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Abbotsforward: The OCP Process



A Creative and Inclusive 2-Year Process

This OCP brings together almost two years of background research, growth scenarios, and broad community engagement with stakeholder groups and Abbotsford residents; and iterative review with City Council, staff across all departments, and a Citizen Advisory Commission.

Abbotsforward was designed to create a plan for tomorrow, not yesterday or today. It embraced the power of a plan making process as a catalyst, and is defined by broad engagement and robust technical due diligence over four stages of work.

Figure I.1: Abbotsforward Process



Broad Community Engagement

One of the guiding principles for the OCP update was to undertake a robust engagement process. The engagement in Abbotsforward was highly successful for two main reasons:

- **The engagement effectively reached a broad and diverse audience:** A wide variety of opportunities were provided for engagement throughout the process, resulting in several thousand residents coming into meaningful contact with Abbotsforward, with more than 7,000 distinct interactions in which participants directly provided input. This was the largest engagement in the City's history. Based on demographic data collected through online surveys, the engagement process included voices representing: all age groups; females and males equally; diverse ethnic backgrounds and languages; residents living in all areas across urban and rural Abbotsford; and people who live, work, study, and/or own a business in Abbotsford.
- **Strong themes emerged in the community input:** While there were many different views, as is the case in any engagement process, strong themes emerged that transcended engagement activities and demographic groups. These themes are the building blocks of the vision, big ideas, and big moves throughout this Plan. Detailed information can be found here: www.abbotsforward.ca.

Figure I.2: A Snapshot of Abbotsforward Engagement Activities and Participation



Technical Due Diligence: Doing the Math

OCPs across Canada contain visions and images of vibrant communities. Policy statements talk of prosperity, walkability, and health. They talk of compactness, completeness, connectedness, sustainability, efficiency, and distinctiveness of place. Yet many cities often struggle to achieve the outcomes they envisioned; there is a disconnect between what residents aspire to, what a plan projects, and what is seen on the ground.

The Abbotsforward process was committed to bridging this disconnect by taking a different approach and beginning with the end in mind. Baseline information about existing urban conditions was collected and analysed against demonstrated thresholds required to achieve desired outcomes.

For example, mobility choice (the ability to walk, bike, and take transit as a ‘delightful’ mode of transportation) was identified early in the process as a priority among residents who participated. As such, existing land use and urban design conditions in Abbotsford were evaluated against known thresholds for land use mix, density, and street connectivity required to support walking, biking, and transit. This information provided a realistic snapshot of where Abbotsford is today while illuminating what is needed in order to achieve desired outcomes tomorrow. The report can be found here: www.abbotsforward.ca.

This baseline information was shared with the community to inform the engagement and, combined with the public input that followed, was used to develop three growth scenarios. Each growth scenario was tested for its real world performance, using indicators that captured different elements of the community’s vision. These ranged from infrastructure costs such as roads and pipes, to the number of residents who would be able to walk to an economically viable neighbourhood grocery store.

These learnings comprised an integral part of the engagement in the final stages of the process, and constituted the basis for a final preferred urban structure. Along with the community vision, this urban structure is the foundation of the OCP.

