



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: October 14, 2025
To: Mayor and Council
From: Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead
Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford
Report Number: COU25-126
Attachments: Appendix A: Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group Report;
Appendix B: End-of-Mandate Survey Feedback Summary;
Appendix C: Timeline Reflection Activity

Title: Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee Findings and Recommendations

Objective: To present the findings and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee at the conclusion of its mandate, and to forward the Committee's final reports and activities to Council for information and review.

Background: Over its two-year mandate, the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee advanced key elements of the Grand Trunk Renewal Project, including recommendations on updates to the Master Plan, community engagement, and partnership development. At its final meeting, the Committee recommended that Council receive for information: the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group report, a summary of end-of-mandate survey feedback, and the timeline reflection activity.

Context:

The Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee was established by Council in October 2023 with the following terms of reference:

1. To support the Grand Trunk Master Plan adopted by City Council.
2. To act as a sounding board to the City on matters dealing with the renewal of the Grand Trunk building, including building designs and architectural plans.
3. To identify fundraising opportunities and support fundraising initiatives.

4. To advise and assist with the development of a public engagement program and promote the activities of the Grand Trunk renewal.
5. To liaise with other committees or organizations with overlapping roles and responsibilities.

The Committee met regularly from November 2023 through September 2025. Key activities included:

- Vision and Guiding Principles: Developed a renewed vision and set of guiding principles for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project and provided recommended revisions for the Grand Trunk Master Plan.
- Site Planning Input: Provided input on site planning, particularly regarding which uses should be located where on the Grand Trunk lands. The Committee's recommendations from February 2025 identified the core land uses for the site as residential, parking, a community facility, and outdoor amenity space. The Committee's recommendations from July 2025 further clarified that the community facility would be located either in the current YMCA building or elsewhere on the site, and that the Grand Trunk superstructure should be explored as an outdoor amenity.
- Community Engagement: Supported two large-scale public events, ten community pop-ups, and the development of updated communications materials including 38 frequently asked questions and a web presence on EngageStratford.
- Partnership Development: Through the Partnership Working Group, engaged with dozens of local organizations (including YMCA of Three Rivers, Stratford Public Library, and United Housing) and hosted public events such as the Stratford Perth Museum session on the Grand Trunk and a panel at the Provocation Ideas Festival.

In addition, the Committee benefited from presentations by subject-matter experts in brownfield remediation, downtown development, adaptive re-use, and housing, which informed its deliberations and advice.

At its final meeting on September 15, 2025, the Committee passed motions recommending that several documents be shared to Council for information and review, including the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group report, a summary of the end-of-mandate survey, and the timeline activity documenting the Committee's work.

Analysis:

Master Plan Update and Implementation Recommendations

The Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group undertook the preparation of a report recommending updates to the Grand Trunk Master Plan and actions to guide implementation. The working group identified the importance of ensuring that the Master Plan remained current with Council's more recent directions on land use, reflected community input gathered through engagement activities, and provided a framework to guide future decision-making. Draft materials were developed, refined through consensus-building, and discussed by the Committee at several meetings, including June and August 2025, before being finalized.

The final report contained two sets of recommendations:

- *Master Plan Update Recommendations:* Refinements to the project vision and guiding principles; updates to site planning, including the arrangement of residential, community facility, outdoor amenity, and parking uses; and considerations for mobility and connectivity within the site and to surrounding areas.
- *Implementation Recommendations:* Approaches to phasing and sequencing of development; governance and partnership structures to support delivery; and next steps for advancing the project.

At its September 15, 2025, meeting, the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee considered the report and passed the following motions:

- THAT the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee accept the Master Plan update recommendations outlined in the report of the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group;
- THAT the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee accept the implementation recommendations outlined in the report of the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group;
- AND THAT the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee direct that the report of the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group be forwarded to Stratford City Council for consideration.

The report is appended as Appendix A.

End of Mandate Survey

At the conclusion of the Committee's mandate, a committee member undertook a voluntary survey of Committee members. The survey was prepared independently and

was not directed by the Committee. Its purpose was to collect reflections on the effectiveness of the Committee’s work over its two-year mandate.

The summary highlights a range of perspectives. Committee members noted several achievements and emphasized the value of community engagement undertaken during the mandate. Feedback from Working Group Chairs pointed to areas for improvement, such as structural inefficiencies and limited tangible outcomes. Taken together, the comments suggest that future committees may be most effective with a sharper mandate, narrower scope, and clearer expectations for participation and results.

At its September 15, 2025, meeting, the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee passed the following motion:

- THAT the report titled Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee End-of-Mandate Survey Feedback be provided to Council for their information.

The survey summary report is appended as Appendix B.

Timeline Reflection

As part of its final meeting, the Committee undertook a timeline activity designed to reflect on the progression of its work from its appointment in October 2023 through September 2025. The purpose of the activity was to document milestones, decisions, and engagement efforts, and to provide members with a visual representation of the work undertaken during the Committee’s mandate.

For accessibility, a bulleted written summary of the timeline content has been prepared and is included in Appendix C, along with photographs of the timeline completed during the meeting.

At its September 15, 2025, meeting, the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee passed the following motion:

- THAT the reflections of the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee be received and forward to Council for their review.

Updates on Council Directions

The Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee’s work has directly informed two key sets of Council directions on the Grand Trunk site.

On February 4, 2024, through report *COU25-019-Grand Trunk Renewal Project Key Recommendations*, Council adopted a series of directions in response to recommendations provided by the Committee. These directions established the core uses for the site, residential, a community facility, outdoor amenity space, and parking, and directed staff to:

- Undertake research on temporary and interim uses;
- Pursue a shared community facility option with City investment and external partners;
- Advance planning for the design, development, and operations of a shared community facility;
- Develop an Expression of Interest (EOI) for housing on parcel 2D; and
- Develop an EOI for a parking and mobility solution.

The Committee participated in workshops with the consultant team in March, May, and June to test scenarios for the community facility and the Grand Trunk superstructure. These discussions culminated in the Committee’s recommendation that:

- 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, and to preserve the majority of the building as feasible.

On July 15, 2025, through report *COU25-084 Grand Trunk Site Update and Superstructure Scenario Considerations*, Council provided direction based on this recommendation. Council directed that Scenario Two (Keep Part) of the superstructure be included in Phases Three through Six of the workplan, with findings on site configuration, land use mix, costs, viability, and implementation strategies to be reported back for Council consideration.

This July direction advanced the February key actions by beginning to resolve where the identified land uses, community facility, residential, parking, and outdoor amenity space, should be located on the site. Clarifying site configuration is an essential step toward bringing EOIs forward to the market, as potential residential and mobility proponents need to understand how their projects will relate to the community facility and the superstructure.

Current Work

Since Council’s July direction, several streams of work have advanced:

- Temporary and interim uses: Destination Stratford has installed its illuminated Heart on the exterior of the Grand Trunk building; Trophy x Dream Weavers and the Springworks Puppet Making Pop-in are scheduled for October 4–5, 2025; and

staff continue to investigate interior use of the building for events, with costing to be brought back for Council's consideration.

- Community facility planning: Staff are actively working with the YMCA to explore how their existing facility might be renovated and/or expanded as the new community facility long foreseen for the site. Options are expected to come back to Council in early 2026.
- Site planning and development: Work is underway to prepare an updated site plan, a housing package for prospective proponents, and options for the future of the Grand Trunk superstructure for Council's consideration.

Together, the February 2024 and July 2025 directions, along with the current work underway, represent the Council framework for the Grand Trunk Renewal Project. The Committee has advised Council, Council has provided direction, and staff are now implementing that direction to advance the project.

The City extends its thanks to the members of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee for their time, expertise, and commitment over the course of the mandate. Their work has provided valuable input into the renewal of the Grand Trunk site, strengthened community engagement, and informed Council's directions on the project.

Financial Implications:

Not applicable:

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 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 the report titled, “Findings and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee” (COU25-126), including the Vision, Planning and Architecture Working Group Report (Appendix A), the End-of-Mandate Survey Feedback Summary (Appendix B), and the Timeline Reflection Activity (Appendix C) attached to the Report, be received for information and review.

Prepared by: Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead
Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford

Recommended by: André Morin, CPA, Chief Administrative Officer