

**Legal considerations:**

Development and partnership agreements will all be considered in the next phase (s) of the project.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:****Work Together For Greater Impact**

Initiating the Grand Trunk Renewal project through formal development models.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the Grand Trunk Site Update report and attachments be received for information;**

**AND THAT in keeping with the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, staff and the consulting group be directed to include SCENARIO TWO (KEEP PART) of the Superstructure in Phases three through six of the workplan, bringing back the findings for Council consideration; including, but not limited to: site configuration and land use mix; capital and lifecycle cost implications; market viability and private sector delivery models; phasing and implementation strategies; impacts on value generation, infrastructure needs, and community benefit.**

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