



The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee
Open Session
AGENDA

Date: Monday, June 16, 2025

Time: 4:00 P.M.

Location: City Hall Auditorium

Ad-Hoc GTR Committee Present: Melanie Hare - Chair Presiding, Barb Cottle, Franklin Famme, Mark Vandembosch, Mayor Martin Ritsma, Nic Flanagan, Paul Parlee, Ron Dodson, Stephen Mitchell, Trudy Jonkman

Staff Present: Adam Betteridge - Interim Chief Administrative Officer , Joani Gerber - CEO of investStratford, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Melanie Reasbeck - investStratford

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgement.

Moment of Silent Reflection.

Regrets provided by Dan Mathieson.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

3. Adoption of Previous Minutes:

4 - 9

Motion by

THAT the Minutes of the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee of The Corporation of the City of Stratford dated May 20, 2025 be adopted as printed.

4. Delegation Requests

4.1 Delegation by Robert Ritz

Motion by

THAT the delegation by Robert Ritz regarding costing scenarios and methods of financing be heard.

5. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

5.1 Svec Group

10 - 18

Joe Svec, Svec Group

Rock Wang, UrbanEdge Advisors

5.2 Refreshing the Grand Trunk Master Plan

19 - 21

Melanie Hare, Chair, Vision, Planning & Architecture Working Group

6. New Business

None scheduled.

7. Working Group and Staff Updates

7.1 Partnership

Herb Klassen & Karen Haslam, Co-Chairs

No report provided.

7.2 Vision, Planning & Architecture

Melanie Hare, Chair

Report included under Item 5.2

7.3 Real Estate, Legal & Finance

Franklin Famme, Chair

No report provided.

7.4 Communications, Advocacy, Civic Engagement 22

Andrew Hilton & John Kastner, Co-Chairs

7.5 Infrastructure & Environment

Stephen Cooper, Chair

No report provided.

7.6 Working Group Coordinators 23 - 25

Alan Kasperski & Ray Harsant, Coordinators

7.7 Staff Update 26 - 34

Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee Meeting is July 21, 2025 in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by

THAT the June 16, 2025 Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting adjourn.



The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee
MINUTES

Date: May 20, 2025
 Time: 4:00 P.M.
 Location: City Hall Auditorium

Ad-Hoc Committee Present: Dan Mathieson - Chair Presiding, Mayor Martin Ritsma, Barb Cottle, Franklin Famme, Melanie Hare, Nic Flanagan, Ron Dodson, Stephen Mitchell, Trudy Jonkman, Zach Schultz

Regrets: Mark Vandembosch, Paul Parlee

Staff Present: Adam Betteridge - Interim Chief Administrative Officer, Emily Robson - Corporate Initiatives Lead, Tim Wolfe - Director of Community Services, Victoria Trotter - Recording Secretary, Melanie Reasbeck - investStratford

Also Present: Joe Svec - Svec Group, Rock Wang - UrbanEdge Advisors, Paul Brown, Working Group Members, Media, Members of the Public

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Emily Robson introduced Melanie Reasbeck of investStratford and noted she will be working with the Committee.

Land Acknowledgement.

Moment of Silent Reflection.

Respect in the Workplace Statement.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

None declared at the May 20, 2025 Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting.

3. Adoption of Previous Minutes:

Motion by: Mayor Ritsma

Seconded by: Nic Flanagan

THAT the Minutes of the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee of The Corporation of the City of Stratford dated March 17, 2025 be adopted as printed.

Carried

4. Delegation Requests

4.1 Request for Delegation from ShelterLink Youth Services

Discussion: Cate Trudeau, Executive Director of ShelterLink Youth Services presented on their organizations interest to be a part of the Grand Trunk Renewal Site. Highlights of the presentation included:

- organization was formed in 1989;
- their vision is to make youth homelessness in Perth County a rare, brief and non-recurring experience;
- provide various outreach services including prevention;
- provide shelter services including 24/7 support;
- 107 youth were served in 2023-2024;
- average length of stay in shelter was reduced to 99 days in 2023-2024;

- current space presents significant limitations in comfort and safety;
- age and structure restricts ability to renovate;
- interested in partnering with the YMCA and Stratford Public Library;
- require approximately 7,000 sq ft;
- are able to raise capital for the project.

Motion by: Ron Dodson

Seconded by: Trudy Jonkman

THAT the report from ShelterLink Youth Services be received.

Carried

4.2 Request for Delegation by Paul Brown of Stratford Homecare Symposium

Discussion: Paul Brown provided a report on the 2025 Homecare Symposium noting the event was well attended and received with a focus on homecare, primary care and older adult needs.

Motion by: Melanie Hare

Seconded by: Barb Cottle

THAT the reported provided by Paul Brown regarding the Stratford Homecare Symposium be received.

Carried

5. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

5.1 Committee Input: Interim Uses, Community Facility Planning & Development Approach

Discussion: Emily Robson, Corporate Initiatives Lead, provided an update on three key areas of the Grand Trunk Renewal Project: interim uses of the site, early planning for a shared community facility, and the approach to preparing development scenarios.

Ms. Robson stated staff have engaged a structural engineer, architect and health and safety consultant to assess whether limited public access could be permitted at the Grand Trunk building and initial assessments are nearing completion.

Ms. Robson noted staff are preparing summer programming for the adjacent parking lot area with estimated costs for temporary signage, lighting, safety equipment, washrooms, event infrastructure, etc. at \$30,000 to \$40,000. Ms. Robson is requesting feedback from Committee members on the interim use of the site.

A discussion took place on the proposed interim uses. Highlights of the discussion included:

- potential for an inflatable art installation;
- parking must remain available outside of the event times;
- small scale tours are permissible;
- activation on the site may assist in engaging the community.

Franklin Famme no longer present at 5:00 p.m.

5.2 Interactive Briefing: What's Shaping Development Options for the Grand Trunk Site

Discussion: Joe Svec and Rock Wang presented an early analysis on the development scenarios for the Grand Trunk Site including land use configurations, infrastructure considerations and trade-offs. Highlights of the presentation included:

- currently in the development concept phase;
- key project components include remediation, YMCA, library, parking garage and housing;
- environmental remediation ranges from \$5 million to \$10 million dependent on the concept chosen;
- the roof structure is not suitable for adding modern roof panels;
- to build a structure inside the current structure is a \$126 million program;
- to renovate and build onto the current YMCA with a portion of the structure used as open-air space for community is a \$43 million program;
- a decision on the structure is required to move to Phase 2.

A question and answer period took place regarding the presentation. Highlights of the discussion included:

- the cement in the structure would need to be capped for environmental purposes;
- YMCA structure is in good shape to renovation and does not require remediation;
- the City would need to provide land adjacent to the YMCA for renovations and addition of other services such as the library;
- vapors from contamination come through the cement in the structure.

Stephen Mitchell is no longer present at 6:00 p.m.

Emily Robson will circulate the presentation for the Committee to review and provide feedback.

6. New Business

6.1 Refreshing the Grand Trunk Master Plan

This item is to be placed on a future agenda for discussion.

7. Working Group and Staff Updates

7.1 Partnership

No report provided.

7.2 Vision, Planning & Architecture

Report presented in Item 6.1.

7.3 Real Estate, Legal & Finance

No discussion.

7.4 Communications, Advocacy, Civic Engagement

No discussion.

7.5 Infrastructure & Environment

No report provided.

7.6 Working Group Coordinators

No report provided.

7.7 Staff Update

No discussion.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee Meeting is June 16, 2025 in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Motion by: Nic Flanagan

Seconded by: Melanie Hare

THAT the May 20, 2025 Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting adjourn.

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 4:06 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 6:11 P.M.

Grand Trunk

S/EC

GROUP

Strategy Workshop Add on

June 2025



4 Phase Process

1. Development Concept



Evaluate and select development concept based on feasibility: market, financials, environmental, structure, and community needs.

July 2025

2. Test and Finalize Concept



Create one detailed development concept and go to market strategy

Fall 2025

3. Market Sounding



Create detailed project program and interview selected developers for upcoming RFP for residential sale

Winter 2025

4. Market EOI



Launch RFP, interview project teams, select proponent, negotiate program.

Spring 2026

Step by Step

1. Development Concept



1. Evaluate Scenarios
2. Align with budget
3. Pick one masterplan concept

July 2025

Stratford needs to pick a direction to move the program forward into Phase 2.

The decision is not final in terms of design, use, configuration, it's a decision on which of the three scenarios to proceed with for further concept development:

1. Retain the building, structure within a structure scenario
2. Demolish part of the building for parking, Retain part of the building for community use outdoor space, Demolish the remainder for housing
3. Demolish the entire building and program the space to accommodate parking, community use and housing

Without choosing a direction, Stratford will be perpetually stuck at Phase 1.

Turning a direction into a masterplan

2. Test and Finalize Concept



Create one detailed development concept and go to market strategy

Fall 2025

In Phase 2, a direction will be turned into a concept.

The concept is a master site plan which needs to incorporate the following components:

- Environmental condition / remediation plan
- Servicing Viability
- Urban Design
- Transportation Demand
- Geotechnical / Hydrogeological Conditions
- Specific Building Typologies per Market Conditions
- Public Space needs / programming / landscape concept
- Fire Safety
- Constructability

Turning a direction into a vision

This is an image of Lakeview in Mississauga, it is an example of a direction that was turned into a **masterplan**.

The masterplan has defined streets, blocks, land uses, land areas and building typologies which have been tested in an economical model for viability. **This level of plan is the goal for Phase 2.**

The Grand Trunk site needs to advance to this level of detail to produce a **reliable economic forecast** for the masterplan components: housing, public space / community facilities, and parking.



Which Direction does the Committee Support?



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 |



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 |



Demolish Structure

Theoretical cost is minimal due to salvage of scrap metal (viability of recycling metal needs to be confirmed with testing)

*Note, the above are not detailed cost estimates. They are preliminary conceptual costs provided for contrast purposes only.

Which Direction does the Committee Support?

1

Structure with a Structure

The Committee supports investing financial and staff resources to produce a detailed masterplan that includes new, **enclosed buildings within the Grand Trunk Building**.

2

Using the Structure for Community Open Space

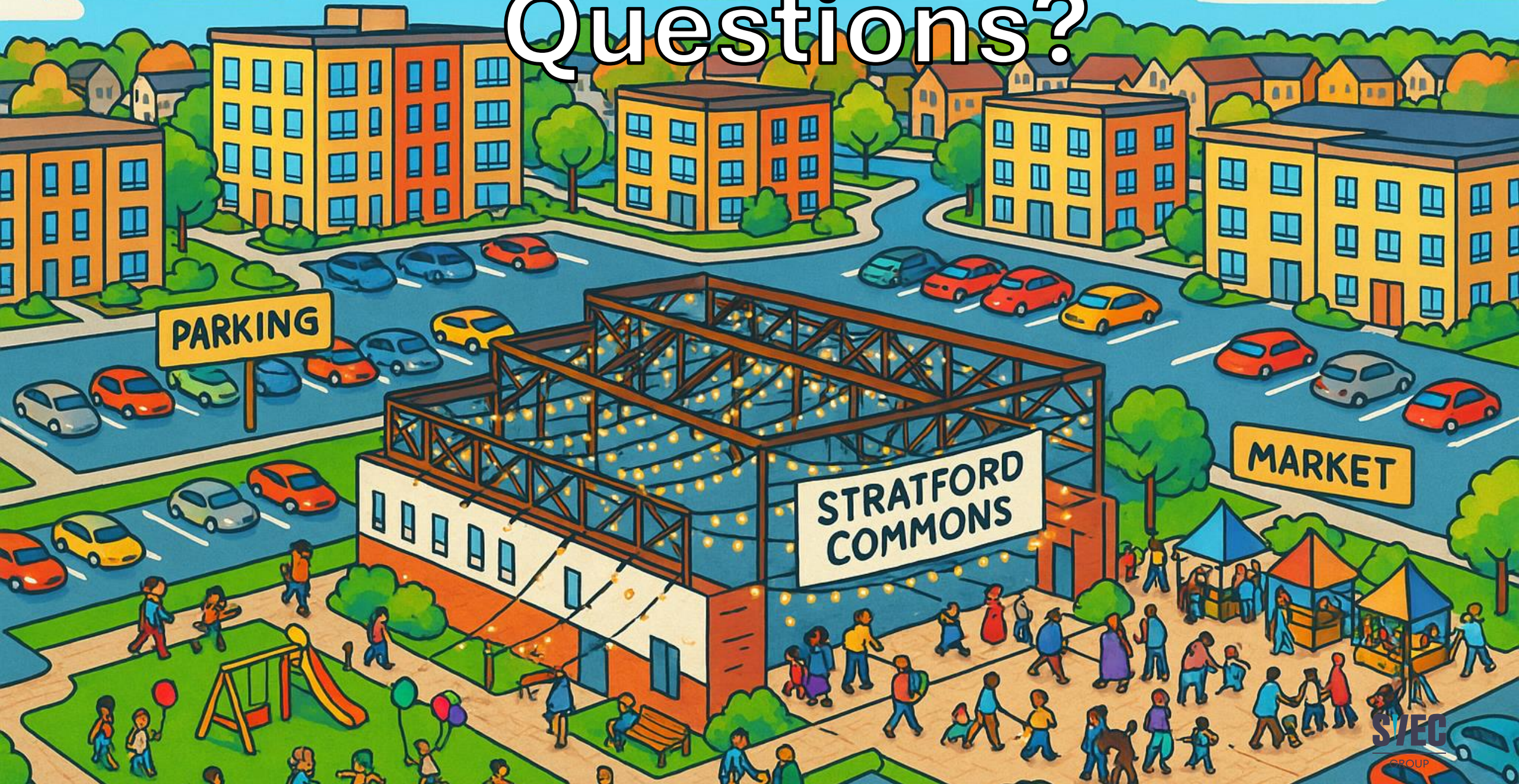
The Committee supports investing financial and staff resources to produce a detailed masterplan which **retains a portion** of the Grand Trunk Building as **Community Common Space** and demolishes the remaining structure for **Housing**.

3

Demolish Structure

The Committee supports investing financial and staff resources to produce a detailed masterplan which **demolishes all** of the Grand Trunk Building and converts the space to **Community Open Space and Housing**.

Questions?



STRATFORD COMMONS

Thank You!





Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Working Group: | Vision, Planning & Architecture |
| Report Date: | May 13, 2024 |

Requested Committee Direction:

The report is for information only.

Discussion Points:

Visual Representation of Vision and Guiding Principles

- The Activity Cluster diagram is being refined for visibility in use in powerpoint and other formats
- City staff are preparing a package of the Vision, Guiding Principles and Activity Cluster diagram to be shared back to the public on the website. This package can also be shared with our updated messages to the community.

Indigenous Engagement and Consultation

- The Working Group will continue to support staff to advance the Indigenous engagement process.

Overview of Previous Month:

- Working with Emily to create a Vision and Guiding Principles update package to be shared with the community.
- VPA Meeting to review mandate, work to date and a workplan with schedule going forward:

AHC Mandate related to VPA working group:

- Refresh Vision and Guiding Principles
- Engage the Community
- Update Master Plan
- Recommendations/advice to Council on development options and potential partners, financial model, phasing and next steps to implementation

Work Complete to date

- Vision and Guiding Principles (and community consultation)
- Endorsed Recommendations to Council: Housing, Parking, Community Facilities and Interim Activations
- Key program/land uses proposed for the site (based on dialogue with the Y, SPL, UW, SLAA, and community groups)

- Market input (Mark Conway and Svec Group)

Work Underway (by AHC, staff and consultants):

- Definition of potential development scenarios, tradeoffs to go back to Council with information to make decisions on scope, scale and phasing of reinvestment on the GTS (Svec Group)

Work to Be Done (VPA with other working groups)

- With Council direction on project scope and scale of investment/partners, review the Grand Trunk Master Plan 2018 site plan drawing and determine any revisions that may be required
- Identify "Early works" and studies needs to unlock redevelopment
- Propose phasing and timelines for GTR

WORK PLAN/PROCESS TO DO SO (focus on VPA work as other working groups will have other matters to address):

- May 20 AHC - Presentation of potential/spectrum of redevelopment scenarios (Svec Group); discussion with AHC on Scenarios material; direction to consultant on scenarios to be assessed. VPA presents proposed schedule and approach to revise the Master Plan
- June 16 AHC - Presentation of Scenario analysis; draft recommendations to Council
- July 14 Council - AHC Recommendations to Council and direction on scope and scale of reinvestment
- July VPA - working sessions on Master Plan revisions
- July 21 AHC ID any updates to Master Plan site plan, early works and next steps
- August VPA -working sessions on Master Plan revisions and recommendations
- August 18 AHC - Discussion on Master Plan Revisions and recommendations
- September 15 AHC - Finalize revised Master Plan site plan, any finetuning of V+GP, recommendations to Council
- October 14 Council- AHC recommendations including : Revised Master Plan site plan, early works, phasing, partnerships, financial model,etc

Key questions of City Staff

1. How to ensure alignment with the overall Official Plan review and in particular the amount and type of housing to be planned for on the Grand Trunk Site.
2. Confirm that key aspects of the Vision and Guiding Principles have been considered in the development scenarios.
3. Confirm key land use or program assumptions (range) that are being considered in the development scenarios ie size of community facility, replacement parking stalls, etc
4. Pls provide an update of Indigenous Protocol and outreach strategy

Overview of Upcoming Month:

| Item # | Item/Action | By Whom | By When |
|--------|-------------|---------|---------|
| | | | |

| | | | |
|----|--|------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Design graphic package for Vision, Guiding Principles and Clusters of Activities as the Vision 2024 | Emily | June 30 |
| 2 | Coordination with Communications and Engagement WG and City Communications staff on update to website and eblast out of Vision, Guiding Principles graphic materials | Emily. VPA, CEWG | June 30 |
| 3 | Finalize Indigenous engagement Protocols | Emily | Under review |
| 4 | Report/Update to Council on Indigenous Engagement Protocols | Emily | To be determined |
| 5 | Initial Outreach and Engagement with Indigenous Communities | WG | Underway |
| 6 | Working with the Environment Working Group and others, confirm key approvals required, timelines and resources to implement the GTR | WG | May 30 |
| 7 | Identify draft of “early works” and project planned timelines | WG | June 30 |
| 8 | Identify key areas to update Master Plan site plan concept - based on scenario analysis (June) | WG | July 31 |
| 9 | Draft Master Plan site plan update to AHC, early works and planning timelines | WG | Aug 31 |
| 10 | Finalize Master Plan site plan update, early works and planning timelines | WG | Sept 30 |



Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee

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|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Working Group: | Communications |
| Report Date: | June 5, 2025 |

Requested Committee Direction:

The report is for information only.

Discussion Points:

NIL

Overview of Previous Month:

The communications working group continues to provide tours and information about the project to the public. In the past month, the communications team has presented to a seniors group in Grand Bend as well as to the monthly meeting of the Stratford Arts and Culture Collective. In both cases, the theme of the discussion was an objective overview of the project today and possible next steps.

Additionally, John has been the contact person for a number of tours of the facility for select members of the community, and more recently for contractors and city staff ahead of any work on the property that would be required for outdoor animation and events.

Andrew, John and Melanie met to discuss a communications plan and Andrew has authored a draft that is included.

Overview of Upcoming Month:

Summary of work anticipated for the upcoming month.

| Item # | Item/Action | By Whom | By When |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Approval of a communications plan | Andrew Hilton | Draft completed |



Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Working Group: | Working Group Co-Ordinator Ray Harsant's June 9, 2025 Report |
| Report Date: | June 9, 2025 |

Information Item and Follow-up Actions

to Improve the roles and purpose of the Ad Hoc Cttee:

This is *a reminder* regarding some outstanding follow-up to motions passed at the February AD Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee meeting. These motions came out of the input from those who completed the Ad-Hoc "survey questionnaire" back in November:

That Working Groups, Chairs, Co-Chairs and Working Group Coordinators review their roles, responsibilities and overall Committee processes and structures;

And that suggestions related to the process and structures be provided to the Corporate Initiatives Lead for proposing amendments to more effectively undertake the Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee's mandate.

No due date was established for us to do this.

I therefore recommend that we – individually as well as Working Groups – consolidate thoughts and ideas on the above and forward these to Emily Robson, the Corporate Lead, by September 1st. This way she will have everyone's input before the current Committee's official two-year mandate is concluded. In the absence of any meaningful communication regarding this, I understand that some Committee members currently expect this to occur between now and the end of the year.

Discussion Points:

I provide the following thoughts with respect to where we currently are in our planning process.

The work that Joe Svec and Rock Wang are doing is *critically important* to the Ad Hoc Committee's overall mandate to establish sound recommendations for Council's considerations regarding these 18 acres and to update the approved 2018 Grand Trunk Master Plan.

To paraphrase some of Joe's opening comments last month, what we are doing here has the potential "to unlock magic that is here with sound decision making."

The exciting preservation of one of Stratford's most critical heritage building landmarks is such a decision. Indeed, it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to cohesively integrate "past and future heritage".

As such, I think it is of utmost importance that we see this phase of imaginatively preserving and repurposing the Grand Trunk "Shops building and space" as only the first of many steps to be taken to fully realize the greater vision of these 18 acres – and in doing so, *transform* Stratford's inner core and beyond.

To do so, the planning of the site's overall Vision must be part of – integrated with – an Overarching Strategic Developmental Vision to the city's planning exercises.

- Such an overall Vision for these lands can have an amazing impact on our quality of life as Stratford residents by attracting investments in surrounding lands and buildings.
- It can have a huge impact on attracting new businesses and industries.
- So, in addition to the revitalized Shops building, what and how can our *overall* vision for this property, impact surrounding lands beyond these 18 acres?
- What are the incentives and attractions such a vision offers?
- Indeed, *what is our overall vision?*

Questions in search of answers!... And for me, others immediately come to mind!

- What questions come to *your* mind...what do *you* think of....as you read the consolidated inputs to the most recent questionnaire.
- Jot your questions and thoughts down.
- And ask them when we meet.

My point here is, let's ensure everyone fully discusses where we are, where we are going with our mandate, and how are we to continue to go about this. Discussion. The May Committee meeting has been labeled a "workshop". I do not see it as ever having really being this. It was a presentation with some discussion. Not much. But some discussion.

In our June 16th meeting, I encourage *everyone* to fully participate in discussing and exploring where we are and how we are going forward.

"There is indeed magic here to be unlocked"

As a possible stimulus for thoughts and discussion, I provide an example of a possible Vision as I put forward in 2016 following many discussions and conversations with fellow citizens, staff and others.

I hope it might stimulate creative thoughts and ideas as we collaborate and collectively continue our discussions and planning around the Shops building and space – as it impacts and integrates with an overall transformative Vision of Stratford's inner core and beyond.

Attachment: "Example of A Visionary Strategic Statement & Plan Document for Enhancing the Vibrancy of Stratford's Downtown Core"; 2016

Example of A Visionary Strategic Statement & Plan Document for Enhancing the Vibrancy of Stratford's Downtown Core

Vision

By 2035 we will have transformed our city's historic downtown core such that its multifunctional components from it Civic Square, surrounding heritage lands, buildings, businesses, services, and arterial ways dance together for the betterment of our community's citizens', visitors, and businesses' vast array of needs and pleasures.

Strategic Elements/
Drivers

Descriptors-

Defining Characteristics :

Long Term
10-20 Year
Goals

(Cascading
down in to
Objectives
next page)

| We will have transformed | Our city's historic downtown core | Multifunctional components...Civic Square, heritage lands, businesses, services, and arterial ways | Dance Together | For the betterment of our...citizens', visitors', businesses' vast array of needs and pleasures |
|--|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Together – Collaborative; Partnerships: Public, private and civic stakeholders; Council, Staff, Community members – Groups and individuals Progressive over time: Continuously incrementally; Management Accountability: Planned, Monitored Reported on; Revised; Successful manifestation of visionary goals/objectives Recognized as such by residents, visitors, Ontario, Canada, internationally Custom tailored solutions From congestion and "unhealthy" space to being open, welcoming, & healthy Beyond transitional while allowing ongoing transitions Establishing new ways of funding and actual developm't | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded focus to fully encompass the entire downtown core. Multi-functional reflecting Businesses; Social, Public and Civic Services; Housing; Recreation; Like a "Log Cabin Quilt" while the Civic Sq. is the heart it is also only a part of the overall tapestry – Is multi-functional Reinforces the historic nature and aspects of all buildings and the Square | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor Theatre performances; Recreational use significantly increases Frequent artistic performances – musical, visual and performing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrates and aligns with Master Plan, city's overall strategic plan - its 3 pillars, Raised roadways/no curbs; Arterial ways provide linkage to parks and other city areas/services/routes; Each component reinforces the other to maximize use and services to fully meet inner city needs, projects and initiatives; Accessibility to and for all; Safe, and Secure (CPTED) Comfort, confidence, wherever you go Enhance profitability to downtown businesses Responsive to customer needs Allowing the client to focus on their business Partner with customers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly communicated and understood strategic/long term Vision and Plan Clearly and proactively communicated semi-annual updates – wins and challenges Enhanced business and cultural foundation manifested thru increased revenues and profits; Increased recreational use – pleasure/peaceful; Ongoing leadership development of the city's elected and civic staff; Recognizing and rewarding personal and group contributions(fundraising); Communicate and celebrate success |
| By 2035 we will have fully developed the CN Rail Shops to become a place of national importance | We will be continually recognized as one of the top 5 tourist destinations in Canada. | Downie/Waterloo/St. Patrick Streets Traffic Circle/Roundabout completed by 2019 | Bus Terminal created at current Via Station area by 2020 | Annually decreased retail vacancies each year from 2020 to 2035 |
| By 2025 we will be <i>annually</i> recognized as one of the top 5 cities to live in Canada for 5 years in a row. | Grant and Private citizen financial contributions provide >80% funding requirements re historical elements | Phase I of Civic Square developed by 2017.07 and renamed the Frances and Donald McDonald Square | Go Train Service comes to Stratford by 2030; | 80+% of all Inner city retail businesses recognize the Plan as being a primary factor resulting in annually increased revenues and profits from 2020 onwards. |
| CN Rail Shops fully developed by 2035 | We will be acknowledged as (one of) the best inner city cores vis a vis numerous criteria in N.Am. | Phase II of Civic Square completed between 2022 and 2025 | | Civic Square special occasional use increases >10%/yr from 2022 |
| | | | | |

Example/Sample provided to Stratford City Council and Staff for Illustration and Discussion Purposes only; Use with permission; January 27, 2016

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rayharsant@outlook.com (2022)



Ad-Hoc Grand Trunk Renewal Committee

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Working Group: | Staff Report |
| Report Date: | June 9, 2025 |

Purpose

This report summarizes the Committee's feedback on the three GTR superstructure development scenarios presented by SVEC Group on May 20. Discussion took place following the meeting via an online document.

This information-only summary will guide the Committee's discussion on June 16 toward selecting their preferred scenario. Afterward, SVEC Group will explore detailed costing and adjustments during Phase 2 of their evaluation. A final decision on what happens to the structure will not be made on June 16.

Appendix: [Analysis of feedback received](#)

Requested Input from the Committee

The Committee is asked to review this summary before the June 16 meeting.

- Which single scenario does the Committee support advancing as the preferred direction for Phase 2 testing and costing?

Feedback: Executive Summary

The Ad Hoc Committee gave broad, strategic feedback on the future development of the Grand Trunk site, highlighting several critical considerations. Top among these is the need to make a firm and informed decision about the fate of the superstructure.

Committee members stressed the importance of fiscal responsibility, in up-front investments and long-term operating costs. They value integrating affordable, high-quality amenities that benefit the community. Clear delineation of operational roles and cost-sharing responsibilities for the shared facility is essential. The committee underscored the need to include revenue-generating elements. This includes balancing market-rate housing with affordable and accessible housing, while maintaining greenspace and ensuring the development aligns with the city's social and environmental goals.

Members are concerned about future risks, like the lack of binding commitments that ensure current decisions are upheld by future councils. There was notable concern about the conflicting findings across consultant reports and a need for a consolidated, consistent summary of technical and environmental studies to support decision-making. Public engagement on the site's interim use could raise unrealistic expectations. The potential for over-reliance on nonprofit partners at the expense of revenue generation was also noted. Affordable and accessible housing targets need definition through engagement with not-for-profit builders.

Despite risks, several opportunities were identified. These included exploring public fundraising models, securing grants, expanding winter tourism, and incorporating innovative uses such as an AI learning centre or cultural attractions. The idea of a "big draw" remains important, though undefined, and may be key to economic return and vibrancy.

Opinions on the superstructure's future remain divided. Some support full demolition for flexibility, while others advocate for partial preservation due to its unique architectural character. The heritage value of the site, some highlighted, could be preserved through design rather than structural retention.

Committee members stressed the need for strategically using the site during the interim and for continued engagement, including with Indigenous communities. Questions remain about the project's overall funding model, the role of private developers, and how this site fits within Stratford's broader planning framework. Clarity on these issues will be essential for meaningful progress.

Highlights of feedback, by category

Decision-making

- Clarify the future of the superstructure (partial retention, full demolition, or adaptive reuse). *See also [Heritage, below](#).*
- Ensure fiscal responsibility when considering long-term operations and capital investments.
- Prioritize affordable, quality amenities and community benefits.
- Clearly define who's responsible for operating and sustaining shared spaces.
- Ensure outcomes align with the city's social and environmental responsibilities.

Development considerations

- Balance affordable and revenue-generating housing.
- Optimize land use and maintain meaningful green space.
- Position the site to serve as a central hub that complements downtown.

- Identify a “big draw” element to attract residents and tourists.
- Preserve flexibility to act on current “knowns” while deferring parts pending future data.

Risks identified

- Future councils may not uphold commitments—explore contractual safeguards.
- Overemphasis on nonprofit use could undercut financial sustainability.
- Mixed confidence in current consultant findings; would like an analysis of all technical studies and recommendations.
- Lack of clarity on affordable housing targets, costs, and non-profit builder partnerships.
- Public engagement within the superstructure may raise false expectations.

Opportunities noted

- Explore public/private fundraising models and government grants.
- Consider bold additions like a casino or an AI-focused learning centre.
- Increase winter tourism through targeted amenities or programming.

Heritage and structure

- Opinions split on whether to retain or demolish the superstructure.
- Some see partial retention as awkward; others value its unique aesthetic.
- Heritage can be honoured through design rather than preserving the structure itself.

Interim use and engagement

- Use the site for select events where suitable; avoid programming for its own sake.
- Ensure any short-term activity doesn’t confuse long-term intentions.
- Prioritize clear, ongoing engagement—especially with Indigenous communities.

Outstanding questions

- What is the current development budget and projected funding sources?
- What share of costs will be the City’s vs. private developers?
- Can site layout be aligned with broader city master plans and growth strategies?

Next Steps

The Ad Hoc Committee will discuss the scenarios at their June 16 meeting and choose one scenario for SVEC Group to explore detailed costing information. SVEC Group will share its Phase 2 evaluation findings with the Committee later this summer.

Appendix

Analysis of all Committee feedback

1. What factors or trade-offs are most important to consider in scenario planning?

- Decide the fate of the superstructure (see also [question 4 below](#)).
 - How might bylaws be impacted depending on whether the whole structure is demolished vs. all or partly kept?
- Fiscal responsibility in decisions and long-term commitments
 - Improvements to the city's quality of life/amenities are affordable
 - Clear responsibility for operations, expenses, and potential losses, once any shared spaces are open
 - Need a better understanding of what those future operational costs will be compared with the overall development investment.
 - Economic benefits of improvements are valued higher than pure costs
 - Development costs are optimized for the return on investments made
 - Generate return on investment/costs now, as it will take time for the economy to rebound, including using housing solutions that attract more workers to the city
- Optimized community spaces (both shared facilities and greenspace)
 - Addresses community needs by integrating amenities that are also solutions (e.g., vulnerable housing, recreation, learning/library)
 - Stratford's environmental and social obligations are met
 - Balance affordable/accessible housing while still allowing for revenue-generating housing as well
- Optimized overall land use
 - Land is not "overdeveloped," and green space for recreation is given its due (not just non-use landscaping)
 - Take advantage of the central location in the city to leverage transit/active transportation hubs and meet the growth of the city for decades to come.
 - The final scheme should have a "big draw" to get crowds to the city core (residents and tourists). Don't lose an element of fun in the outcomes.
 - Quantifying an acceptable ratio of public-use spaces (parks, shared facilities, amenities) in the new neighbourhood to private, revenue-generating amenities is divisive due to cost vs. principles.

- What can we responsibly start work on now, using confirmed info on hand, which preserves areas where work can start when more is known, even if there is a broad time gap between these two points?

2. Are there any additional opportunities or risks that should be taken into account?

POTENTIAL RISKS

- Decision-making process
 - Don't rush decisions without due consideration
 - Avoid thinking that "easy" and "cheap" are the best solutions for the project.
 - Risk that the future Council will not meet commitments made now. There's no mechanism of reassurance/enforcement. Could there be contracts, etc., to mitigate this risk? Approving plans and bylaws doesn't guarantee this.
 - Decision making, actions won't respect partnership (such as with the YMCA), autonomy, as organizations.
 - Ongoing risk that decisions to build and/or renovate routinely exceed budget, and/or have unforeseen problems, despite careful and informed decision-making. What's the strategy for this likelihood?
 - Overemphasis on non-profit occupancy of the site vs. revenue-generating occupation
- Optic that there are contradicting findings across various consultant reports. Clarify what's universally accepted as sound in the superstructure, vs. unsalvageable.
 - Need a summary of all the various environmental, consulting and engineering studies completed since the beginning of the acquisition (in one document/place).
 - Findings/presentations are analyzed for consistency, and from that, generate confirmed universal recommendations.
 - Opinion on SVEC's findings is divided (very supportive/neutral/critical)
- The "big draw attraction" (mentioned above) hasn't been defined as a core element of the final plan. This puts it at risk of being overlooked as an eventual revenue stream.
- Housing affordability is at risk since we've not engaged with a not-for-profit builder to get specifics for the balance of affordable/accessible units vs. market-rate units.
 - What do those numbers/prospective rent rates look like?
 - How do we define affordable and/or accessible units?

- A risk is that continuing to show the public the site/superstructure doesn't manage expectations if the structure is ultimately demolished.
 - It may be a "novelty" to see inside, but it may not attract people to return to the site.
 - No guarantee that a seasonal activity program will improve public opinion or be a cost-effective crowd draw.

POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES

- Conduct professional fundraising to help offset investment, like the initiative to raise money for the Tom Patterson Theatre.
- What are potential federal/provincial funding streams, or other grant sources?
- Offer more winter activities to boost Stratford's tourism. Perhaps a casino that generates revenue for the city (could this be the "big draw"?).
- Could AI be of more use in the project's operations?
 - Create a center of learning for smart (digital/AI) entrepreneurship, high school training

3. How well does this work reflect the vision and guiding principles the Committee helped shape? Are there ways the connection could be made clearer for the Council and the public?

- Project vision is not linked to milestone timing/caps, which will hinder efficient progress.
- Overemphasis on parking counters accepted environmental key principle
- Unclear how work on the GTR site fits into the overall city Master Planning and growth

4. The idea of reusing the Grand Trunk superstructure as outdoor public space is a new one. How well do you think this concept supports the idea of preserving the historical value of the building? Are there features or uses that could help strengthen the connection to heritage and community value?

Generally, opinion on whether to retain part or all of the structure vs. demolishing it for the benefit of a "clean start" is divided. It's unclear if the past choice to retain as much as possible is still valid, given SVEC's evaluation.

HISTORIC VALUE

- Need to balance cost vs. benefits of keeping part of the structure or demolishing it all to start fresh with the best room for options, and find different ways to honour heritage. We can honour heritage with clever materials, passionate design and expressive architecture elements that are thematic, meaningful, deliberate, but modern—and still have impact.
- Acknowledge that nostalgia is not a sentiment to make fiscally responsible decisions on.
- An actual relic locomotive on site may be excessive and doesn't speak to the future of Canadian transportation.
- Demolishing the structure makes Stratford seem bland, like every other generic Ontario city.
- "The impressive and cathedral-like expanse of the interior space is stunning, and what distinguishes this building today."

STRATEGIC LOCATION

- Consideration should be given to whether this site should ultimately be an extension of the downtown. Or do we want it to be only a transition point between the downtown core and the surrounding neighbourhoods?
 - Perhaps removing all or most of the structure will improve movement from other city areas to the core, through the whole site.

STRUCTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Retaining only one-third of the structure will overall "look ridiculous."
- The choice to have an open roof vs. using technology to cover the final structure in a new roof is still unresolved for some.
 - Can't cranes access the structure before the roof is reconstructed?
 - Haven't other railway structure roofs been modernly restored?
 - Suggestion made that the roof should be made into/from Sunpanels

STRUCTURE-USE IDEAS

- If the ground floor of whatever structure is retained becomes partially covered parking, perhaps the mezzanine could be restored for use as retail and/or gathering space?

- If the structure stays up but changes to open air + parking, might it not be another idea to route the road through it instead of taking away from other developable land?
- An open-air theatre or outdoor venue for gatherings, but revenue-generating for the city
- Markets, a skating rink, public art, cultural use, and more parking are supported ideas.
- City's municipal affairs (offices, Chamber, etc.) should relocate to a new, purpose-built building on the site. Then, the current city hall building is converted to a combined market/maker/retail space with social or recreation space.

5. What rationale do you have which reflects your support or opposition to the direction being proposed for interim use of the Grand Trunk site, particularly the summer programming idea(s).

- Comments reflect the similar points in [Question 2 above](#) about managing public expectations on the structure's future.
- Support for using the current grounds for an event when it's a good fit, but doesn't have sufficient space to happen elsewhere in the city. In other words, some wiggle room to take advantage of the space rather than losing a good event opportunity if the location works.
- The Activations budget may be better used in determining longer-term use of grounds instead of activities covering only 1-2 summer seasons.
 - Mixed opinions about the costs and benefits of a summer program for the sake of resident entertainment, without clearly defined engagement outcomes.
 - Support for developing a good strategy and implementation plan first for using the grounds effectively for public benefit over the next 1-3 years.

ENGAGEMENT

- Community engagement continues to be critical and is widely supported by committee members.
 - Opinion is divided on whether funds are better spent on studies and getting the Master Plan right, rather than further interim activities on site.
 - Straightforward information flow to the public using outreach should be favoured to show progress, vs. miscellaneous site activities in terms of funds invested.

- More engagement with Indigenous people in Huron-Perth, and include an element in the design/final site that honours their local story.

6. What concerns or considerations do you think the Committee should address before these activities proceed?

- Need a better understanding of the city's portion of development cost against the contribution of private, for-profit developers who will take on other aspects of the final Plan.
- The committee and the city need to be nimble and adapt to get things accomplished when it comes to making use of the site until true construction begins.

7. What questions come to mind that you think should be explored in proceeding to finalize a plan reflecting recommendations the Council consider in how to proceed with renewing these vital lands, including the shops building?

- Where are all the various revenue streams predicted to come from to cover all the development aspects?
- What's the current development budget, reflecting those predicted revenue streams?
- Suggestion to meet for brainstorming on this topic

Miscellaneous:

- Reduce the focus of the current development project to what's needed between now and 5-10 years to better get to work being done.
- Desire for the working groups to gather and just talk it out. Less document production and paperwork to sift through.
- Not clear internally (across Committee) how much consultation has been done with the stakeholders...or this isn't seen as transparent
 - Unclear how much consultation has happened with other cities that undertook similar development projects, and what are their lessons learned?