



# CUSTOMER CULTURE strategy

2019-2022

An aerial photograph of Abbotsford, British Columbia, showing a large lake in the foreground, residential areas with colorful buildings, and mountains in the background under a cloudy sky.

**We make it easy for our  
community members to access,  
learn about, and use our services.**



**Customer Experience Excellence is a core capability through which we fulfill our obligations to Council's Strategic Vision & Mission.**

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## Introduction

The City of Abbotsford serves more than 150,000 Abbotsford residents and has a diverse and broad customer base. From the new business owner who visits City Hall to apply for a business license, to the parent enrolling their children in recreation classes, to the developer considering an investment in our community, the City of Abbotsford serves many people each and every day. Our staff interact with thousands of residents and stakeholders face-to-face, and even more people receive City services on a daily basis without any direct interactions with our staff.

Providing service excellence and meeting the diverse needs of all of our customers is a top focus for everyone at the City of Abbotsford. We strive to provide a positive experience for everyone we interact with and fulfill our Mission to continually improve the quality of life within our community. Through the delivery of key services for current and future generations, we will meet Council's Strategic Plan cornerstones of building a Vibrant Economy and a Complete Community for all in Abbotsford.

This Customer Culture Strategy sets out a path for how the City's journey towards customer service excellence will progress over the next five years.





## Our Customer Culture Strategic Intent:

Customer Experience Excellence is a core capability through which we fulfill our obligations to Council's Strategic Vision & Mission.

## Our Customer Experience Mission:

We make it easy for our community members to access, learn about and use our services.

## We do this by:

### Being accountable:

being transparent, honest, consistent and exceptionally good at communicating.

### Acting in support of our collective commitments:

having a deep understanding of the interrelated nature of all of our services, and supporting each other to be successful in providing excellent service delivery.

### Knowing our business:

fostering a deep understanding of our business and respecting the diverse skills, knowledge and experience of our staff.

### Making continuous improvement a way of life:

being experts in customer experience, process management and innovation.

### Being responsive:

going above and beyond to ensure information and services are accessible.

## Our Big Customer Experience Goals:

- Increased customer engagement and awareness
- Customer focused processes
- Improved customer satisfaction



## Strategy One

### Purposeful and United Leadership Toward a Customer Focused Organization

Through consistent action, communication, support and policy direction we will make it easy for our community members to access, learn about, and use our services, while fostering growth, development and an improved quality of life.

#### We do this by:

**Regular and transparent communications with all City team members about the successes and opportunities we deliver for our community members.**

**Supporting our staff by providing training and tools in the areas of:**

- ✓ Roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Helping employees to balance efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery
- ✓ Communication skills
- ✓ Facilitating rules and regulations to achieve community members outcomes
- ✓ Prioritizing initiatives that streamline processes, improve bylaw implementation and effortless experiences
- ✓ Being visible in and around areas in which we serve community members

#### Success Indicators:

1. Employees feel well informed and clear about the organization's direction.
2. Leaders are rated as helping employees to make progress in their roles.
3. Feedback from our customers and from our staff.

### Starting Immediately - High Priority

- Review our Recruitment and Job Description processes to ensure there is a focus on customer service
- Update organizational Customer Service Standards
- Develop an organizational Customer Service Policy (from the City Manager to staff)

### 3-5 years – Medium Priority

- Create internal Customer Service training program
- Engagement Action Plans implemented (results from Engagement Survey)
- Create a staff Retention Strategy

### Long Term

- Year over year analysis of staff engagement results
- Ensure every employee receives Customer Service Training as part of joining/working at the City





## Strategy Two

### Putting Community Members First In All We Do: Listen, Understand and Take Action

We act as one organization in delivering services that meet our community needs, foster growth and development, and improve quality of life.

#### We do this by:

**Investing in research and journey mapping to identify our diverse customer base and understand the individual requirements of each; including:**

- ✓ Developers – very small/small; medium; large
- ✓ Non-profit
- ✓ Public sector
- ✓ Tax payers – demographics

**Focusing our processes, policies and services on achieving community members' desired outcomes related to time, cost and quality standards.**

**Listening intently to community feedback across all communication channels.**

**Being highly responsive, innovative and aligned with good City governance in taking action to meet community needs.**

**Asking our stakeholders and colleagues for their input into our service delivery design and improvement opportunities; including, but not limited to:**

- ✓ City Council
- ✓ Council Committees
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Abbotsford Police Department
- ✓ Tourism Abbotsford
- ✓ Chamber of Commerce

#### Success Indicators:

1. Improved customer perception of the City “met my needs” (Survey: Did the City meet your needs today?).
2. Improved customer perception of their overall experience in dealing with the City (Survey: Was your overall experience with us positive?).
3. Our customers say, “The person I dealt with was knowledgeable and able to help” (Survey).

### Starting Immediately – High Priority

- Utilize our community engagement portal - Let's Talk Abbotsford – for all Strategic Service Priorities
- Implement 3 minute customer service survey kiosks in strategic locations
- Conduct follow-up Quality of Life Surveys (2020 and 2022)

### 3-5 years – Medium Priority

- Conduct Customer Service surveys by key service delivery segment
- Create Customer Journey Maps of key services

### Long Term

- Year over year analysis of customer engagement results
- Provide Conflict Resolution Training for staff that includes “Active Listening” and “Appreciative Enquiry” skills



## Strategy Three

### Equipping Our People: Helping Each Other to Succeed

We will attract, develop, empower and motivate a workforce that supports our community members in accessing, learning about and using our services, and foster growth and development and improved quality of life.

#### We will do this by:

**Ensuring strategic and “critical-to-quality” positions are always staffed.**

**Committing to appropriately resourcing improvement programs and development initiatives.**

#### Investing in a workforce planning tool to:

- ✓ identify growth impacts
- ✓ predict economic/environmental highs and lows in our work volumes
- ✓ optimize the resources required to provide/maintain a minimum standard of customer service

**Acquiring the organizational core competencies needed to develop and deliver services for today and in the future.**

**Identifying quick wins in systems and efficiencies by giving people access to digital technology.**

**Linking Customer Experience to internal organizational recognition program.**

**Open, transparent and authentic communications between staff within departments.**

#### Success Indicators:

1. Employee Engagement rating improvement year over year.
2. Reduced work-related stress leave and unplanned absences year over year (e.g. HR data - SAP).
3. Measurement of cross-functional team performance (e.g. time of processing for DART files).

### Starting Immediately – High Priority

- Upgrade HR Hire-Desk process
- Develop Succession Plans (Phase 1)
- Review Organizational Alignment for maximum effectiveness
- Conduct annual employee engagement surveys starting in 2019 to identify key issues from staff

### 3-5 years – Medium Priority

- Develop Succession Plans (Phase 2)
- Implement Leadership Development program

### Long Term

- Link performance standards to internal staff recognition program





## Strategy Four

### Update Processes, Policies and Bylaws that Make It Easy to do Business with the City of Abbotsford

We will reduce or remove barriers within our bylaws and policies to promote departments and employees being able to work as ONE organization, support our community members in accessing, learning about and using our services, and foster growth development and improved quality of life.

#### We do this by:

Placing customer experience at the heart of our business.

Establishing a process for regular review and revision of Bylaws to reflect the needs of community members. The initial Land Use Bylaws under revision/to be revised include:

- ✓ Zoning Bylaw
- ✓ Development Services Bylaw
- ✓ Development Cost Charges Bylaw (DCC)
- ✓ Tree Management Bylaw/ Urban Forest Canopy

Continuing to map our internal core processes across departments to identify improvements and take action to reduce backlogs.

Training our people in simple quality tools to enable them to identify, analyze and recommend improvements in their work processes.

#### Success Indicators:

1. Improved permit application process and reduced cycle time for permits.
2. Reduce backlogs (backlogs are measured by their age).
3. Bylaw revisions completed in the agreed time, cost and quality standards.

### Starting Immediately – High Priority

- Develop Bylaw Modernization and Compliance Strategy
- Updates to Zoning Bylaw (Phase 1)
- Update DCC Bylaw and Development Services Bylaw
- Develop Urban Forestry Strategy and Update Tree Management Bylaw
- Modernize PRC Fees & Charges
- Continue updates to Building Bylaw
- Conduct Business Process Reviews of key services
- Modernize Allocation Policy

### 3-5 years – Medium Priority

- Implement Bylaw Compliance Strategy

### Long Term

- Develop a culture of continuous improvement



## Strategy Five

### Multichannel Access to Services, Information and Support

We will expand our capacity to serve community members in accordance with their requirements through enhancing online, digital and mobile services and self-serve channels.

#### We do this by:

Developing a holistic digital strategy that evaluates current and future departmental technology needs to identify, prioritize and act on quick wins.

Ensuring uniformity in customer experience across multiple channel delivery of our services (online, in-person etc.).

Quantifying the number of channels, contacts, and transactions we handle today and predictions for the next 3 to 5 years.

Building a self service road map to guide the updating of our website with a renewed focus on search/accessibility, intuitive information layout and online applications and payments.

Enhancing our mobile service offerings to enable our on-the-move community members to interact with our services as they needed.

Pursuing options for Open Data and AI opportunities.

#### Success Indicators:

1. Increase the ratio of online/digital/mobile transactions to in-person contact.

#### High Priority

- Continue with additions to the @Abbotsford App
- Continue to improve online payment options
- Enhance public access to wifi in City facilities
- Develop a Digital Strategy

#### 3-5 years – Medium Priority

- Review key services for online development
- Implement Digital Strategy

#### Long Term

- Foster culture of online service development



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CELEBRATING  
**25**  
YEARS  
OF COMMUNITY