



PORT COLBORNE

What's Next for Port Colborne's Grain Terminal?

Engagement Results

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Introduction

On February 26, 2025, the City of Port Colborne launched a comprehensive public engagement campaign to collect public feedback on what's next for the Port Colborne Grain Terminal. The campaign included:

1. Online survey
2. Paper Survey
3. Drop-in style open houses

This document serves as a summary of the results of the engagement activities.

Please note that personal information collected during this public engagement project was collected under the authority of the *Municipal Act, 2001* and will be used to help Council make decisions related to what's next for the Port Colborne Grain Terminal. The disclosure of this information is governed by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Questions related to the collection of this information may be directed to the Deputy City Clerk at 905-228-8118 or deputyclerk@portcolborne.ca

Survey

Overview

The Port Colborne Grain Terminal was in operation for more than 125 years, connecting products from the Great Lakes region to the global market. The Grain Terminal ceased operations as of December 31, 2024. The survey was designed to gather feedback from residents on the future of the Port Colborne Grain Terminal, including:

- Future uses for the Grain Terminal building
- Development possibilities for the current location of the Grain Terminal
- Funding strategies for the Grain Terminal, including demolition, restarting operations and development

The survey was distributed online and in paper format.

The survey was launched February 26, 2025, and closed March 21, 2025. The survey was promoted through multiple channels to maximize reach and participation. These included the City's website, social media platforms, digital advertising, and media outreach.

Paper surveys were available at City Hall, Vale Health & Wellness Centre, and Port Colborne Public Library.

Residents were also invited to two drop-in style open houses, which took place March 5, 2025 from 2 to 6 p.m. and March 6, 2025 from 3 to 7 p.m.

This document summarizes results and feedback gathered from both the surveys and open houses.

Quick Facts

- 549 surveys were completed (515 online and 34 paper)
 - City Hall: 4
 - Port Colborne Public Library: 14
 - Vale Health and Wellness Centre: 5
 - Open houses: 11
- 646 open-field comments to analyze and categorize
- Average time to complete the survey: 4 minutes (online survey)
- Estimated completion rate: 80% (online survey)

Overall Survey Observations

Support for keeping the Grain Terminal operational

- 55% of respondents are either extremely or very familiar with the Grain Terminal
- 80% of respondents believe the Grain Terminal contributes to Port Colborne culture and character
- 52% of respondents believe it is either extremely or very important for the Grain Terminal to resume operations
- 62% of respondents support finding a new tenant and re-leasing the Grain Terminal

Relationship with private developers

- 53% of respondents support a partnership with a private entity if the Grain Terminal were to be demolished for commercial or industrial purposes
- 40% of respondents support a partnership with a private entity if the Grain Terminal were to be demolished for use as a public space
- 44% of respondents support a partnership with a private entity to fund the development of a public space at the property

Concern about raising property taxes for development and funding

- Only 7% of respondents support raising property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne to fund the development of a public space at the property
- Only 9% of respondents support raising property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne to fund the demolishing of the Grain Terminal if it were to be used as a public space

- Only 5% of respondents support raising property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne to fund the demolishing of the Grain Terminal if it were to be used for commercial or industrial purposes

In-Person Open Houses

Overview

Two drop-in style in-person open houses were held at the Vale Health & Wellness Centre in the Golden Puck Room. The sessions were on:

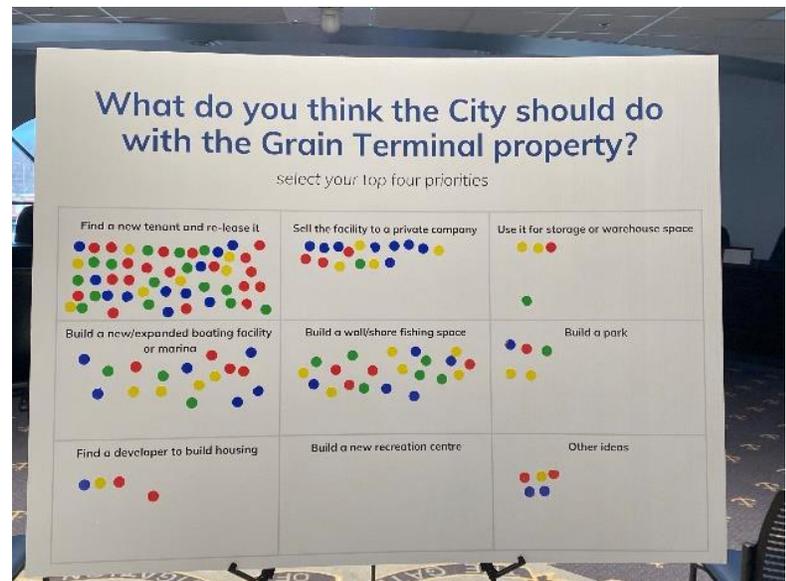
- Wednesday, March 5 from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- Thursday, March 6 from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

A total of 94 people attended the open houses

A variety of information boards with photos and question prompts were displayed around the room, encouraging conversation and discussion with attendees.

Information about the history of the Grain Terminal was also available, with a long-term employee of the terminal there to respond to inquiries. Photo boards displaying the location of Grain Terminal, and its surrounding area, were posted for attendees to reference.

An interactive station asked residents to vote for what they believe should be done with the Grain Terminal property. Participants received four sticky dots and could vote for the options they preferred. As seen in the photo to the right, residents voted most frequently to find a new tenant and re-lease it.



Overall Open House Observations

During the open houses, a variety of comments and concerns were collected. These included, but were not limited to:

- Continuing to use the Grain Terminal for its intended purpose, as it adds jobs to the community and is an important part of the economic supply chain for farmers in Ontario.

- The historical significance of the Grain Terminal, which is locally referred to as the “shrinking mill” due to an optical illusion the building creates.
- Many residents brought forward ideas on how to use the building without demolition, such as painting a mural on it or using it to screen “boat-in” movie nights.
- Some residents suggested turning the area into a public-use space, including options like a hotel, museum or restaurants.
- Moderate support for using the location for housing was shared by residents, many noting that housing should be accompanied by updates like a pier or fishing space.
- Suggestions to look to Buffalo for ideas on how to repurpose the Grain Terminal were also made. Buffalo has been renovating and repurposing grain terminals along the Niagara River and Lake Erie for some time.

Summary of Survey Results by Question

Responses to survey questions are outlined below. Open-ended questions include a summary of the responses received. A full list of open-ended responses received has been posted on www.portcolborne.ca/grainterminal

Please note, staff used Microsoft CoPilot to help provide summaries and detect trends in the 646 open-ended responses received.

Q1. Where do you live?

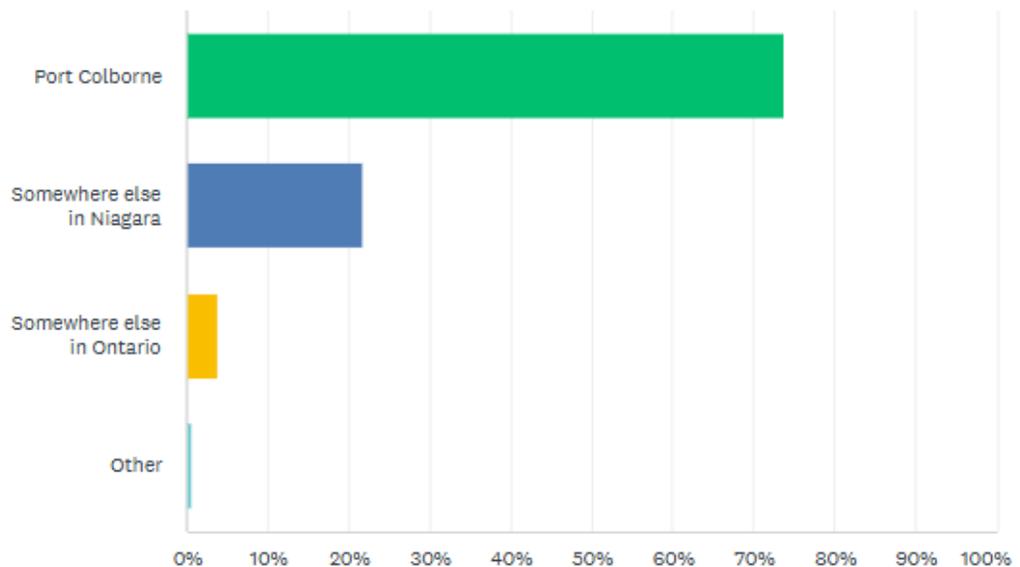
Answer Choices	Responses
Port Colborne	404
Somewhere else in Niagara	119
Somewhere else in Ontario	21
Other	4
Answered	548
Skipped	1

74% of respondents were from Port Colborne.

95% of respondents were either from Port Colborne or somewhere else in Niagara.

Where do you live?

Answered: 548 Skipped: 1



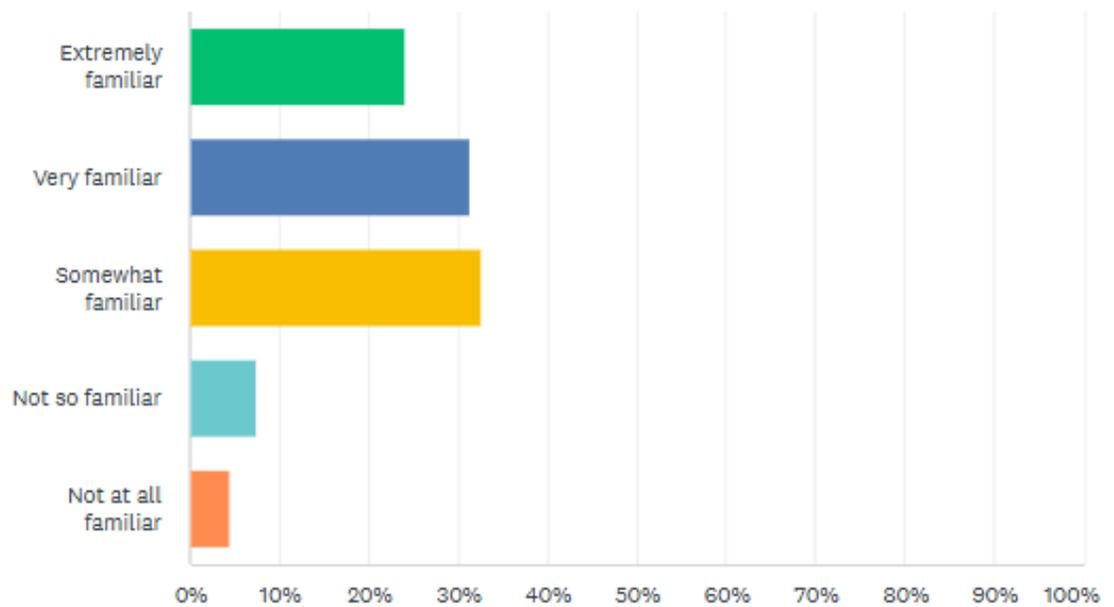
Q2. How familiar are you with the grain terminal?

Answer Choices	Responses
Extremely familiar	132
Very familiar	171
Somewhat familiar	179
Not so familiar	41
Not at all familiar	24
Answered	547
Skipped	2

88% of respondents had some level of familiarity with the grain terminal.

How familiar are you with the grain terminal?

Answered: 547 Skipped: 2



Q3. Considering its location near the Welland Canal and Sugarloaf Harbour Marina, do you think the grain terminal contributes to Port Colborne's culture and character?

Answer Choices

Yes	439
No	68
I'm not sure	41

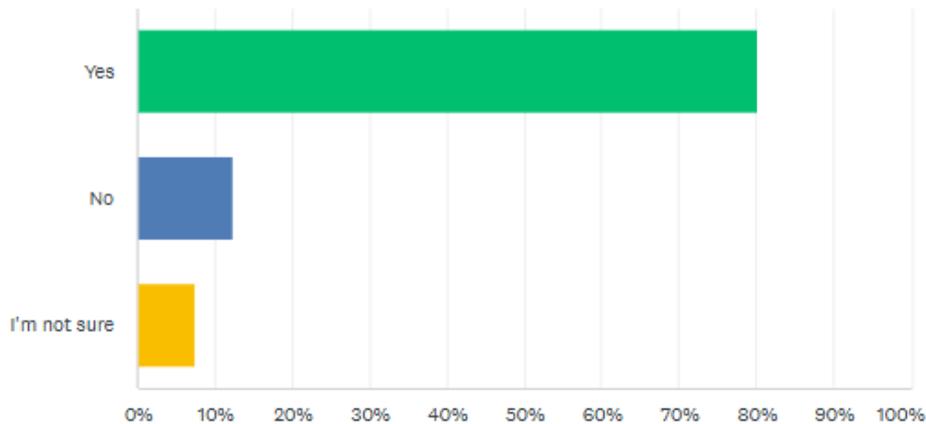
Responses

Answered	548
Skipped	1

80% of respondents believe the grain terminal contributes to Port Colborne's culture and character.

Considering its location near the Welland Canal and Sugarloaf Harbour Marina, do you think the grain terminal contributes to Port Colborne's culture and character?

Answered: 548 Skipped: 1



Q4. How important is it to you that the grain terminal continue to operate as a hub for receiving, storing, and transporting grain?

Answer Choices

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not so important
- Not important at all

Responses

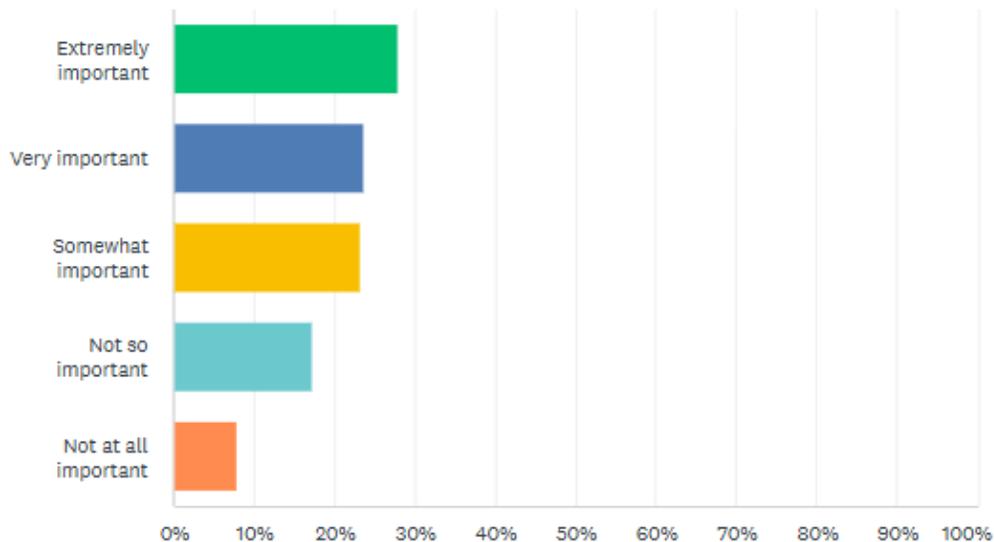
- 151
- 127
- 125
- 93
- 43

Answered 539
Skipped 10

75% of respondents believe there is some level of importance for the grain terminal to continue to operate a hub for receiving, storing and transporting grain.

How important is it to you that the grain terminal continue to operate as a hub for receiving, storing, and transporting grain?

Answered: 539 Skipped: 10



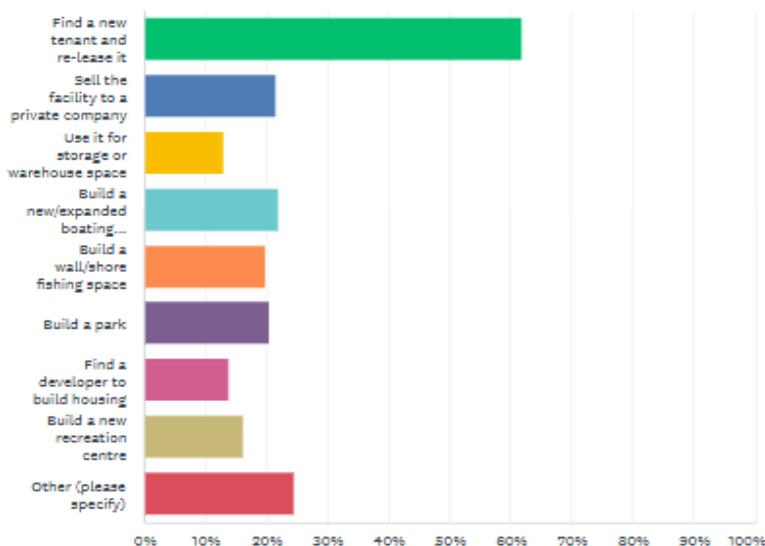
Q5. The previous tenant has now moved out of the Grain Terminal and the facility is currently empty. What do you think the City should do with this property/facility in the future? (Select all that apply)

Answer Choices	Responses
Find a new tenant and re-lease it	337
Sell the facility to a private company	117
Use it for storage or warehouse space	71
Build a new/expanded boating facility or marina	120
Build a wall/shore fishing space	108
Build a park	111
Find a developer to build housing	76
Build a new recreation centre	88
Other (please specify)	134
Answered	545
Skipped	4

62% of respondents would like to see the grain terminal re-leased for continued use as a grain terminal.

The previous tenant has now moved out of the Grain Terminal and the facility is currently empty. What do you think the City should do with this property/facility in the future? (Select all that apply)

Answered: 545 Skipped: 4



Question 5 also allowed for respondents to offer “other” answers.

134 comments were received. A summary of the responses is shown below.

Q5 Open-Ended Response Summary	
Preservation and Historical Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many comments emphasize the historical importance of the Grain Terminal and suggest preserving it as a landmark or museum. • Ideas include creating a museum, maintaining the building's historical integrity, and using it for tours.
Public and Recreational Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several suggestions focus on converting the terminal into a public space, such as a park, marina, or other recreational area.
Commercial and Mixed-Use Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some comments advocate for commercial development, including retail spaces, restaurants, and hotels. • Ideas include transforming the terminal into a multi-use centre with vendors, restaurants, or a hotel, and developing it into a tourist hub with shops and recreational facilities.
Industrial and Employment Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of comments suggest finding a new tenant to continue using the terminal for grain storage or other industrial purposes. • Proposals include leasing the terminal to create income for the city, finding a foreign direct investor, and maintaining its use for agricultural purposes.
Housing and Residential Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are mixed opinions on residential development, with some comments supporting the idea of building condos or affordable housing, while others strongly oppose it. • Suggestions include developing high-end condos, affordable housing, or mixed-use residential spaces.
Common Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of Control: Some comments express concern about losing control of the property if it is sold to private developers.

Q5 Open-Ended Response Summary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental and Structural Issues: Concerns about the building's unique design and the artificial land it sits on, which may present challenges for repurposing.• Impact on Local Community: Comments highlight the importance of considering the impact on the local community, including noise, dust, and traffic from potential new uses.
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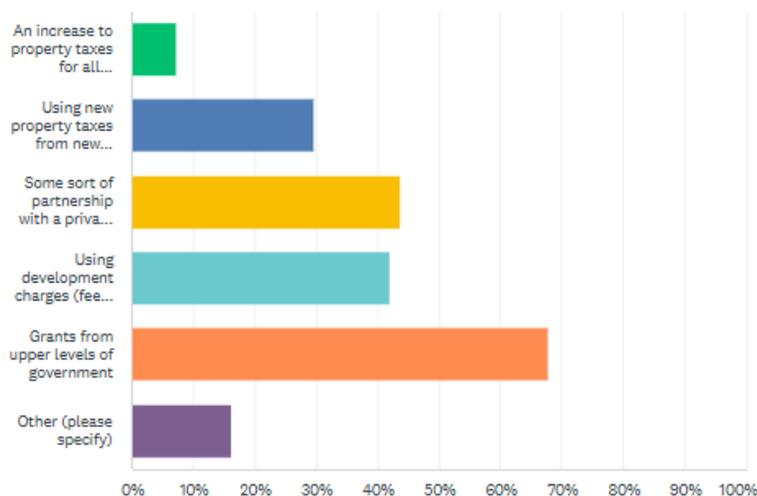
Q6. If the grain terminal property was to be used as a public space in the future (i.e. a park or other publicly accessible area), how do you think the City should fund the project? Choose all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses
An increase to property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne	38
Using new property taxes from new developments in Port Colborne	156
Some sort of partnership with a private entity	231
Using development charges (fees charged to developers who build new homes or businesses in the community)	222
Grants from upper levels of government	358
Other (please specify)	85
Answered	528
Skipped	21

68% of respondents would like to see funding for a public space development come from grants from upper levels of government.

If the grain terminal property was to be used as a public space in the future (i.e. a park or other publicly accessible area), how do you think the City should fund the project? Choose all that apply.

Answered: 528 Skipped: 21



Question 6 also allowed for respondents to offer “other” answers.

85 comments were received. A summary of the responses is shown below.

Q6 Open-Field Response Summary	
Revenue Generation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarging the marina to accommodate larger vessels and generate long-term revenue. • Partnerships with private companies to maintain the area as a public park. • Revenue models involving conventions, weddings, events, rentals to retail tenants, and festivals.
Opposition to Tax Increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong sentiment against raising property taxes.
Alternative Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants and access fees. • Fundraising initiatives. • Donations from local businesses. • Admission fees for specific activities.
Commercial Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference to keep the grain terminal as a commercial site. • Concerns about converting farmland to residential areas. • Suggestions to bring in other industries to broaden the tax base.
Public Space Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns due to the location and transport trucks. • Liability and high costs associated with converting the area to public space.
Alternative Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestions for multi-use spaces combining parks with residential and commercial areas. • Ideas for developing a historical community/visitor site similar to Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto.

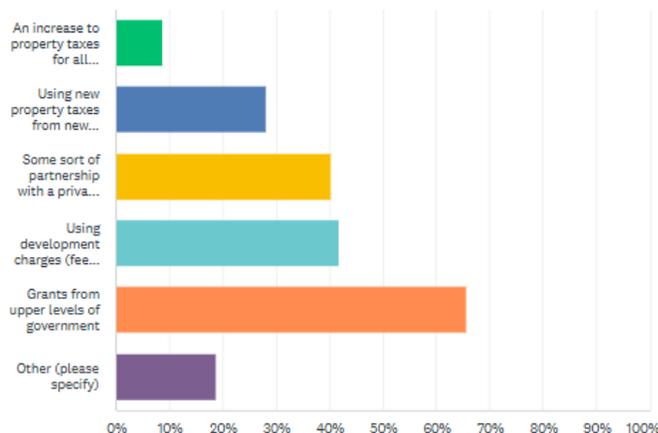
Q7. If the grain terminal property required demolition, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$12 million. How do you think the City should fund the expense, if the space would be used as a public space (i.e. a park or other publicly accessible area?) Choose all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses
An increase to property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne	46
Using new property taxes from new developments in Port Colborne	149
Some sort of partnership with a private entity	214
Using development charges (fees charged to developers who build new homes or businesses in the community)	221
Grants from upper levels of government	348
Other (please specify)	100
Answered	530
Skipped	19

66% of respondents thought grants from upper levels of government should fund the demolition – for public space use.

If the grain terminal property required demolition, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$12 million. How do you think the City should fund the expense, if the space would be used as a public space (i.e. a park or other publicly accessible area?) Choose all that apply.

Answered: 530 Skipped: 19



Question 7 also allowed for respondents to offer “other” answers.

100 comments were received. A summary of the responses is shown below.

Q7 Open-Ended Response Summary	
Opposition to Demolition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many respondents strongly oppose the demolition, citing historical significance and the high cost. • Suggestions to preserve or refurbish the terminal instead of demolishing it.
Funding Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Increase in Taxes: A common sentiment is that property taxes are already high, and additional taxes should not be used to fund the demolition. • Alternative Funding: Ideas include using funds already set aside, seeking federal and provincial grants, and exploring public-private partnerships. • Private Investment: Some suggest selling the property to a developer who would cover the demolition costs.
Alternative Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Space: If the terminal is demolished, the space could be used for parks, marinas, or other public areas. • Adaptive Reuse: Proposals to repurpose the terminal for community and economic benefits, such as event spaces, observation decks, or commercial development.

Q8. If the grain terminal property required demolition, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$12 million. How do you think the City should fund the expense, if the space was to be used for commercial or industrial purposes? Choose all that apply.

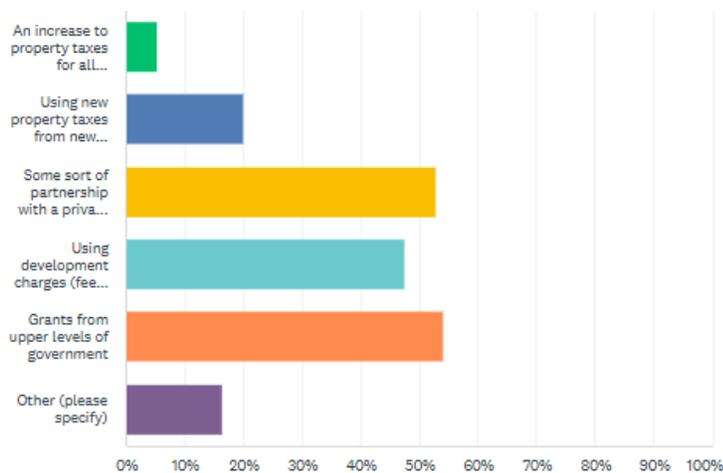
Answer Choices	Responses
An increase to property taxes for all residents of Port Colborne	28
Using new property taxes from new developments in Port Colborne	105
Some sort of partnership with a private entity	277
Using development charges (fees charged to developers who build new homes or businesses in the community)	249
Grants from upper levels of government	283
Other (please specify)	86
Answered	523
Skipped	26

54% of respondents thought grants from upper levels of government should fund the demolition – for commercial or industrial space use.

53% of respondents support a private

If the grain terminal property required demolition, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$12 million. How do you think the City should fund the expense, if the space was to be used for commercial or industrial purposes? Choose all that apply.

Answered: 523 Skipped: 26



Question 8 also allowed for respondents to offer “other” answers.

86 comments were received. A summary of the responses is shown below.

Q8 Open-Ended Response Summary	
Funding Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial/Industrial Funding: Several comments suggest that commercial or industrial entities should fund the demolition. • Tax Concerns: Many respondents are against using taxpayer money, citing already high taxes • Alternative Funding: Suggestions include using funds already set aside, federal and provincial grants, public-private partnerships, and contributions from other investors.
Opposition to Demolition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage and Preservation: A significant number of comments emphasize the terminal's historical importance and advocate for its preservation. • Adaptive Reuse: Ideas for repurposing the structure include converting it into living and commercial spaces, event spaces, or tourist attractions. • Economic and Community Benefits: Some suggest that preserving and repurposing the terminal could generate new tax revenues and create jobs.
Miscellaneous Suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sell the Property: Some comments propose selling the property and having the buyer cover demolition costs. • Focus on Other Issues: A few respondents believe the City should prioritize other projects

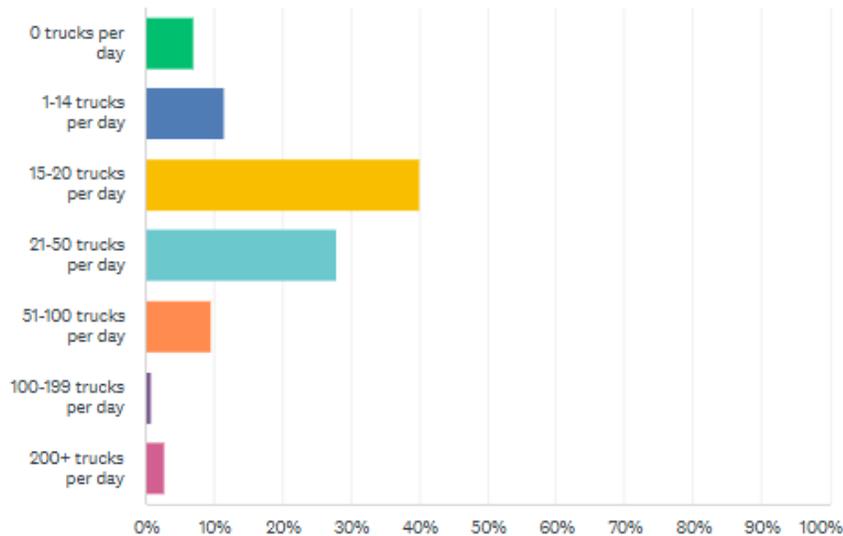
Q9. If the property was used for commercial or industrial purposes, it could require additional commercial truck traffic to move goods on and off the property. In recent years, the previous tenant had around 15-20 trucks per day visiting the site. In your opinion, what would be an appropriate number of trucks per day for this location?

Answer Choices	Responses
0 trucks per day	37
1-14 trucks per day	61
15-20 trucks per day	213
21-50 trucks per day	148
51-100 trucks per day	51
100-199 trucks per day	5
200+ trucks per day	15
Answered	530
Skipped	19

40% of respondents believe 15-20 trucks per day is an appropriate amount of traffic, while 96% of respondents would like to see under 100 trucks per day.

If the property was used for commercial or industrial purposes, it could require additional commercial truck traffic to move goods on and off the property. In recent years, the previous tenant had around 15-20 trucks per day visiting the site. In your opinion, what would be an appropriate number of trucks per day for this location?

Answered: 530 Skipped: 19



Q10. Is there anything else you'd like to share with us about your vision for the future of Port Colborne's grain terminal?

Answered 241

Skipped 308

Question 10 was an open-ended question which allowed respondents to fill in comments. 241 comments were provided.

A full list of comments is available at www.portcolborne.ca/grainterminal

Overall, respondents expressed that the grain terminal holds historical significance and is a notable landmark in Port Colborne. There was support for re-leasing the building and continuing operations as a grain terminal. There was some support for developing the land into a public-use area or tourist area. Some respondents expressed concerns regarding the use of taxpayer money to fund the demolishing or development of the grain terminal property.

Q10 Open-Ended Response Summary	
Preservation and Historical Significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some comments emphasized the historical significance of the grain terminal and suggested preserving it as a tourist attraction or museum. Commenters proposed painting murals or improving its appearance to enhance its value as a landmark.
Economic and Agricultural Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several comments supported maintaining the grain terminal for its original purpose, highlighting its importance to local farmers and the agricultural industry. Suggestions included leasing the property to new tenants or using it for commercial purposes to generate revenue and create jobs.
Alternative Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ideas for alternative uses included converting the property into a marina, hotel, conference centre, or residential development. Some comments proposed creating public spaces, parks, or recreational areas to benefit the community.

Q10 Open-Ended Response Summary	
Concerns About Taxes and Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many comments expressed concerns about the potential increase in property taxes to fund any changes to the grain terminal.• There were suggestions to avoid using taxpayer money and to seek private investment or grants for redevelopment.