

CITY OF  
**Abbotsford**  
Parks, Recreation and Culture Department



Civic  
Cemeteries  
Master Plan **2007**

August 2007



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## *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The City of Abbotsford owns and operates four cemeteries: Aberdeen, Mt. Lehman, Musselwhite, and Hazelwood. The Aberdeen Cemetery is located on the Fraser Highway close to Aldergrove. The Mt. Lehman Cemetery is located on Taylor Road in the historic farming area of Mt. Lehman. The Musselwhite Cemetery is located at the intersection of Marshall Road and Old Yale Road. The Hazelwood Cemetery is located along Hazelwood Avenue just east of the Abbotsford-Mission Highway. The first three of these cemeteries are quite small, and have reached or are close to their capacity. The Hazelwood Cemetery has most of the occupied and reserved burial and cremation plots in the City of Abbotsford. Together these four cemeteries account for over 12,000 occupied or reserved gravesites or cremation plots.

This is the first comprehensive review of Abbotsford's civic cemeteries since amalgamation in 1995. The Arlington Group Planning + Architecture Inc., in association with PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc., were retained in June 2006 to develop a Civic Cemeteries Master Plan for the City of Abbotsford. The Master Plan was initiated in order to:

- Ensure the sustainable management, operation and maintenance of all four civic cemeteries;
- Ensure interment options for future residents of Abbotsford through creative use of remaining cemetery space; and
- Preserve, protect and celebrate the community history contained in these cemeteries.

Guided by the City's policies and operating objectives, the Master Plan was developed in collaboration with City of Abbotsford staff and a Steering Committee of municipal, non-profit and private sector stakeholder organizations. Interviews and meetings were also held with all of Abbotsford's funeral service providers, the two Mennonite cemeteries and the Matsqui First Nation Lands Dept. which oversees management of the Matsqui Cemetery. Meetings were held with members of the two Indo-Canadian Temples and the Hindu community. The draft report was profiled at a well attended Open House held on May 30, 2007 at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium.

Development of the City of Abbotsford Civic Cemetery Master Plan was guided by the following principles or Vision for Renewal:

- Preserve, restore and protect those aspects of the cemeteries that define their heritage character.
- Ensure future development does not disturb existing grave and cremation sites.
- Provide an array of memorialization options in response to market trends and capacity constraints.
- Enhance and diversify cemetery landscapes to include contemplative spaces, inclement weather mitigation, and way-finding measures.
- Enhance the landscapes to attract and support broader community uses such as walking, cycling, historical tours and interpretation and appropriate events.
- Ensure fiscally sustainable operations through efficient use of existing resources and diversification of services.

Historical records were reviewed to determine the heritage significance of the cemeteries. An analysis of each of the cemeteries was undertaken identifying burial plot capacity, unknown gravesites, cremation memorialization options, and possibilities for expansion. A business plan for sustainable implementation of the Master Plan was developed taking into account current financial structures; historic and current service records; capacities for new and reclaimable plots; demographic and market trends.

The average number of burials in Abbotsford Civic Cemeteries has averaged 138 over the past 12 years. Annual cremation interments have averaged 98 over the same time period. There are currently over 12,000 occupied or reserved graves or cremation plots in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries. Of this total, two thirds are located in Hazelwood Cemetery.

Of the total number of deaths in Abbotsford, approximately two thirds of the deceased are cremated while one third is buried. The proportion of burials is well above the provincial average, which is due in part to the high proportion of Mennonites who strongly prefer burial to cremation. Nevertheless the proportion of cremations in Abbotsford has been increasing and this trend is expected to continue.

In recent years, approximately 44% of all burials of deceased Abbotsford residents have taken place in one of the Abbotsford Civic Cemeteries. The Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery closely followed with 37%.

An average of only 18% of all cremation interments takes place in the City's four cemeteries. This is partly due to the fact Abbotsford offers only in-ground interment for ashes (i.e. cremated remains) of the deceased.

It is estimated that there will be total of 39,824 deaths in the Abbotsford Local Health Area over the next 30 years, based on demographic projections by BC Stats. Of this total, it is projected that slightly over three quarters of dispositions will be by cremation whereas burials will comprise less than one quarter. The four Abbotsford civic cemeteries are projected to accommodate 50% of burials and 30% of cremations in the Abbotsford Local Health Area. This will result in a demand for close to 5,000 burial graves and nearly 9,000 cremation plots over the next 30 years.

The current supply of existing and available burial graves and cremation plots is limited. Only 1,030 are available in all four cemeteries, 90% of which are located in the Hazelwood Cemetery. Approximately two thirds consist of burial graves and the remaining one third consists of cremation plots.

The potential development area of Abbotsford's civic cemeteries is significant. All cemeteries have some opportunity for additional capacity although over 93% of the total development area is located in the Hazelwood Cemetery. This includes the areas between Elmwood Drive and Park Lane as well as the two properties fronting onto Maclure Road and abutting the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery. Mt. Lehman Cemetery has the second largest expansion capacity provided two adjacent road rights-of-way can be closed and the adjacent municipal site utilized. Musselwhite Cemetery has several small undeveloped areas as well as undefined parking areas along Marshall Road which can be developed more efficiently. By developing vacant cemetery lands and better utilizing existing cemeteries, the projected demand over the next 30 years can be accommodated.

The current price structure for adult graves of seven other municipal cemeteries in the Fraser Valley Regional District and the eastern part of the Greater Vancouver Regional District is \$725.00 or 35% above the rates charged by the City of Abbotsford. The cost of cremation plots in other comparable municipalities is also well above the fees charged by the City of Abbotsford. It is recommended that the City of Abbotsford raise its rates to the municipal average to address needed capital improvements. Consideration should also be given to variable pricing for the different civic cemeteries in the City of Abbotsford. For comparison purposes, detailed fee schedules for many other municipal cemeteries in B.C. are contained in Appendix E.

## **Implementation Plan Recommendations**

### **Individual Cemeteries**

- A. Develop an individual Master Plan for each of the four municipal cemeteries that diversify the types of memorialization, details areas for expansion, and indicate planned improvements to parking, fencing, signage and planting. Site specific opportunities for each cemetery are documented in Section 3.9.1.

### **Interment Options**

- B. Consider adding new markers for existing gravesites that are unmarked and where the occupant is known.
- C. Initiate a program to identify and reclaim unknown graves in Aberdeen and Musselwhite Cemeteries.
- D. Introduce columbaria to Hazelwood and Musselwhite Cemeteries and possibly Mt. Lehman and Aberdeen as well.
- E. Explore diversified memorialization and interment options, recognizing evolving market trends. Capacity could be increased almost indefinitely through the addition of columbaria, ossuaries, scattering ground/depository and other forms of memorialization.
- F. Amend the Cemetery Bylaw to allow for different styles and sizes of markers, including uprights, and above ground interment options to allow character development and visually interesting cemeteries, particularly in Hazelwood Cemetery.

### **Operations & Maintenance**

- G. Purchase an enhanced records management database. Information on the leading Canadian product, Stone Orchard Software, is contained in Appendix H.
- H. Brief staff and contractors responsible for cemetery maintenance on techniques that will ensure the best possible long-term conservation of historic elements.
- I. Brief staff and contractors on the importance of proper conservation procedures.
- J. Involve community volunteers in the ongoing restoration of grave markers.

### **Site Enhancements**

- K. Undertake a phased series of site improvements, including new entrance gates, fencing, and other improvements.
- L. Develop an identity for the four cemeteries that relates to that of the City of Abbotsford as a whole, including replacement of the existing signage.
- M. Add wayfinding systems, maps and directional signs. This may also include historical information.
- N. Consider the addition of lighting where needed.

### **Landscaping Inventory and Future Development**

- O. Undertake a landscape inventory that will identify the scope and range of plantings in each cemetery.
- P. Develop a phased planting plan.

### **Heritage Management, Education & Interpretation**

- Q. Include the four civic cemeteries on the City of Abbotsford Heritage Register and document their historic significance.
- R. Institute an interpretive sign program. These would include site-specific signs that tell the story of the site and also identify specific elements of interest.
- S. Hold periodic walking tours of each site and publish a walking tour brochure or guide of each cemetery in cooperation with interested stakeholders.
- T. Provide improved online information.
- U. Undertake an inventory of the historic context and specific heritage elements of the civic cemeteries.

### **Crematorium**

- V. Support the concept of a community crematorium on a vacant portion of the Hazelwood Cemetery as outlined in Section 3.10.

### **Future Capacity**

- W. Review cemetery needs in 15 years and consider acquisition of new cemetery sites for future provision of cemetery services.

### **Financial**

- X. Introduce fee increases to Abbotsford's cemetery pricing with the objective of reaching the average of other comparable municipalities in conjunction with scheduled improvements.
- Y. Consider variable pricing for Abbotsford's civic cemeteries taking amenities, development costs and available supply into consideration.

# **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## **1.1 OVERVIEW**

The City of Abbotsford has a rich history, and today has a diversity of cultural heritage drawn from the land, the people who settled here, and their activities. Prior to European settlement, the Sto:lo people lived near the Fraser River and its tributaries, fishing and hunting for thousands of years. In 1808 Simon Fraser and his North West Company exploration team navigated the river named after him. By 1830 the Hudson's Bay Company had begun shipping goods they traded with the Sto:lo to homes and businesses in England. Historic water and land routes are still used today for both commercial and personal transportation.

In the late 1850s, when explorers learned of gold in the mountains by the Fraser River, the rush to stake claims brought a dynamic frontier society and economy to the Fraser Valley. As the first wave of the gold rush moved from the coast to the interior, placer miners picked up where the earlier gold rush miners left off, and among them were workers brought from China to construct the final section of the CPR line, from Yale through the Fraser Valley to Vancouver.

In 1866, the Fraser Valley and the rest of mainland British Columbia united with Vancouver Island to create one Crown Colony. About the same time, Europeans began to settle and farm in the Fraser Valley, displacing the Sto:lo onto reserves that house their descendents today. Six townships were surveyed, cleared and dyked in order to support the towns and surrounding produce, dairy and cattle farms. Maclure Road was named after one of the valley's first European settlers, John Maclure—a retired Royal Engineer—who took possession of 160 acres in 1868. The acreage was sold twice and its third owner granted a right of way to the CPR through the property. The township site plan showed the name Abbotsford, named after the CPR Western Superintendent Harry Abbott.

The four municipal cemeteries in Abbotsford followed the early patterns of European settlement. All were established between 1864 and the 1920s as detailed in Section 2.

In 1995, the Districts of Matsqui and Abbotsford (which included the previously incorporated Sumas District) were amalgamated to form the City of Abbotsford. Aberdeen, Hazelwood, and Mt Lehman Cemeteries had been in the former District of Matsqui, while Musselwhite Cemetery had been in the District of Abbotsford. These cemeteries are among the oldest in the Lower Mainland, and since Amalgamation, the City of Abbotsford has maintained and operated all four of them.

These four cemeteries are the final resting place for many of the Fraser Valley's settlers. Each cemetery is rich with the personal, family, and settlement stories of the pioneers and early settlers. Veterans from the First and Second World Wars are honoured in Hazelwood Cemetery by an entrance monument of two gatepost cairns. Aberdeen Cemetery is included in Canada's national war graves Maple Leaf Legacy Project. These historic places continue to reflect the ongoing growth and diversity of the



community. Today the cemeteries are landscaped and maintained in park-like settings with views to the nearby mountains and the Fraser Valley.

These civic cemeteries are historic resources and a cultural community asset, but they were established before any requirement for perpetual care funds. As the cemeteries age and are filled, operating and maintenance costs will increase. It is now timely to examine all four cemeteries to determine a new vision for how they will be preserved, and also serve the community into the future.

## *1.2 STUDY PURPOSE AND PROCESS*

The Arlington Group Planning + Architecture Inc., in association with PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc., were retained in June 2006 to develop the City of Abbotsford Civic Cemeteries Master Plan.

This Master Plan has been prepared to:

- Ensure the sustainable management, operation and maintenance of all four civic cemeteries
- Ensure interment options for future residents of Abbotsford through creative use of remaining cemetery space
- Preserve, protect and celebrate the community history contained in these cemeteries

This Plan represents a starting point in understanding the overall framework for management of these cemeteries that will lead to a more innovative, flexible and creative use of the sites, while maintaining empathy for past, current and future use. Opportunities for expansion and alternative memorialization have been explored. Following this Plan, the next stages will need to include the development of detailed individual plans for each cemetery.

The Master Plan has been developed in collaboration with the City of Abbotsford and through an inclusive stakeholder processes. The City's policies and operating objectives have guided decisions in the preparation of the Plan. Research and analysis of the sites, together with all available documentation on the cemeteries, as well as local and general industry-related information have also been assessed.

A business plan for sustainable implementation of the Master Plan has also been developed. Taken into account were current financial structures; historic and current service records; capacities for new and reclaimable gravesites; demographic trends and market research. The Business Plan integrates the diverse funereal, social, and heritage interests of Abbotsford and assesses the financial viability of the recommendations.

The Consultants and City Staff toured the four cemeteries together on June 20, 2006. Afterwards they convened to further define the objectives, methodologies, benchmarks, and timeline for the project. A list of stakeholder groups was identified for inclusion on a project Steering Committee. Subsequently, thorough on-site analyses were conducted at each of the four civic cemeteries. The opportunities and limitations of each cemetery were identified in terms of burial plot capacity, unknown gravesites, cremation

memorialization options, and possibilities for expansion. The landscape architects prepared illustrations that show the site analysis and identify opportunities.

The Steering Committee met three times since the start of this project.<sup>1</sup> The first meeting was held September 13, 2006, and was attended by 12 members of the Committee. The presentation outlined the current and projected demographic context of Abbotsford, and provided a summary of the four civic cemeteries, including a preliminary brief on the heritage value of each cemetery. A discussion followed the presentation and many comments and suggestions were noted, including the names of other stakeholder groups to invite to the next Steering Committee meeting.

The Indo-Canadian community had previously requested the City of Abbotsford to provide land for a crematorium at Hazelwood Cemetery, and this request is being considered as part of the Master Plan. Background documentation was reviewed, funeral and cremation service providers were interviewed, and meetings with the Indo-Canadian community were conducted in order to determine the need and viability of a community crematorium at Hazelwood Cemetery.

The second meeting was held November 7, 2006 and was attended by 16 members of the Steering Committee. The site analyses were explained in some detail, for each of the four cemeteries along with a presentation of the opportunities identified in each. The subsequent discussion included unmarked grave identification and reclamation, potential heritage impacts of enhancing or expanding each cemetery, the role of the First Nations and Mennonite cemeteries, and the feasibility of a crematorium.

The third meeting of the Steering Committee was held on January 23, 2007. It was attended by 14 members. The Consultants provided a PowerPoint overview of the key elements in the Draft Report which had been sent by email to all members the previous week. The Steering Committee unanimously indicated support for the City of Abbotsford making available a vacant portion of the Hazelwood Cemetery site for the construction and operation of a crematorium with an attached community assembly hall to be operated by a non-profit society. The Steering Committee indicated that the community facility should be available to all Abbotsford residents.

The Consultants indicated that future cemetery needs of the City of Abbotsford can be accommodated by the existing civic cemeteries for a period of 30 years. Although the Steering Committee did not disagree with this conclusion, it felt that the future cemetery needs of the City should be reviewed in 15 years in order to determine if the assumptions proposed are being met and also to plan ahead for the long term once the City's existing cemeteries reach capacity.

Following completion of the draft report, a Public Open House was held at the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium on May 30, 2007. The event was well attended, with over 200 persons in attendance. Strong support for all aspects of the Master Plan was expressed. Particular interest in the concept of a community crematorium was indicated.

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<sup>1</sup> A list of all Steering Committee members is contained in Appendix A. Project Team members are noted in Appendix B. Appendix I contains the minutes of Steering Committee meetings.

### 1.3 COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

The unique historical development of Abbotsford has led to a diverse multicultural population that is growing rapidly. As a result of Amalgamation, the City of Abbotsford is now the fifth largest municipality in the Province of B.C. Population trends indicate that this growth will continue. Abbotsford is also the proud home of large, faith-based communities. These individual groups bring a rich diversity to the community, and also their customs and traditions, including their traditions of memorialization.

#### **Religion and Disposition of the Deceased**

Disposition of the deceased is usually embedded in cultural and religious values and customs. Since the late 1800s, Abbotsford has accommodated the different practices and methods of disposition required by its different cultural and religious communities.

In 1991, the number of Catholic and Protestant practitioners was a total of 60,790. Ten years later the total number had grown to 67,830. Though much smaller in number in 1991 (7,205), people practicing other religious traditions in Abbotsford more than doubled in population so that by 2001 there were a total of 18,090. In both the 1991 and 2001 Census data, practitioners of the Sikh religion comprised the vast majority of the total of other/ non-Christian religions. The Sikh community has deep historical roots in Abbotsford. The original Abbotsford Sikh Temple, built 1910-12, is the only Gurdwara from the pioneer phase of Sikh immigration to Canada that has survived. It is the oldest surviving Sikh Temple in North America and has been declared a National Historic Site. As the following table indicates, the Sikh religion had the greatest rate of growth over the 10-year period of time from 1991 to 2001 (187%), followed by a notable percentage increase in the Islamic (160%) and Buddhist traditions (156%).

Religions in Abbotsford	2001 Census*	% Change 1991-2001
Sikh	15,220	186.9%
Roman Catholic	11,895	25.7%
Mennonite	10,120	-8.5%
United Church	7,735	-11.1%
Anglican	5,800	3.4%
Protestant not incl. elsewhere	3,470	-66.2%
Baptist	3,200	41.6%
Lutheran	2,885	-9.4%
Christian Reformed Church	2,560	-15.5%
Pentecostal	2,330	-38.9%
Christian and Missionary Alliance	1,680	Not available
Buddhist	1,035	155.6%
Evangelical Missionary Church	1,015	Not available

\* 2001 Statistics Canada Census Data. Religions with fewer than 1,000 members not included in this table.



Although the percentage increase of Muslims was large, the actual numbers were very small. There were many more Buddhist (1,035) than Islamic (390) practitioners in 2001. This is significant when considering different services for disposition. Sikhs and Buddhists choose cremation, while Muslims choose burial.

When the 870 (in 2001) adherents to the Hindu tradition are combined with members of the Sikh and Buddhist communities, a total of 17,125 Abbotsford residents belonged to a tradition in which cremation is the overwhelmingly used as the preferred method of disposition.

On the other hand, the tradition in the large Mennonite community in Abbotsford has strongly favoured burial of their deceased. Other Christian faiths have also historically favoured burial for the disposition of the deceased. This tradition

has gradually eroded in favour of cremation. Cremation rates have steadily increased over the past generation and cremation is now the preferred method of disposition throughout B.C.

The most recent data from Vital Statistics shows that in 2005, there were 950 deaths in the Abbotsford Health Unit. Of this total, two thirds were cremated while one third were buried. This compares to the B.C. as a whole, in which 78.6% of deaths resulted in cremation while only 20.9% were buried.

Due to historical settlement patterns of different faith based groups in Abbotsford as noted above, the cremation rate in the City of Abbotsford is noticeably lower than most other municipalities in B.C. Most funeral and cremation service providers in Abbotsford have indicated a shift toward cremation regardless of their client base. Due to a series of factors including cost, immigration patterns and increasing community acceptability, it is anticipated that the rate of cremation will continue to gradually increase over time.

In order to determine the needs of different faith-based groups, meetings were conducted to determine the needs of each group for the disposition of the deceased of their community.

### **Hindu Temple**

Hindu practices involve cremation of the deceased. There is no demand for burial graves. Temple representatives participated in a meeting together with Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara Sahib (Sikh) Temple (see following page).

### **Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara Sahib (Sikh) Temple**

Religious services occur at the Abbotsford temple and there members have indicated a need for a local crematorium with capacity for accommodating up to 500 bereaved. All deceased Sikhs are cremated. Sikh practices require that the temple and cremation facility be separated. Cremation is a religious ceremony of 3 – 5 day duration, involving cold storage and preparation of the body by family members, and prayers. Following cremation, the ashes are typically deposited into moving water – locally or in India. There is no demand for burial graves; and none for cremation graves, scattering gardens or memorial walls – although this may change in the future. Many of the cremations for temple members take place at the Five Rivers Crematorium on Tilbury Island in Delta along the South Arm of the Fraser River. While this facility caters to the Indo-Canadian community and is well regarded, its distance from Abbotsford is cited as a major concern.

### **Khalsa Diwan Society Abbotsford (Sikh Temple)**

Approximately 500 members but the Society provides for the religious needs of 5,000 persons in the Abbotsford area. There is a strong feeling that the Sikh community in Abbotsford is not adequately served by the existing service providers. The cost of cremation services (\$3,000 to \$6,800) is financially difficult especially at the time of a death in the family. Large motorized processions travel between the temple, meeting hall and crematorium. Having the crematorium and hall located near the temple would be a major improvement. Four years ago, demand from the Sikh communities was estimated to be 100 cremations per year. Current demand is considered to be significantly higher due to the increasing size of the Sikh community in Abbotsford. The South Asian population in Abbotsford is now significantly higher than documented in the 2001 Census for the City of Abbotsford.

Their request is for a lease of municipal land to enable a non-profit society to construct and operate a crematorium for all. Executives of both Abbotsford Sikh temples met in November, 2006 and endorsed the crematorium concept, agreed their needs for the facility would be the same and they would work together to finance, build and operate a crematorium and hall. The facility would be managed by a non-profit society with a variety of stakeholders including the two Sikhs temples in Abbotsford, the Hindu community and interested Christian organizations. The Sikh proponents have indicated that the City of Abbotsford should not be responsible for the capital funding or its operation, only the land lease.

### **Other Funeral Service Providers**

All Abbotsford service providers and most others that offer services to Abbotsford residents were interviewed as documented in Section 3.6. Each Abbotsford service provider has a distinct market niche depending on a variety of factors such as religious affiliation served (Mennonite, other faith based community or non-faith based), type of disposition (cremation or burial), cost and range of services offered (viewing area, on-site service), and access to private cemeteries with memorialization options not available in Abbotsford.

## **2.0 ABBOTSFORD CIVIC CEMETERIES**

As a result of Amalgamation in 1995, the City of Abbotsford inherited four municipally-owned cemeteries, an unusually high number compared to other municipalities. Three of these cemeteries are quite small, and have reached or met capacity, while only one has significant remaining space. Operations are centralized at the largest cemetery, Hazelwood. No equipment storage is required at the other three cemeteries.

Each of the four cemeteries presents a unique situation. As they were all established before any requirement for perpetual care funds, the cost of maintenance has been an ongoing issue. Additionally, there is no source of development funds for enhancement of the cemeteries. Despite these constraints, the City has committed resources to their maintenance and all are in a state of good repair. Appendix C consists of a detailed inventory all occupied, reserved (i.e. pre-need sales), unknown, and unsold gravesites and cremation plots in the four municipal cemeteries. Potential development areas for each cemetery are also indicated.

### **2.1 ABERDEEN CEMETERY**

#### **Overview**

This modest cemetery is located about 1.6 kilometers east of Aldergrove, at 28417 Fraser Highway. Traditionally, it served the community of Aldergrove in the Township of Langley as well as residents on the Abbotsford (and prior to amalgamation, the Matsqui) side of the municipal border. Aberdeen appears to have been established in the 1880s, base on the dates of the earliest gravestones, but may be older as Aldergrove was settled at an earlier date.

A number of pioneer families are represented here, and there are a number of elaborate and beautiful grave markers. One notable interment is that of Charles Hill-Tout (1858-1944). Born in England and educated at Oxford University, he was an early Abbotsford settler, who ran a local mill and was also renowned for his pioneering ethnographic and anthropological field work among the Salish people. Aberdeen Cemetery also includes war graves, and is included in the Maple Leaf Legacy Project for war graves.

The site lacks parking area except along the shoulder of the Fraser Highway. A small, unused shed is located at the north perimeter. There are no washroom facilities.

#### **Zoning**

The site is zoned Parks, Open Space and Schools (P-2). A Cemetery, Park, Child Care Centre, Public School and Accessory One Unit Residential uses are permitted in this zone. The Aberdeen cemetery is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR).

#### **Surrounding Land Uses**

- South: Single family residences
- West: Business
- North: Field and farmhouse
- East: New municipal fire hall

### **Landscape Character**

The setting for Aberdeen Cemetery suggests an old farm, country house, or plantation. Large trees separate the space visually from the busy road, and the markers and tombstones provide a fascinating glimpse into Fraser Valley history. Unfortunately, the sides of the property offer views of a commercial property on one side, and a fire station on the other; both of which take away from the contemplative mood of the cemetery. The site is partially buffered on the east, north and west perimeters. Proximity to the Fraser Highway, the narrow entry gate, and traffic noise also detract from the visitor's experience. Garbage receptacles and hose bibs appear in unattractive places, and there are no way-finding devices. The lack of buffering allows traffic noise to penetrate the site.

### **Topography**

The existing cemetery rises gradually from the Fraser Highway to the north property line. The total elevation change is six metres resulting in a grade change of 6%. The site has a high water table with clay soil and two underground springs that pose a challenge for future cemetery development involving excavation.

### **Existing Planting**

There are several groups of large deciduous trees at Aberdeen Cemetery that include two Black Locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) and a Copper Beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*). These are significant, healthy landmark specimen trees. There are also groups of shrubs and hedgerows between the cemetery and the adjacent properties.

### **Security**

There is an existing chain link fence (4' height) along the Fraser Highway with a narrow pedestrian entrance at its midpoint. A vehicular service access from Fraser Highway is gated. This arrangement offers good passive surveillance from the Fraser Highway, and there are currently few security concerns.

### **Cemetery Capacity**

All burial plots are sold and cemetery is considered full. Almost the entire cemetery consists of full graves with a small cremation area to south-east. There have been no sales for many years except for the cremation area. The Aberdeen Cemetery has a total of 1,485 occupied or reserved graves and cremation plots. This represents 12.3% of all occupied or reserved graves or cremation plots in the four municipal cemeteries (see Appendix C for details).

Aberdeen contains 80% of the unknown grave sites. The 184 unknown gravesites plus 7 unknown cremation plots in the Aberdeen Cemetery stem from a loss of early records. It is not known if these graves or cremation plots are occupied or unoccupied. If occupied, the name of the deceased is unknown. If unoccupied, the gravesite or cremation plot has either been sold to persons unknown or remains unsold.

### **Future Expansion Opportunities**

There is minimal capability for expansion. The main opportunity would be to accommodate cremation plots and possibly a columbarium within the central access road through the middle of the site that connects with the Fraser Highway. This access for service vehicles and non-vehicular traffic has a minimum width of six metres. The site analysis and development opportunities of the Aberdeen Cemetery are illustrated on the drawings prepared by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.

Determining the status of the unknown gravesites and cremation plots could free up some additional capacity. There is a provision in the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Regulation* for this to take place. The cost would be modest, no disturbance of any interment site would occur and the result could enable up to 191 existing interment sites to be made available to the public.

Given the limited development opportunities of the Aberdeen Cemetery, any significant expansion would require additional land acquisition. The most logical area for any expansion would be to the north. This would require the acquisition of part or all of the adjacent agricultural property. Rezoning for cemetery use and the approval of the Agricultural Land Commission would also be required.

<b>Aberdeen Cemetery Information</b>
<b>Address: 28417 Fraser Highway</b>
Legal Description: Lot 28, Sec. 21 Twn. 13, Plan 40064
PID: 004-895-819
Parcel Folio Number: 9500024202
Site Area: 9,075 m <sup>2</sup>
Zoning: P2 (Parks, Open Space, Schools)
Within ALR

## 2.2 HAZELWOOD CEMETERY

### Overview

This is the largest municipal cemetery, and the most centrally located, consisting of approximately 4.9 active hectares (12 acres) with an address at 34070 Hazelwood Avenue. The total area including undeveloped municipal lands is 10.8 hectares (26.7 acres). Hazelwood Cemetery was established in the 1920s. It was originally named after the Maclure Family, reflected in the name of the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery, which is adjacent to Hazelwood Cemetery.

Veterans from the First and Second World Wars are honoured by the monument of two gatepost cairns, constructed in 1972, at the entrance to Hazelwood Cemetery. There are two Canadian Legion areas (Old and New) and a small Legion memorial. The Legion area is cleaned every year by volunteers. This section of Hazelwood Cemetery has been reserved for war veterans and their spouses only. Also buried here are 12 Royal Air Force members who were killed while training at Abbotsford Airport. These Royal Air Force graves are looked after by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The only mausoleum in any of the civic cemeteries is located here in the older section, the Mercer Family vault. The vault was built between 1919 and 1924, by Benn Mercer (1850-1933), and holds the remains of six members of the Mercer family. Benn Mercer was from Ireland, immigrated to Canada in the early 1880s, and to British Columbia in the late 1880s. The Mercers farmed land in the Matsqui / Ridgedale area, before relocating to the B.C. Interior. Benn Mercer lived on Boundary Road South in Burnaby at



the time of his death. (Information provided by Rose Deck, great-granddaughter of Benn Mercer.)

There are paved internal access roads and a 70 space parking lot. On-site facilities include washrooms, small administrative area and maintenance requirements for all municipal cemeteries. The maintenance area contains open topsoil storage area contained by lock-blocks at end of parking lot. Equipment storage is adjacent bounded by 3 metre high chain link fence. Back storage is very visible. Adjacent to the equipment storage is a concrete block storage building (6.6 metres by 10 metres). The building contains public washrooms, a small office and equipment and small storage.

A major BC Hydro right-of-way is located to the south and contains three large transmission towers. The City owned land to the south could accommodate additional cemetery capacity and is zoned for that purpose. City owned land to the east is also vacant and is also zoned for allow for future cemetery purposes.

### **Zoning**

All six properties which make up the Hazelwood Cemetery are zoned Parks, Open Space and Schools (P-2). A Cemetery, Park, Child Care Centre, Public School and Accessory One Unit Residential uses are permitted in this zone.

### **Surrounding Land Uses**

- South: Vacant municipal land and hydro transmission corridor
- South-West: Mennonite Cemetery (accessed from Maclure Road)
- North: Single family residences
- East: Vacant municipal land

### **Landscape Character**

Hazelwood is a large cemetery with mature hedges on much of its perimeter. The main burial areas consist of a series of open manicured lawns, and there are distant views over the power lines to the south. The majority of these lawns are raised above the surrounding grade, with concrete steps connecting them to the interior roadways. The existing parking lot is framed by groups of mature trees that screen it from the transmission right-of-way, as well as from the burial area. Municipal land on the east side is hilly, with grass and trees at the edges, and attractive views over the existing cemetery. This central area lacks definition, leaving the visitor without shelter or way-finding devices.

### **Topography**

The existing cemetery is very gently sloping with a maximum elevation change of six metres. The average grade is 2% with a maximum of 4%. The rises from the low point in the north-west corner to the south and south. The soils are sandy, and there is no standing water or difficulties with drainage.

The two undeveloped properties to the south are also very gently sloping. Neither site has an elevation change of more than four metres. However the site east of Park Lane has quite variable terrain. The total grade change is nearly 20 metres. Most of the steep terrain is in the south-east corner where the site rises above Elmwood Drive. The elevation change on the majority of this vacant site is six metres or less.

### **Existing Planting**

The most distinctive trees in Hazelwood Cemetery consist of a mature planting of conifers around the existing parking lot and works yard, a row of Pin Oaks (*Quercus palustris*) to the north, and a large evergreen hedge along Hazelwood Avenue. The burial areas are made up of manicured terraces with steep grass banks along many of the interior roadways. The undeveloped area to the east is treed around the edges, with large rolling grass fields in the center.

### **Security**

Hazelwood Cemetery is gated; however it lacks natural surveillance from the surrounding neighbourhood. In 2006, the Canadian Legion flagpole was stolen from its location near Hazelwood Avenue. Closing the entrances along this side of the site would limit access, and increase security after dark.

### **Cemetery Capacity**

The cemetery contains rectangular blocks of plots with typically 16 gravesites per block. A cremation section is located in the south-east. The Hazelwood Cemetery contains two large blocks for Commonwealth graves. Unlike the other municipal cemeteries, the grid pattern is very noticeable and is accentuated by the lack of landscaping except at the perimeter of the cemetery. The Hazelwood Cemetery has over 6,000 occupied gravesites plus over 600 occupied cremation plots. Two-thirds of all occupied or sold municipal gravesites and cremation plots in Abbotsford are located in the Hazelwood Cemetery. The vast majority of unsold gravesites and burial plots are located in the Hazelwood Cemetery. Over 600 gravesites plus an additional 300 cremation plots are currently available for sale. This represents nearly 90% of the unsold inventory in the four municipal cemeteries.

### **Future Expansion Opportunities**

Opportunities lie to east and to the south (subject to constraints of the BC Hydro right-of-way and transmission towers). Vacant municipal land to the east has been owned by the City for at least 37 years. The road between the cemetery and this land has been closed. This vacant property east of Park Lane (the eastern boundary of current development) has a large area of 3.75 hectares. Although the development potential in the south-east corner of this site is severely restricted by a topographic constraint, the majority of this area offers excellent potential for in ground and above ground interment and memorialization. In addition, this site is the most suitable location for a future crematorium as discussed in Section 3.10.

There are also two undeveloped properties south of the existing cemetery parking. Most of the properties south of the parking lot are constrained by a BC Hydro transmission right-of-way. While this will preclude structures, parking areas and interment sites can be constructed there. A good example is the Mennonite Cemetery to the immediate west. There, a large majority of interments are located within the transmission right-of-way. This has not hindered the development of the cemetery and the aesthetic impact is minimal.

There are also several development opportunities within the existing Hazelwood Cemetery. The south-west part of the Hazelwood Cemetery is not fully developed. Second, by reducing and relocating the parking lot to the south under the Hydro transmission right-of-way, the existing parking lot could be redeveloped for interment purposes as well as enhanced landscaping. Third, some of the internal roadways are

wide enough to permit infill columbaria and cremation plots. The site analysis and development opportunities of all of these areas are illustrated on the drawings prepared by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.

The total area available for future development exceeds 72,000 square metres. This large area available for future cemetery development at the Hazelwood Cemetery represents well over 90% of the entire potential of Abbotsford's four municipal cemeteries.

<b>HAZELWOOD CEMETERY INFORMATION</b>
<b>ADDRESS: 3356 PARK LANE</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 83, SEC. 27, TWN 16, PLAN: 57029
PID: 005-518-601
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 7185081800
SITE AREA: 37,515 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR
<b>ADDRESS: 34040 HAZELWOOD AVENUE</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: E1/2 + W1/2 OF LOT 41, SEC. 27, TWN. 16, PLAN 2173
PID: 012-546-356
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 9500031905
SITE AREA: 9,173 M <sup>2</sup> + 9,172 M <sup>2</sup> = 18,345 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR
<b>ADDRESS: 34070 HAZELWOOD AVENUE</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 42, SEC. 27, TWN. 16, PLAN 2173
PID: 012-546-372
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 9500032107
SITE AREA: 17,227 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR
<b>ADDRESS: MACLURE ROAD</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 34, SEC. 27 TWN. 16, PLAN 2173
PID: 012-546-267
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 9500031309
SITE AREA: 18,286 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR
<b>ADDRESS: MACLURE ROAD</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 33, SEC. 27, TWN. 16, PLAN 2173
PID: 012-546-241
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 9500031103
SITE AREA: 16,786 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR
<b>TOTAL SITE AREA OF 6 PROPERTIES: 108,159 M<sup>2</sup></b> (37,515 M <sup>2</sup> + 9,173 M <sup>2</sup> + 9,172 M <sup>2</sup> + 17,227 M <sup>2</sup> + 18,286 M <sup>2</sup> + 16,786 M <sup>2</sup> )

## 2.3 MOUNT LEHMAN CEMETERY

### Overview

Mount Lehman is an historic farming community. The cemetery, located in the 29000 block of Taylor Road, was originally a small rural cemetery that appears to have been established by the 1880s, the date of the earliest visible headstones. Mount Lehman is the smallest civic cemetery with a site area of only 0.41 hectare (1 acre). Notable burials include the Lehman family: Katherine (1834-1884); Lucy Hannah (1861-1923); Thomas Henry (1863-1935); Thomas, son of Thomas and Lucy Lehman (1893-1894); and Carson (1873-1944). The wide range of historic markers adds to the uniqueness of this cemetery.

There is a parking area at the entry, and no on-site facilities. A small storage shed is currently unused, but is apparently an old railroad building, and may be of historic significance.

### Zoning

The existing cemetery is zoned Parks, Open Space and Schools (P-2). A Cemetery, Park, Child Care Centre, Public School and Accessory One Unit Residential uses are permitted in this zone. The municipal property to the east that is used for cemetery parking is zoned Agricultural One Zone (A1). Both properties are in the ALR.

### Surrounding Land Uses

- South: Single family residence in ALR
- West: Ravine
- North: Single family residence

### Landscape Character

Mt. Lehman cemetery gives the visitor the impression of an old orchard or country garden carved out of the second growth forest. The trees and benches within the burial area provide intimate sitting areas, and mature cypress trees mark the boundaries between the roadway and the cemetery itself. The site is bright and open, as a result of its exposure to both the south and east. The lawns are manicured and there are clear views through the chain link fences that surround the cemetery. In addition to this, the small wooden storage building evokes the period when much of the Abbotsford area was settled in the early twentieth century. The negative aspects of the setting include the narrow entry gate, which is difficult to navigate, and the blue plastic portable toilet.

### Topography

The existing burial area slopes up very slightly to the west, and there is a steep wooded ravine along the north side. The soils are primarily clay, and the high water table makes establishment of drainage a challenge.

### Existing Planting

The cemetery is relatively open with flowering trees, and several groups of mature Cypress (*Chamaecyparis*) to the south and east. Both the west and north boundaries are heavily forested.

## Security

The site is open along two sides with an existing chain link fence (4' height) and a single pedestrian gate on the east side. The gate has been constructed to limit access to one person at a time, and is awkward to pass through. Vehicular service access from Taylor Road is gated. Visual surveillance from Taylor Road is excellent. There are no recent security concerns due to good passive surveillance from road and residence to south.

## Cemetery Capacity

All gravesites are sold and the cemetery has in effect, reached capacity, although there are some reserved (or pre-need) plots that have been sold but are not occupied. Almost all of cemetery consists of full graves with a small cremation area. There are approximately 24 unsold cremation plots. The number of occupied and reserved gravesites and cremation plots in the Mt. Lehman Cemetery is 736, only 6.1% of the municipal total.

## Future Expansion Opportunities

The size of the existing cemetery could be substantially increased through the addition of unused road allowances to north and a triangular municipal site to the east, part of which is used for parking. A municipal road closure would be required. The potential expansion area is approximately 4,100 square metres. This represents a significant expansion considered this is the smallest municipal cemetery and the fact there are no unsold Mt. Lehman gravesites. Please refer to the site analysis and development opportunities drawings prepared by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.

<b>MT. LEHMAN CEMETERY INFORMATION</b>	
<b>ADDRESS: 29745 TAYLOR ROAD</b>	
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: SEC. 11, TWN. 14, PLAN 2181 (PART W 1/2 OF NW1/4, RP2182)	
PID: NOT INDICATED	
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 9500025103	
SITE AREA: 4,093 M <sup>2</sup>	
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)	
WITHIN ALR	
<b>ADDRESS: TAYLOR ROAD (TRIANGULAR CORNER LOT)</b>	
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT 2, SEC. 11, TWN. 14, PLAN 33707	
PID: 006-949-762	
FOLIO: 9500025206	
SITE AREA: 2,017 M <sup>2</sup>	
ZONING: A1 (AGRICULTURAL 1)	
WITHIN ALR	

## 2.4 MUSSELWHITE CEMETERY



### Overview

Musselwhite Cemetery is located in the 35000 block of Old Yale Road at the intersection of Marshall Road. The cemetery was named for John Musselwhite, who was a Royal Engineer. After leaving the Engineers, Musselwhite was granted land where the Whatcom Trail and Yale Road met. He proceeded to homestead and a short time later, the area was named after him. A small village sprung up around his homestead, including a school, called Musselwhite Elementary School in 1909, but the only remaining evidence of this early settlement is this cemetery. Musselwhite Cemetery has an area of 1.7 hectares (4.3 acres).

The cemetery was established in 1892. The land was donated by farmer Jackson van Buren Means; his headstone transcription reads:

In Loving Memory of  
Jackson Van Buren Means  
Born Misery (sic), U.S.A. 1839  
Died at Abbotsford, Feb. 7, 1915  
Aged 76 years

The first person to be buried here was in 1892—Mrs. Annie Johnson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Musselwhite. The Musselwhites and their other daughter are among the many local pioneers who have been laid to rest in this historic cemetery. There are many beautiful headstones with decorative embellishments and funerary symbolism that contribute to the historic significance and visual charm.

### Zoning

The site is zoned Parks, Open Space and Schools (P-2). A Cemetery, Park, Child Care Centre, Public School and Accessory One Unit Residential uses are permitted in this zone.

### **Surrounding Land Uses:**

- Single Family Residential on all sides

### **Landscape Character**

Musselwhite Cemetery provides a dramatic setting for an historic burial area. It offers a number of intimate spaces under the stands of mature conifers, and a fascinating collection of grave covers and headstones sprinkled down the hillside. Views to the west contribute to a lush country setting, and the grassed ravine near the south side provides a memorable experience. The corner of Marshall and Old Yale Roads suggests an old country crossroad, and the high bank to the north evokes the feeling of being in an intimate valley. This is a special site with enduring qualities that have continued to draw local families to it as a resting place for over a hundred years.

### **Topography**

The site rises 18 metres from the intersection of Old Yale Road and Good Road in the south to Marshall Road along the north property boundary. The average grade is 18%; however, some parts of the site are much steeper. These steep parts of the site have been left undeveloped. Once these topographic constraints have been taken into considerations, the future development potential of the Musselwhite Cemetery is limited. The soils are highly variable, with gravelly conditions on the north side, and loam at the lower elevations. There are areas along the perimeter where gravel was dumped on the site during road construction.

### **Existing Planting**

There are several stands of mature Western Red Cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) near Marshall Road on the north site of the site, and on the adjacent properties to the south. The remainder of the cemetery is open grass with isolated Cypress (*Chamaecyparis*), a weeping Beech (*Fagus* sp.), and a row of deciduous street trees underplanted with Junipers on the Boulevard outside the cemetery. There are two low hedges at the corner of Marshall Road and Old Yale Road, and a row of Eastern Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis*) along the existing service road to the south.

### **Security**

There is good passive surveillance from the adjacent roadways, and an existing chain link fence (4' height) around the perimeter of the existing cemetery. The large graveled parking lot is open to the street on Marshall Road. A road is also located along the south property boundary with one gated access to the cemetery. Residences overlook the cemetery from the north. A portable toilet was removed due to fears of vandalism.

### **Cemetery Capacity**

Current cemetery capacity is limited. Approximately 34 gravesites are currently available. A small cremation section is located in the south-east which has 38 unsold cremation plots. An initial planning study to allow for an increase in capacity was undertaken several years ago. There are also 41 unknown graves, and a number of areas that could be in-filled. Musselwhite has over 1,000 occupied gravesites.

An old driveway area that runs through at the lower level is unused and could be in-filled. Areas too steep to use for burials could be terraced with columbaria walls. There are excessive amounts of parking currently provided and the gravel parking is not demarcated. As a result, the parking which occurs is haphazardly organized and does



not represent an efficient use of space. Future road upgrading may be required in the future but the City Engineering Department has determined that no right-of-way will need to be taken from the existing cemetery property.

**Future Expansion Opportunities**

Despite its topographic constraints, the Musselwhite Cemetery still has considerable expansion opportunities. These are located mainly in four areas. One is located in the north-west part of the site by the intersection of Marshall and Old Yale Roads. The second area is along Marshall Road where gravel parking areas are undefined and could be reduced in size thereby freeing up additional flat land for cemetery use. The third area is a pathway connection between the old and new sections of the cemetery. Although the bank is steeply sloped, a pathway could be built into the bank with minimal change in grade. This would dramatically improve connectivity within the cemetery and would open up columbaria and other memorialization opportunities. The fourth area consists of infill opportunities where the distances between graves sites are up to six metres. These infill areas are located mainly in the western part of the cemetery. Please refer to the site analysis and development opportunities drawings prepared by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc.

<b>CEMETERY PARCEL INFORMATION</b>
<b>ADDRESS: 35301 OLD YALE ROAD</b>
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: LOT A, SEC. 13, TWN. 16, PLAN LMP38314
PID: 024-175-617
PARCEL FOLIO NUMBER: 6134041611
SITE AREA: 17,426 M <sup>2</sup>
ZONING: P2 (PARKS, OPEN SPACE, SCHOOLS)
NOT WITHIN ALR

**2.5 OTHER CEMETERIES IN ABBOTSFORD**

There are five other cemeteries in Abbotsford. Two are operated by Mennonite Church organizations and three are on First Nations Reserves. There are no cemeteries in Abbotsford operated by private funeral service organizations.

**First Nations Cemeteries**

First Nations are the original residents of the Abbotsford area and large native settlements were present prior to the start of European settlement in the nineteenth century. Earlier burial sites may be extant as archaeological sites. The three existing First Nations cemeteries date from the 1890s or early 1900s.

- Leq’a:mel First Nation Sumas Cemetery (Indian Reserve #12)**  
 Access to this cemetery is difficult, and this cemetery is no longer in use. Burial records show interments as early as 1893. The cemetery is 2.5 hectares in size and is located on the left bank of the Fraser River, near the mouth of the Sumas River. Band members are now interred in the cemetery in Deroche.

- **Matsqui First Nation Cemetery**  
This cemetery is on a table top mountain at the end of a steep unpaved road with restricted access from Harris Road. A parking area was recently provided. The first known burial was circa 1905. There are approximately 50 identified graves. The presence of unmarked graves limits new burials which are approximately three per year. A cemetery planning and consultation process will commence to address its capacity and the need for perpetual care.
- **Sumas First Nation Kilgard Cemetery (Upper Sumas Indian Reserve #6)**  
This cemetery can accommodate approximately 625 gravesites; however, the remaining capacity is unknown. Burial records show interments as early as 1891. The cemetery is still in use though there are unmarked graves and care must be taken. It is approximately 0.2 hectares (1/2 acre) in size, located east of the City of Abbotsford and north of Highway 1.

### **Mennonite Cemeteries**

The history of the South Poplar Cemetery is directly connected to the Mennonite settlers who pioneered the south Abbotsford area in the 1930s and 1940s. Construction of the South Abbotsford church building on Gladwin Road began in November of 1935 and a two-acre plot was purchased for a cemetery in 1937. The first funeral was conducted August 9, 1938 for Grace Buhler, a South Abbotsford member who died at age twenty-five. About twelve to fifteen churches of the two Mennonite conferences made use of this cemetery. The burials at the outset were few, with an average of five per year (1938- 44). However, from 1945 to 1950, the number of burials averaged 17 per year and increased to 23 per year from 1948 to 1950. Since South Poplar Cemetery would soon reach capacity, municipal authorities made space available through transfer of a section of Hazelwood Cemetery lands. Later, in 1966, the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery Society was formed and this property is now the main burial site for Abbotsford's Mennonites.

- **Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery (33965 Maclure Road)**  
This cemetery is 3.8 hectares (9.5 acres) in size and is located southwest and next to Hazelwood Cemetery. The cemetery site was acquired from the District in 1951 for a nominal sum. Despite their adjacency, there is no physical connection between the two cemeteries. The cemetery serves a faith community consisting of 15 Mennonite churches. Demand is almost exclusively for burial plots although there is a small area of the cemetery set aside for cremation plots. The cemetery has an average of 120 burials per year but has had up to 156 burials in a single year. The demand for cremation plots is small but has slowly increased. There are no pre-need sales; burial and cremation sites are available only at demand.

The cost of a gravesite is \$575 for a member of one of the affiliated Mennonite churches or \$900 for a non-member. It is unlikely that any other active cemetery in the Lower Mainland has such an economical price structure. It is estimated that the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery will reach capacity by 2011. There is a desire to acquire additional land to expand the cemetery but the directors have yet to find suitable property at an acceptable price. A portion of the Ministry of Transportation site to the

immediate west may become available for cemetery expansion once future interchange requirements have been determined.

- **South Poplar Mennonite Cemetery (Gladwin Road)**

This cemetery is 0.8 hectares (2 acres) in size and was purchased by the community of the South Abbotsford Mennonite Brethren Church. The small rural cemetery has been attractively developed (see following picture). The first burial was in 1938. There are approximately six burials per year. It is estimated that the remaining capacity could be reached by 2016. South Poplar Cemetery management has operated without a policy on perpetual care funding and has been running a deficit for some years now. They will likely be engaging in a cemetery planning process to determine management and sustainability options.



## **3.0 BUSINESS PLAN**

### **3.1 VISION FOR RENEWAL**

There are significant opportunities to preserve, protect and enhance Abbotsford's civic cemeteries. This Vision for Renewal recognizes this potential for these cemeteries, and their importance as sacred, contemplative spaces to the community. The key objectives of this Vision are to:

- Preserve, restore and protect those aspects of the cemeteries that define their heritage character;
- Ensure that no disturbance occurs to existing grave and cremation sites as a result of any future development;
- Provide a diversification of memorialization services, that addresses market trends, demand and capacity constraints;
- Diversify the cemetery landscapes in a way meaningful to diverse communities, including enhancement through the creation of landmarks, routes and way-finding;
- Enhance the landscapes in a manner that attracts and supports appropriate community uses such as walking, cycling, historical tours and interpretation, gatherings, events and contemplation; and
- Ensure fiscally sustainable operations through efficient use of existing resources and diversification of services.

### **3.2 GOVERNANCE**

The provincial governing legislation is the 2004 *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act* and the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Regulation* enacted under that regulation. Land use regulations of the City of Abbotsford Zoning Bylaw also apply. All municipal cemeteries are zoned P2 (Parks, Open Space, Schools). In addition, two cemeteries, Mt. Lehman and Aberdeen, are located within the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve.

The *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Act* provides for the disposition of human remains, the establishment and enlargement of places of interment, crematoria, the establishment of care funds, operations and business practices. Under the *Cremation, Interment and Funeral Services Regulation*, a minimum of 25% of the selling price of the right of interment for a gravesite or cremation plot and a minimum of 10% of the selling price of right of interment to a columbarium must be set aside in a perpetual Care Fund.

### **3.3 CURRENT OPERATIONS**

The four civic cemeteries are operated through the City's Parks, Recreation & Culture Department, with dedicated staff time that includes a Cemetery Caretaker and seasonal

workers. Operations are centralized at Hazelwood Cemetery, with a small office and works yard.

With the exception of Hazelwood Cemetery, the civic cemeteries are at or near capacity, and their current capacity for revenue-generation is minimal. Given the lack of care funds for the older sections of the cemetery, and with the expectation of perpetual care, the City of Abbotsford is at this point subsidizing the maintenance of the civic cemeteries.

### 3.4 MARKET DEMAND

#### 3.4.1 Demographics: Births, Deaths and Population Growth

The population of Abbotsford has grown rapidly although the rate of growth has declined in recent years. The population increase from 1996 to 2006 was 14,326 or 13.1% for the latest decade. From the 2001 to the 2006 census, the Abbotsford population increased by 8,370. The increase from 2005 to 2006 was 852 persons representing a modest rate of growth of 0.7%. B.C. Vital Statistics Agency projections indicate an annual growth rate of 1.3% for the City of Abbotsford to the year 2031.

YEAR	POPULATION	5 YEAR INCREASE
1991 CENSUS POPULATION	*89,239	
1996 CENSUS POPULATION	109,538	20,299
2001 CENSUS POPULATION	120,500	10,962
2006 CENSUS POPULATION**	123,864	3,364
2031 BC STATS PROJECTION	202,246	
*COMBINED DISTRICTS OF MATSQUI AND ABBOTSFORD – PRIOR TO 1995 AMALGAMATION.		
**2006 CENSUS POPULATION FOR ABBOTSFORD ANNOUNCED MARCH 2007 DOES NOT INCLUDE THE ESTIMATED UNDERCOUNT WHICH IS INCLUDED IN PREVIOUS CENSUS DATA.		

The median age of Abbotsford residents has been rising since 1986 when it was 31 years. This means that half the Abbotsford population was younger and half was older. In 2005 the median age increased to 35.9. By 2031, BC Stats projects the median age will increase to 42.0 years.

Abbotsford population statistics by gender show that during the 10 year period from 1991 to 2001, the number of males increased from 43,335 to 57,010. This represents an increase of 31.6%. BC Stats estimates indicate a further increase of 12.0% from 2001 to 2006 for a total male population of 63,877. Males in the 65 years and older age group increased 23.1% from 1991 to 2001, for a total of 6,965 male seniors.

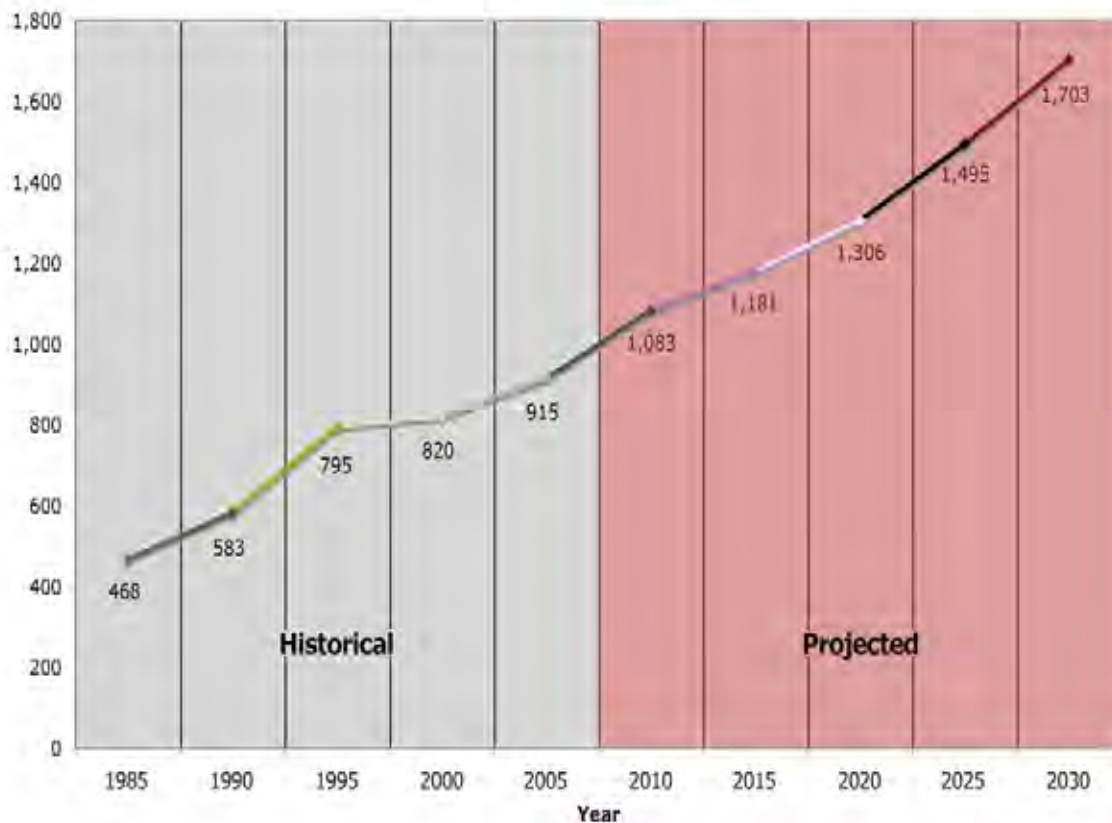
The total female population increased by 34.1% during the same ten year period, 1991-2001, (43,595 to 58,455). BC Stats estimates of the female Abbotsford population indicate an increase of 10% from 2001 for a 2006 total of 64,289. Women in the 65 years and older age group grew 28.3% from 1991 to 2001. There were 9,035 female seniors in 2006 which is significantly more than men in this age group.

Although the population has increased, the birth rate has fallen. Vital Statistics Agency data shows a decreasing total fertility rate (TFR) in lifetime births per 1,000 women from the aged 15 to 49, in the Abbotsford Local Health Area. (The Abbotsford Local Health Area consists of the City of Abbotsford plus Electoral Area H of the Fraser Valley Regional District. The Abbotsford Local Health Area is effectively the same as the City of Abbotsford as Electoral Area H represents less than ½ of 1% of the overall population. In 2001, the Electoral Area H population was 387 compared to the City's 115,463). In 1987, the TFR was 1,921. This fell to 1,827 in 2005. A further drop to 1,708 is projected to occur by 2031.

Over time Abbotsford's falling birth rate and its rising life expectancy rate will intersect. Vital Statistics projections for dependency rates indicate by 2031 the child dependency rate (0.326) will almost equal that of the elderly dependency rate (0.323). This is despite a dramatic increase in the number of households from 24,096 in 1986 to 82,654 in 2031.

Net migration counts are projected to remain fairly steady from 2,236 in 1986 to 2,338 in 2031. There was a high fluctuation when net migration rose to 5,065 in the period from 1987 to 1995. However, it is the death rate and the actual number of deceased residents that will have a greater impact on the growth rate in the Abbotsford LHA over the next 25 years.

**Historic and Projected Deaths**





Key demographic changes are summarized in the following table:

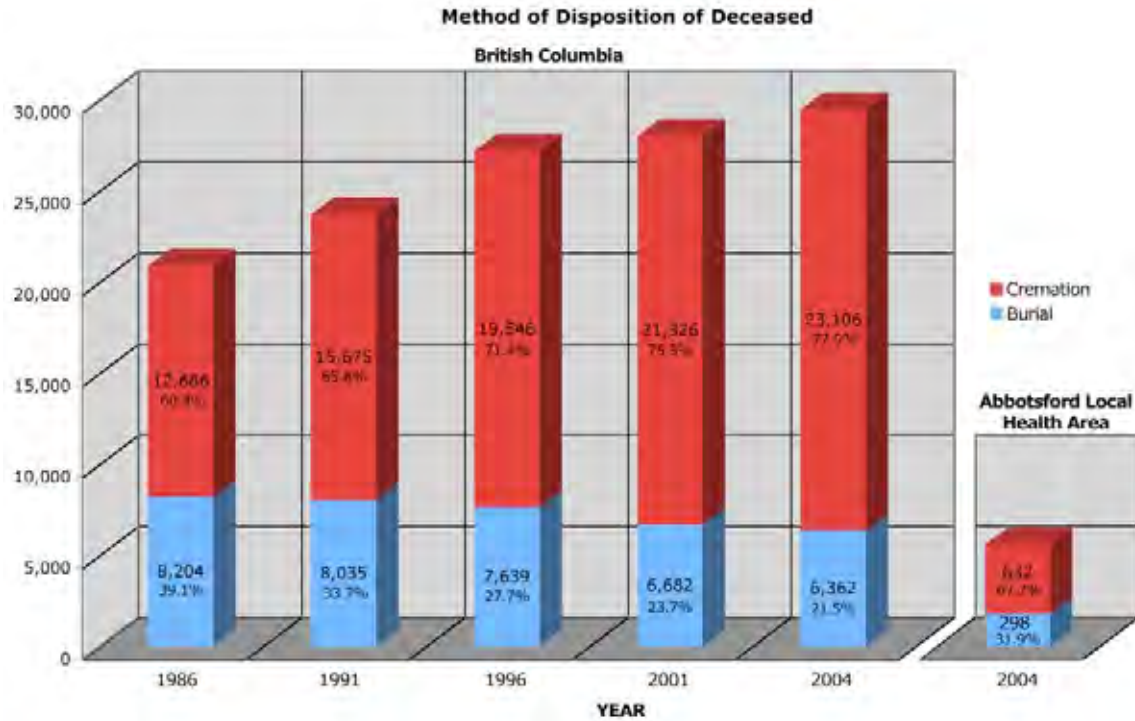
<b>AGING POPULATION</b>	
MEDIAN AGE	SENIORS (65+) HAVE FASTEST GROWTH RATE
31.0 IN 1986	FEMALE SENIOR POPULATION LARGER THAN MALE (9,035 VS. 6,965 IN 2001)
35.9 IN 2005	MALE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 78.3 YEARS (2001-2005)
42.0 IN 2031	FEMALE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 83.1 YEARS (2001-2005)
	COMBINED LIFE EXPECTANCY OF 80.7 YEARS (2001-2005)

Abbotsford residents are living longer and are dying at older ages than previous generations. In 1986 the median age of death was 76.8, by 2005 that had risen to 79.8 and is projected to rise to 80.9 by 2031. This is an average of the lower median age of death for men and the higher age for women.

1985 records show that 468 persons in the Abbotsford LHA residents died. Over the next generation, the number of deaths incrementally increased annually resulting in a doubling to 915 by 2005. Further increases in the number of deaths are projected to continue annually reaching 1,703 by 2030.

The increasing number of deaths among residents of the Abbotsford LHA has a parallel increase in the crude death rate measured per 1,000 persons. The crude death rate in 1987 was 6.6. With minor ups and downs over time, the 2005 death rate was 7.2. By 2031, the crude death rate is projected to rise to 8.7.

According to Vital Statistics Information on Local Health Areas (LHA), two thirds of the 950 persons in the Abbotsford LHA who died in 2005 were cremated while one third were buried.



The above graph shows a steady increase in both the number and proportion of cremations in B.C. In addition to this provincial trend, the dramatically higher growth rate of those religions for which cremation is the more common, if not required, method of disposition must also be taken into consideration. As a result, it is reasonable to predict a significantly higher demand for disposition by cremation over time in the City of Abbotsford.

### 3.4.2 Current and Projected Burials and Cremations

Up until recently, burial was the most common method of disposition in Canada. However, cremation has increased in Canada over the last ten years, and in B.C. it has become far more widespread than burial. The following table shows the three areas with the highest cremation rates in Canada and the trend over the last ten years:

Province	Percentage of Disposition by Cremation	
	1996	2005
B.C.	71.4%	78.6%
Alberta	45.0%	61.5%
Yukon	42.6%	58.8%

Abbotsford has a lower cremation rate than most parts of in B.C., but even so, the number of cremations is double the number of burials. 2005 is the most recent year for which B.C. annual disposition statistics are available. Those statistics show 316 burials



(33.3%) and 632 cremations (66.5%) of deceased Abbotsford residents occurred in 2005.<sup>2</sup>

The cremation rate in B.C. is reportedly the highest in North America. There are several factors contributing to the dramatic rise in cremations in B.C. Many seniors choose to retire in this province where the milder weather is more amenable. With this mobility comes a loss of tradition and historical connection. The high number of people with no formal religious affiliation and the reduction of traditional values have also contributed to cremation becoming a preferred method of disposition. Cost is another major factor. More people are choosing cremation for themselves and more people are choosing it for their next-of-kin. Finally the increasing sizes of religious and ethnic communities that exclusively use cremation have amplified the demand for cremation services.

Some people prefer to not be buried, and that preference extends to their ashes as well. The array of memorialization options has also drawn people to cremation. The cost of land as reflected in the cost of burial is a deterrent for some people seeking money-saving options. Others view it as environmentally sensitive to choose cremation which stems the acquisition of land to accommodate more cemeteries.

BC Stats has prepared projections indicating the future population of the Abbotsford Local Health Area<sup>3</sup> to the year 2031. Included are the three elements of population change (births, deaths and net migration) for each year. Due to the aging population and increased death rates, the number of deaths is projected to increase at a higher rate than the rate of population increase. For example, the population is projected to increase by 57% from 2006 to 2031 while the number of deaths is projected to increase by over 91%.

Due to changing funeral practices as noted above, the method of disposal will not remain fixed. As a result, it is necessary to make assumptions in order to predict the number of future burials and cremations. The current cremation rate of 67.7% in the Abbotsford LHA is expected to increase while the burial rate of 31.9% is expected to increase. Assuming continued immigration resulting in a changing ethnic and religious mix plus evolving practices within the existing population, it is reasonable for the provincial averages to be reached over the next 30 years. If this occurs, the annual changes will be small. Even if the cremation rate increases by less than ½ % per year, these changes will become significant over time. However, the cremation rate in the Abbotsford LHA may not reach the provincial average if the provincial average also increases over time.

In order to estimate how these changing trends will impact Abbotsford, a 30 year table was prepared estimating the number of projected deaths, burial and cremation rates, and the resulting number of anticipated burials and cremations. This is provided in Appendix D. This 30 year time frame is longer than the provincial projections but this is considered the minimum needed for long term planning purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> The total of burials and cremations is slightly less than 100% due to bodies dedicated to medical research, deaths where the body is not recovered, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Population projections are not available by municipality. However the Abbotsford Local Health Area closely approximates the boundaries of the City of Abbotsford. The only difference is the inclusion of Electoral Area H in the Abbotsford Local Health Area.

Based on the above noted assumptions, the number of deaths will increase to 1,920 by 2032. The proportion of burials will gradually decline to under 20%. Despite this, the number of burials will nevertheless increase from 274 to 368 by 2032 due to the large increase in the projected population. With both an increasing population and a higher cremation rate, the number of anticipated cremations will nearly triple to 1,550 by 2032.

Based on the assumptions underlying Appendix D, the total number of deaths over this 30 year period is anticipated to be 39,824. The total number of resulting burials is indicated to be 9,872 and the number of cremations is indicated to be 29,910. These are very large numbers. However it should be noted that the total time frame is well over one generation. Furthermore, these changes will be moderated by the fact that burials and cremations will also occur in other cemeteries both inside and outside of Abbotsford.

### 3.5 CURRENT CONDITIONS

#### 3.5.1 Historical Demand for Interments

The following table shows the number of interment rights sold by the City of Abbotsford for burial graves and cremation plots over the past 12 years from 1995 to 2006. These represent pre-need sales. Also included are the number of interments for the same 12 year period broken down by burials and interments.

<b>Abbotsford Civic Cemeteries</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Interment Rights</b>		<b>Interments</b>	
	Burials	Cremation Plots	Burials	Cremations
1995	88	24	142	79
1996	90	15	145	104
1997	100	25	163	87
1998	110	21	138	93
1999	59	19	150	82
2000	84	27	146	118
2001	61	20	110	85
2002	66	49	131	102
2003	45	16	128	98
2004	126	46	131	100
2005	98	50	127	106
2006	127	43	143	126
Average	88	30	138	98

The above table indicates that in most years, the sale of interment rights for burials comprise more than half of the number of burials. The proportion of pre-need sales of cremation plots is much lower. In no year did the number of interment rights for cremation plots equal one half the number of cremations. In several years, pre-sales of cremation plots represented less than 20% of the number of interments.

This would indicate that pre-need planning for cremations is considered less important to those favouring cremation compared to those planning on disposition by burial. The lack

of available gravesites in most of Abbotsford's civic cemeteries may also be a factor as well as the limited range cremation interment options in Abbotsford.

### 3.5.2 Civic Market Share

The City of Abbotsford's cemeteries represent four interment options available to Abbotsford. To determine the City's market share over time, the number of casket burials and cremation interments in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries were compared to historical vital statistics. Data from both sources is available for the years 1997 to 2005 as shown in the following table.

Abbotsford Civic Cemeteries						
Year	Burials			Cremations		
	Burials	LHA	Market Share	Cremations	LHA	Market Share
1997	163	343	47.5%	87	485	17.9%
1998	138	322	42.9%	93	474	19.6%
1999	150	325	46.2%	82	479	17.1%
2000	146	333	43.8%	118	498	23.7%
2001	110	295	37.3%	85	548	15.5%
2002	131	299	45.3%	102	552	18.5%
2003	128	289	44.3%	98	544	18.0%
2004	131	298	44.0%	100	632	15.8%
2005	127	316	40.2%	106	632	16.8%
2006	143	<sup>4</sup>		126		
Annual Average	137	313	43.5%	100	538	18.1%

Burials refer to the total number of burial interments in Abbotsford's four cemeteries. The total number of burials in the following column is based on the decedent's residence in the Abbotsford Local Health Area. Consequently the burial could take place in one of Abbotsford's civic cemeteries, in another cemetery in Abbotsford or in any other location outside Abbotsford. For the nine year period between 1997 and 2005, Abbotsford's civic cemeteries represented between 37.3% and 47.5% of all burials in the Abbotsford LHA. The City's market share averaged 43.5% and in most years fell within a narrow range of 43% and 46% of all burials.

A much lower proportion of cremation interments occur in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries. In no year did the City's market share exceed 25% of total cremation interments. For the nine year period from 1997 to 2005, the proportion of cremation interments in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries averaged only 18.1% of all cremation interments in the Abbotsford LHA. There are several reasons for this. First, there are no above ground options such as columbaria for the disposition of cremated remains or ashes of the deceased. Second, there are no any forms of memorialization available in the civic cemeteries. Third, many persons choose to dispose of the ashes of their loved one informally such as spreading them in a forest, on a mountain or the ocean. Often the urn is simply kept in the home.

<sup>4</sup> 2006 data not yet available from Vital Statistics.

### 3.5.3 Available Supply

As documented in Section 2, the total available supply of gravesites (adults plus infants) and cremation graves is quite limited, except in the Hazelwood Cemetery. As the summary table below notes, there are less than 700 unsold graves in total including infant gravesites. Almost this entire total (664) is located in the Hazelwood Cemetery. An additional 1,615 gravesites have been reserved (pre-need) for future occupancy.

The number of available cremation plots is much smaller. The total unsold inventory is 331 of which a large majority (259) is located in the Hazelwood cemetery. In addition there are 250 reserved cremation plots for future need. For a more detailed inventory of gravesites and cremation plots by cemetery, see Appendix C.

Cemetery	Graves		Cremation Plots	
	Unsold/ Available	Reserved/ Not Occupied	Unsold/ Available	Reserved/ Not Occupied
Hazelwood	664	997	259	155
Musselwhite	34	344	38	72
Aberdeen	0	88	10	18
Mt. Lehman	1	186	24	5
<b>Total Civic</b>	<b>699</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>250</b>

### 3.5.4 Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery

Most remaining burials and cremation interments that take place within the City of Abbotsford occur in the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery. For the seven year period from 2000 to 2006, the number of burials in the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery has ranged from 97 to 134. In two of those years, the number of burials at Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery exceeded the number of burials in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries. However the annual average of 110 in the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery was well below City's average of 137.

Over four out of five burials (average of 80.9%) in Abbotsford take place in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries or the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery. A very small number take place in the South Poplar Mennonite Cemetery and the First Nations cemeteries. The remainder take place outside Abbotsford in other municipal cemeteries or in private cemeteries.

Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery						
Year	Burials		Cremations		Interments	
	Burials	LHA Market Share	Cremations	LHA Market Share	Total	% Burials
2000	120	36.0%	16	3.2%	136	88.2%
2001	111	37.6%	13	2.4%	124	89.5%
2002	106	35.4%	13	2.4%	119	89.1%
2003	116	40.1%	12	2.2%	128	90.6%
2004	97	32.6%	22	3.5%	119	81.5%
2005	134	42.4%	22	3.5%	156	85.9%
2006	88	<sup>5</sup>	15		103	85.4%
Annual Average	110	37.4%	16	2.9%	126	87.2%

As the preceding table indicates, the number of cremations in the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery is very small. The number of cremation interments over the past seven years has averaged 16 per year. This represents only 2.9% of all cremations in the Abbotsford LHA. Over 87% of all dispositions in the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery over the past seven years consisted of casket burials.

The low proportion of cremation interments is due to two main factors. One is the fact that the cemetery caters mainly to Mennonites who strongly prefer burial to cremation. The other is the fact that no above ground cremation option is available at the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery.

### 3.6 LOCAL FUNERAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are a number of funeral homes and crematoria in and near Abbotsford. The following highlights these service providers and their comments about possible improvements:

#### Abbotsford:

##### **Henderson's Funeral Home: 34537 Marshall Road**

- Henderson's has funeral homes in Abbotsford and Chilliwack.
- Henderson's Chilliwack crematorium has one retort.
- Henderson's also has access to the Victory Memorial Gardens/Crematorium in South Surrey, which has two retorts.
- There is an \$85 transport fee to their crematorium in Chilliwack.
- Cremation is 80% of their business with only 20% consisting of full burials.
- Henderson's has been recently acquired by Service Corporation International-(SCI), the largest funeral home provider in Canada and North America.

<sup>5</sup> 2006 data not yet available from Vital Statistics.

Comments:

- The vast majority of persons requiring a burial or cremation will contact a funeral service provider, not a municipal cemetery. As a result, the funeral service provider will contact the City and include the City's prices in the price of their own services – Interment rights and opening and closing costs charged by the City of Abbotsford are usually the majority of the total price.
- A large mobile canopy on wheels to cover mourners in inclement or hot weather should be provided for the Hazelwood cemetery.
- Hazelwood is utilitarian and provides no landscaped or other shelter from wind and inclement weather.
- Niche walls, columbaria, etc are needed (like at Forest Lawn).
- Niche walls would fit well into Hazelwood's new section to the east near the parking lot and cremation plots.
- A scattering garden could be developed as a park with pathway winding around memorial trees, benches, stumps and boulders (containing urns).
- A memorial book should be considered to commemorate the deaths of children, young people and fetal deaths. This would provide a distinctive way to recognize these untimely deaths.
- A pillar-vault as in Ocean View Burial Park could be considered.
- There are no requests for a mausoleum.
- Abbotsford should plan for a crematorium with two retorts, washing and dressing areas, and space for 500 people.
- A walled area for quiet contemplation is very desirable; it could include granite benches with engraved text, memorial plaques and columbaria with flower holders on the columbaria walls.
- Funeral service providers want to work together with the City of Abbotsford on cemetery improvements and would like to be kept up to date on the process.

**Wiebe & Jeske Burial & Cremation Care Providers Ltd.: #202-31314 Peardonville Road**

- Operate the only crematorium located in Abbotsford. It has one retort, and is located in a small industrial business park. Viewing and prayer services are limited due to space.
- The only independent funeral provider in Abbotsford.
- Does cremations for other independents from Hope to Squamish.
- Generally serves the Lower Mainland although 60% of its business comes from Abbotsford.

Comments:

- Have never had a problem with the City's cemeteries. They are well maintained with good staff.
- Pricing could be simplified, e.g., one basic price; (that price can be broken down to include details of the perpetual care fund, opening & closing costs, plot cost, etc.). Set prices that are manageable for lower income working families.
- The City could raise its prices in small increments and the additional revenue could be applied to beautification and other improvements.
- Cemetery design could capture and control water flows so burials are not flooded by underground water and run-off (e.g., capture and divert water into

a stream along which could be a cremation pathway with scattering grounds, urn fountains, boulders, stumps, and benches, etc.).

- Many people don't want to be buried – including no burial of their ashes.
- There is a need to diversify cremation options - including columbaria and scattering ground.
- Hazelwood is unattractive, utilitarian and provides no landscaped or other shelter from wind and inclement weather.
- The language in the funeral industry could be simplified (e.g., call ashes, ashes – not cremains – the public calls them ashes).
- Want to work together with the City since funeral service providers are the City's most frequent cemetery users. In terms of cemetery services, the private and civic interests are much the same.

#### **Woodlawn Funeral Home: 2310 Clearbrook Road**

- Woodlawn is owned by SCI.
- 30% of Woodlawn's business is Indo-Canadian cremations, about 100 Indo-per year; mostly done in Burnaby.

#### **Comments:**

- Anticipate total of 250-260 cremations by year end; a lower volume than normal.
- Woodlawn considered building a crematorium with an attached meeting hall and determined that the number of cremations would not support the investment.
- The Fraser Valley service costs are lower compared to Lower Mainland, B.C. and other provinces.
- People choose cremation plots even though they'd prefer above-ground options because they can keep family together in Abbotsford.
- A map board could be provided for the public at the entrance to each cemetery with the number to appropriate City staff who could assist in finding grave locations.
- Demand exists for family plot areas, especially in the Chinese community.
- The City could provide active burials throughout the cemetery to give families burial options near other family members and to limit the number of nearby open graves at one time thereby giving mourners graveside privacy.
- Provide folding chairs and a collapsible awning at graveside
- Limit future plots to family members of those already interred and to people living within "catchment" area of cemeteries close to capacity.
- Set costs based on desirability of location (higher demand for location draws higher revenue).
- Funeral service providers are familiar with the civic cemeteries from perspective of different user groups and would be pleased to work with the City on improvements.

#### **Aldergrove:**

##### **Personal Alternative Funeral Services: 3070 - 275A Street, Aldergrove**

- Their business is about 70% burial and 30% cremation.
- They serve many of the Mennonite and other Christian communities.
- 20-25% of their business is from Abbotsford and it is mostly burial service.

Comments:

- Municipal services would be used more often if a wider range of options were available for cremation (in addition to cremation plots).
- Abbotsford should put in columbaria and provide other cremation options
- Appreciate the opportunity to have input on the City's cemeteries process

**First Memorial Funeral Services: 27555 31<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Aldergrove**

- First Memorial Funeral Services is owned by SCI
- 90% of First Memorial services are cremations done at Forest Lawn, Burnaby
- First Memorial conducts burials wherever instructed; however, when given a choice people most often choose the cemetery closest to home.

Comments:

- Hundreds of new homes in west Abbotsford without convenient access to any cemetery.
- Aberdeen Cemetery has reached capacity but there is land behind fire hall.
- A columbarium wall could be placed at the back of Aberdeen cemetery.
- Hazelwood Cemetery is a long distance for those who would use Aberdeen.
- Hazelwood is unattractive, utilitarian and provides no landscaped or other shelter from wind and inclement weather.
- Five Rivers in Delta is not used as much due to its longer distance from Abbotsford.
- Sikh community cremations are done on Saturdays and Sundays almost exclusively. This concentrates demand within a limited time period. Cremations Monday to Friday are typically for persons from other faiths or non-faith persons.
- Weekend traffic to the crematoria serving Indo-Canadian communities is highly congested; City should consider having a public transit option to Hazelwood if a crematorium is installed there.

**Delta:**





**Riverside Funeral Home and Crematorium / Five Rivers Community Services Society: 7410 Hopcott Road, Delta**

- This facility is located in an area zoned for industrial use; there was no rezoning application and no public process.
- Large site located in Tilbury Industrial Park in Delta
- Crematorium has been in operation since June 2002
- Management is by a non-profit society and registered charity
- Contains two cremation facilities with capacity for two more (total of four)
- Each facility has pew seating for 500 persons and cremation viewing at the side.
- Folding doors in the middle allow for accommodation of 1,000 persons.
- Provides on-site parking for 300 vehicles.
- Services the entire Lower Mainland but the primary market area is Vancouver, Surrey and Richmond.
- Annual cremations are 400-500.
- Vast majority of cremations include a service.
- Although open to all, the crematorium primarily serves South Asian communities.
- Management claims operation is viable as a community service, not as a profit making business.
- Annual taxes were over \$160,000 but were recently reduced by \$25,000 upon appeal.
- Delta Council was not prepared to pass a tax exemption bylaw for the facility.

## **Mission:**

### **Baker View Community Crematorium & Celebration Centre: 34867 Cemetery Road, Mission**

- This crematorium is owned by the District of Mission.
- It was provided in response to Indo-Canadian communities' expressions of need and some financial support.
- It was used by many funeral homes in the Fraser Valley and operated at a rate of 2 cremations per day until large for-profit businesses entered the market.
- Cremations at this facility fell to one per week and the lack of use caused the kiln to deteriorate.
- Repairs were prohibitively costly. The crematorium was leased to a private operator with another facility on Vancouver Island.
- This facility has yet to generate self-sustaining revenues. Operator is bound to certain time limited restrictions.
- Operator is negotiating with the District of Mission to allow upgrades such as an enclosed hall and a small expansion to better accommodate services.
- Operator is developing a plan to offer the type of space and services for a celebratory approach to an end-of-life service.

## **Burial and Memorial Marker Services:**

### **Abbotsford/Surrey Monuments**

- Abbotsford is a sales office only; Surrey produces the monuments.
- Estimate an average of 30 monuments to Abbotsford cemeteries per month.

### **Melody's Memorials & Markers**

- Most of their product is handled through funeral homes, therefore they have no idea of what number or percentage goes to Abbotsford cemeteries.
- Direct sales show an average of 6 monuments per year go to Abbotsford.

### **Tradesman's Monuments**

- Abbotsford's major supplier of markers and monuments for 40 years.
- Also supplies products to clients around the world.
- Retiring soon and no one is taking over the business.

## **3.7 RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

Known burials are currently recorded in the City's SAP system (financial and human resources database).

### **3.7.1 Historical Records**

Very few early cemetery records are available at City Hall. This is apparently the result of a fire at Matsqui Municipal Hall that destroyed many early records, as well as confusion arising from Amalgamation. The following records survived, and were examined, indicating that there is insufficient information to determine the situation of unknown graves.

- Mount Lehman Cemetery
- Plot receipts dating back to approximately 1902
- Early linen map
- Aberdeen Cemetery
- Receipt Books from 1921 on
- Plot Records (alphabetical index)
- Hazelwood Cemetery
- Alphabetical index

In addition, headstone transcriptions are available through the British Columbia Genealogical Society (<http://www.bcgs.ca/>) for the following cemeteries in Abbotsford:

- Aberdeen Cemetery
- Kilgard Cemetery
- Mount Lehman Cemetery
- Mennonite Cemetery
- Musselwhite Cemetery

### *3.7.2 Enhanced Records Management*

Although the City's current system is adequate to manage interments, there is little built-in flexibility that could be used to enhance records management for the civic cemeteries.

There are differences in the database requirements for cemetery organizations, usually based around their size, the need for accounting functionality, and the need for interactive maps. The advantages to such a system include:

- All information regarding all owners, deceased, interment records, next-of-kin, etc. is instantly available to all terminals, in all office locations.
- Copies of all data are easily stored off-site.
- Handwriting or repeated typing of all new records is eliminated, and old records can be verified as entered.
- No duplication of data entry is required.
- Reports are produced easily for many different needs - local management, central management, and even for public use.

Given the potential advantages of enhanced records management, it is recommended that the City continue to explore the use of an enhanced database system that is available through private sector providers.

## **3.8 HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

The heritage characteristics of each cemetery are of great cultural and heritage significance to the citizens of Abbotsford. However, the oldest parts of each cemetery were established before there were any requirements for perpetual care funds. As the cemeteries age, there are also maintenance issues that are beginning to manifest as safety concerns. The lack of funding has also led to minimal upgrades or improvements. Overall, this situation has created challenges in long-term maintenance and upkeep.

### *3.8.1 Heritage Status*

All four of these cemeteries are of historic significance, and heritage value to the community. Currently, none of these sites are listed on the City of Abbotsford Heritage Register, and they do not have official heritage site status.

In recognition of its cultural and heritage significance to the citizens of Abbotsford, the four civic cemeteries could be placed, by resolution of Council, on the City's Heritage Register. This is an official recognition of significance, but is not equivalent to legal heritage designation. It would be onerous to expect that the cemeteries should be restricted in carrying out normal business operations; however being on the Heritage Register would send a clear message of the intent to conserve their heritage character. This is considered an appropriate level of protection for the sites, as there is no identified threat to their conservation, and there are many activities, such as continued interments, that cause change on a regular basis but in no way have an impact on heritage character. Any major changes anticipated to the heritage sections of each cemetery should, however, be subject to a heritage review process.

### *3.8.2 Operations & Maintenance*

If the cemeteries are listed on the City's Heritage Register, they must be considered as "working sites," where change is constant and ongoing maintenance is a crucial issue. In general, the contractors responsible for cemetery maintenance should be briefed on techniques that will ensure the best possible long-term conservation of historic elements. This could be handled through a workshop format, with instruction from someone versed in conservation techniques. Reference could also be made to existing material on conservation such as *Landscapes of Memories*. Caution should always be exercised when cutting grass or weeds adjacent to grave markers.

### *3.8.3 Grave Marker Conservation Guidelines*

Grave markers deteriorate due to a number of factors, including:

- Environmental conditions and weathering
- Atmospheric pollution
- Incorrect conservation and repair techniques, including improper mortars used in resetting monuments
- Vandalism and graffiti
- Buildup of organic material (moss, lichens, etc.)

Overall, deterioration and vandalism of the grave markers at these four cemeteries has been minimal. There is, however, noticeable deterioration of some individual markers, and lichen and moss bloom on many others. A thorough understanding of stone and other materials is essential before undertaking any conservation treatment or cleaning technique. A highly recommended guide is *Landscapes of Memories*, which outlines in detail the causes of deterioration, and recommends repair and remediation techniques.

### *3.8.4 Repair*

A site survey should be undertaken to determine the extent of damage and the number of markers that require repair. Priorities should be determined. Each marker to be repaired should be examined for cracks, delamination, spalling, or other weaknesses. A determination of who will undertake the work should be made. There are ten common repairs, as further detailed in Landscapes of Memories:

1. Correct minor tilting
2. Reset stone markers
3. Rest bases
4. Reset markers onto bases
5. Repair snapped markers
6. Mortar-fill pinned repairs
7. Repair markers with multiple breaks
8. Mortar-fill missing elements
9. Reset obelisks
10. Repair broken bases

### *3.8.5 Cleaning*

Grave markers should be kept clean and repaired in order to preserve their legibility, and promote their long-term conservation. Overcleaning or aggressive cleaning can cause a great deal of damage, and should be avoided. Determine the simplest and most effective cleaning techniques:

1. Assess the extent of soiling.
2. Try the simplest, inexpensive methods first, including dry-brushing to remove organic material, or small amounts of soapy water with a soft, natural bristle brush (NEVER wire brushes).
3. If further cleaning is required, try wetting the stone thoroughly and then use a bristle brush, starting at the ground and working up, to avoid staining.
4. If that still doesn't work, try LOW-pressure water washing with detergent.
5. For stubborn efflorescence, staining and graffiti, chemical poultices may be required (refer to Landscapes of Memory).
6. Wrought iron is sometimes used as a fencing material or enhancement. Clean and repaint. Gently clean surfaces rust with wire brushes, prime any bare metal, and repaint with Tremclad or similar product. Match original colour (likely black).

### *3.8.6 Community Involvement*

As the cemeteries are community heritage assets, public involvement with their maintenance, upkeep and long-term conservation should be considered a highly desirable objective. This could be accomplished by sponsoring community events for various religious, ethnic and/or civic groups. The events should reflect the individual

character of the cemeteries to familiarize people with the history and services available. Historic tours could be offered to familiarize the public with the cemeteries.

This community involvement has already started with the activities of the B.C. Genealogical Society, which has been undertaking headstone transcriptions. Further community involvement will develop over time, based on public awareness, which can be promoted through a variety of educational activities.

### ***3.8.7 Education & Interpretation***

There are a number of specific aspects of each site's history that can be developed, either as interpretive signs, public brochures, or educational components. The following is a broad range of the sub-themes of interpretation:

- Historical development of the site
- Broad connections to the community
- Pioneer histories
- Personal histories
- Landscape and unique heritage features
- Unique sculptural features, including grave marker symbolism

#### ***Recommended Actions***

- Institute an interpretive sign program. These would be site-specific signs that tell the story of the site and also identify specific elements of interest.
- Install location signs that identify row numbers and sections of each cemetery.
- Publish a walking tour brochure or guide for each cemetery. This would be a very effective way to reach a broader community audience.
- Provide improved online information, including historical information.
- Hold periodic heritage walking tours.

### ***3.8.8 Potential Partners***

It would be helpful to develop community partnerships to advance the goals of long-term management and conservation. These could include the B.C. Genealogical Society (already involved with the sites); the British Columbia Heritage Branch (Community Heritage Planning Program); the British Columbia Heritage Legacy Fund (cost-shared funding for interpretive and commemorative programs); and the Abbotsford School District (educational initiatives). Other partners could be identified as public programs develop.

### ***3.8.9 Volunteer Programs***

The experience of other communities indicates that once the public becomes engaged with the heritage elements of a cemetery, they often take an active role in its conservation. Ross Bay Cemetery in Victoria has been very successful in enlisting volunteers in the restoration of headstones through public workshops in restoration

techniques and a community volunteer program ("Adopt-a-Row"). Similar programs could easily be adopted for the Abbotsford civic cemeteries.

### **3.8.10 Documentation**

The City already maintains documentation and current registers for known burials in the cemeteries. This presents an adequate documentary framework for the current management of the Cemetery. There are, however, a number of "unknown" gravesites, where it is unclear whether or not burials ever occurred. In addition, there is almost no existing historical documentation for the oldest parts of the cemetery other than existing headstones.

Information can be made available to the public through the City's website. Other municipalities now provide burial information and even mapping online. The headstone transcriptions already undertaken by the B.C. Genealogical Society, and other historical information, could be attached to the website.

A systematic investigation and recording should also be undertaken of the historic context and heritage elements of the civic cemeteries. In order to undertake this inventory, a format for documentation should be developed, that includes available information, description, burial information, photographs of the grave marker, and biographical information. Please note that standard genealogical format for dates is day/month/year (e.g. 14 June 1894) and that measurements should be metric. The forms should include the following information:

1. Plot Location
2. Photograph (and negative number)
3. Name of Deceased
4. Date of Birth
5. Date of Death
6. Type of Plot (Single/Double/Family)
7. Description of Marker
8. Inscription (line by line, with dimensions)

For further information, refer to Norm Truswell and David Townsend, *A Guide for the Recording, Care and Use of British Columbia's Heritage Cemeteries*.

## **3.9 SITE ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

For each of the four civic cemeteries, there are opportunities to create and adopt signature designs for signage, entry gates and fencing that utilize local materials, and provide a distinctive and recognizable look for all cemeteries in Abbotsford. Ideally the future entry gates will provide visitors with a comfortable access, and ensuring that two people can enter side by side without compromising the physical security provided by the perimeter fence. It will also provide both Abbotsford residents and visitors with a sense of identity that relates to the history of the community.

There are additional opportunities to expand the range of interment and memorialization arrangements by integrating some or all of the following into the existing cemeteries:

- Columbaria
- Cremation plots
- Scattering Gardens
- Ossuaries
- Family 'Garden' burial plots
- Memorial Benches
- Green burial<sup>6</sup>

Additionally, in response to the many comments regarding the utilitarian and visually bland design of the cemeteries, particularly Hazelwood Cemetery, the Abbotsford Cemetery Bylaw could be amended to enable the development of character and visually interesting cemeteries. The amendment would introduce different styles and sizes of markers, including uprights. It could also allow for above ground interment options, such as family vaults, for which members of some cultural communities have expressed a desire.

There are a number of unknown gravesites in each of the cemeteries, with the greatest number in Aberdeen. There is an opportunity to determine whether or not these graves are occupied through the use of Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR). A program to examine these individual graves should be considered, and if graves are empty, a process should be initiated to reclaim them for re-sale.

In addition, specific enhancements can be introduced that will improve the aesthetics, functionality and capacity of each cemetery:

- **Directional and Entry Signs:** A sign program should be developed for the cemeteries that will identify the individual sections, indicate Row numbering, and identify specific historical aspects. It may be desirable to institute a small number of interpretive signs or plaques that tell the history of the sites. Where possible, traditional materials such as stone and bronze should be used.
- **Built Elements:** can be added that will function as focal points and sitting areas for visitors. These may be dedicated memorials such as those created by the Legion.
- **Wayfinding Systems:** can be integrated into both the signage and the layout of the cemeteries, so visitors can orient themselves when they are looking for a particular grave.
- **Unmarked Graves:** A program could be instituted, where graves are unmarked and the occupant is known, to provide identification with a simple marker. Other historic cemeteries have undertaken this through their annual programs (North Vancouver Cemetery) or through community involvement and special community grants (e.g. Kelowna Cemetery pioneer marker program).

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<sup>6</sup> Green or natural burial refers to a burial site as natural as possible. It includes the use of bio-degradable caskets. Embalming fluids are avoided as are concrete vaults. It should be noted that there are some legal limitations as per Sections 11 and 12 of the *Cremation, Internment and Funeral Services Act*.



- **Landscaping:** There are a number of specimen shade and ornamental trees in each cemetery. The species, age, size and condition of these plantings should be documented as part of a landscape inventory. This inventory should identify the scope and range of plantings in the cemeteries, and will provide the base information for a phased planting plan, as follows:
  - Undertake a inventory of the existing trees and shrubs to determine significant existing plantings, and plot this information on the existing site plans
  - Identify which specimens are targeted for long-term retention, and which will be removed, and possibly replaced
  - Identify which specimens will be removed and/or replaced
  - Develop a phased planting plan, beginning with replacement planting to ensure that removal does not lead to an aggregate loss in plantings overall
  - Update as-built planting plans as required
  
- **Connections to Recreational Trail System:** opportunities should be explored to connect, whenever possible, the cemeteries to recreational trails, thereby enhancing opportunities for passive recreation and public use.
  
- **Lighting:** No specific recommendations are made regarding lighting as the cemeteries closes at dusk. There may be opportunities to introduce low-level feature lighting that would enhance security aspects. This could include uplighting of specimen trees, especially near the entry areas. Any lighting fixtures introduced into the cemetery context should be unobtrusive, and the source of light hidden when possible.

### *3.9.1 Site-Specific Opportunities*

#### **Aberdeen Cemetery**

- Develop the central path to include columbaria/cremation plots, memorial benches and a memorial structure with sitting area at the north end. This will also involve the removal of the existing storage shed.
- Replace chain link fence along southern property line with distinctive new boundary demarcation that may offer sound attenuation.
- Provide new directional, way-finding and entry signage
- Add benches and litter receptacles and replace existing hose bibs provided for flower preparation.
- Enhance plantings that screen the cemetery from adjacent properties to the east and west
- Establish angle parking along the Fraser Highway on both sides of the entry gate
- Determine status of 184 unknown gravesites, and offer vacant sites to prospective purchasers.

## **Hazelwood Cemetery**

- Develop the vacant municipal site between Elmwood Drive and Park Lane for future gravesites, cremation plots and columbaria, and take advantage of views overlooking the existing cemetery
- Add in-ground burial plots on the site of the existing parking lot.
- Provide a pedestrian connection to the Maclure Road Cemetery.
- Create opportunity to develop a new Legion Memorial.
- Develop cremation plots and columbaria along the roadways and sloping grass banks in the 'Old Section' that include benches and ornamental trees.
- Provide additional trees and shrubs throughout the existing burial grounds to add variety and mitigate the large size and uniform development pattern.
- Provide a public way-finding system that includes both directional and entry signage
- Provide for new, main entrance on Elmwood Drive to serve future cemetery expansion and for a crematorium.
- Close access points into the cemetery from Hazelwood Drive
- Identify area near Elmwood Drive suitable for a crematorium with attached indoor assembly areas including significant parking capacity
- Provide for relocated cemetery parking area under the BC Hydro right-of-way with the existing parking area to be reclaimed for gravesites
- Provide for small public reception area suitable for an interactive kiosk adjacent to existing public washrooms
- Screen the existing maintenance area.
- Allow for long term cemetery expansion on vacant municipal land south to Maclure Road.
- Provide for mobile weather protection for gravesite ceremonies

## **Musselwhite Cemetery**

- Expand in-ground burial capacity on the two gravel parking areas along Marshall Road.
- Add a distinctive structure at the northwest corner of the cemetery to provide a community signpost, serve as a gathering point for visitors and provide a location for memorials
- Provide new directional and entry signage

- Add benches and litter receptacles and replace existing hose bibs provided for flower preparation.
- Provide new pathways connecting the new and older parts of the cemetery, as well as columbaria and memorialization opportunities built into the slopes.
- Add to the existing native conifers to provide selective screening.
- Consider a scattering ground within the upper treed area with its native ground cover and shrubs.
- Determine status of 41 unknown gravesites, and offer vacant sites to prospective purchasers.

### **Mt. Lehman Cemetery**

- Close surplus road rights-of-way
- Prepare cemetery expansion area (gravesites, cremation graves and columbaria) on surplus road rights-of-way (requiring road closures) and part of City owned property east of existing cemetery.
- Relocate and reduce size of parking area
- Replace chain link fence with new perimeter demarcation for expanded cemetery area
- Provide new directional and entry signage
- Add benches and replace litter receptacles
- Provide additional trees and shrubs throughout the cemetery to build on the country orchard setting.

### ***3.10 COMMUNITY CREMATORIUM***

For a number of years, the Indo-Canadian community has been requesting that the City of Abbotsford make land available for a crematorium. Their proposal is to create a non-profit society which would then lease an undeveloped part of Hazelwood Cemetery at a nominal sum from the City of Abbotsford. The board of directors of the proposed non-profit society would be comprised of representatives from the two Sikh temples as well as other interested faith communities, including Christian and Hindu.

Meetings held with the Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara Sahib Temple and the Khalsa Diwan Society demonstrated a very strong level of support for the concept of a community crematorium. Appendix F documents meetings held with the Kalgidhar Darbar Gurdwara Sahib Temple on October 31, 2007 and the Khalsa Diwan Society on November 26, 2006. This support was reinforced at the Public Open House held on May 30, 2007 in the foyer and auditorium of the Matsqui Centennial Auditorium. It was attended by 215 persons, the vast majority of which were there to indicate their support for a community crematorium. Appendix J documents the results of the Open House.

The initial objective of the proponents of the community crematorium is to secure support from Council for the concept of a crematorium on vacant civic land located on the Hazelwood Cemetery site. Following that, they propose to form a non-profit organization to undertake the project and initiate fund raising from the South Asian communities as well as other interested groups. The non-profit organization would also be responsible for operating expenses of the facility.

The proponents envision a crematorium development that would:

- Be undertaken by a non-profit organization that would be responsible for constructing and operating the crematorium and attached assembly hall;
- Receive tax exempt status from the City of Abbotsford;
- Be available to all the diverse cultural and religious communities in Abbotsford; and
- Have an adequate site area to meet long term needs as the proposed crematorium may be developed in phases.

A phased expansion is anticipated depending on demand and available financial resources. The site area should be sufficiently large to accommodate building requirements (current plus expansion potential), landscaping and parking. A proposed crematorium site on an undeveloped part of the Hazelwood Cemetery is shown on the drawings prepared by PWL Partnership Landscape Architects Inc. A possible location is shown east of Park Lane with vehicular access from Elmwood Drive. The crematorium would be located north of the Hydro transmission right-of-way adjacent to parking which would be within this right-of-way.

Costs for the following elements will need to be addressed by the proponents:

- Site servicing
- Vehicular access
- Building construction
- Purchase and installation of retort(s)
- Parking development
- Landscaping

There are several challenges that would need to be addressed, all of which are believed to be manageable. First, the nature of the demand is such that utilization would be intense on weekends and modest on weekdays. Although there is no religious requirement, the Indo-Canadian community prefers to hold cremations and celebrations of life on weekends, so much so that weekday use is unusual. As a result the overall utilization rate will not be high even if all weekends are fully utilized. This uneven pattern of utilization can be evened out if the community crematorium is successfully marketed to non-religious and other religious groups

Second, utilization of the proposed crematorium would have an initial market demand based primarily on deceased members of the two Sikh temples in Abbotsford. The estimated potential is 125 annual cremations from the Indo-Canadian community plus additional potential from Sikhs and Hindus in nearby communities. Cremations of deceased Abbotsford residents affiliated with other religions or with no religion are likely to increase over time; however, they will be less likely to use the public assembly facilities. Currently, a total of 200 annual cremations is considered attainable.

Third, the establishment of such a facility will impact local funeral service providers. The impacts would be unevenly distributed due to the different market niches of funeral service providers.

Fourth, although the existing funeral service providers have expressed good will toward the proponents, they do not believe that the proposed concept would be profitable. That is due to the proposed facility size, the number of potential cremations, and the uneven pattern of use (i.e., mainly weekends) for the facility. In general there is no objection to this crematorium concept for Abbotsford provided the facility is not subsidized by City taxpayers.

Fifth, the crematorium concept is driven primarily by cultural and religious considerations. Cost and convenience are also factors. There should be no expectation by any of the stakeholders that a crematorium will be a profitable enterprise, at least not initially.

Sixth, the initial concept that has been proposed is believed to be realistic and attainable. However, a business plan by the proponents is needed in order to demonstrate their financial capability to undertake this project.

It is recommended that Council give a preliminary indication of support for the concept of a community crematorium on a vacant portion the Hazelwood Cemetery. This will enable the proponents to move forward with a detailed proposal. The proponents should then establish a non-profit society that is open to all Abbotsford residents. The proponents recognize the need for co-operation with other organizations. The non-profit society or proponent organization should then prepare a business plan that addresses the following:

- service delivery model;
- size and massing of the crematorium;
- number of retorts;
- vehicular access location from Elmwood Drive;
- location and size of parking;
- utilities and other required services;
- provision for future expansion;
- landscaping; and
- proposed funding to meet capital and operational requirements.

### *3.11 MEETING FUTURE CEMETERY NEEDS*

Except for Hazelwood, there is currently very limited capacity for expansion. If Hazelwood is intensively developed, and opportunities considered for the other cemeteries, there can be City-wide capacity for a number of years, especially if alternate memorialization methods are considered. The capacity of expansion of municipal facilities, however, is finite. The existing supply of gravesites and cremation graves is documented in Appendix C.

It is anticipated that there will be approximately 9,900 burials plus 30,000 cremations in the Abbotsford Local Health Area over the next 30 years. The Abbotsford civic market share of burials is estimated at 50% based on additional capacity being made available in all cemeteries except Aberdeen. While this is somewhat above the historic levels, which are typically 43%-46%, it is considered conservative if site enhancement opportunities take place as identified in Section 3.9.1. This market share would result in a need to provide close to 5,000 burial gravesites over the next 30 years.

One important variable which will have a major effect on demand in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries is the future of the adjacent Mennonite Cemetery on Maclure Road. The Mennonite Cemetery has limited capacity and will be filled in approximately five years unless an additional site is secured. The adjacent Crown land to the west is one potential expansion area. A cemetery would be an ideal land use given its access and transmission right-of-way constraints. This site is owned by the Ministry of Transportation for long-term interchange needs. The entire land area will not be required but until a design has been prepared, the precise transportation requirements will not be known. The Ministry of Transportation is prepared to consider a cemetery use for any surplus land this is one of the few land uses that will generate no traffic or access concerns.

It is more difficult to determine future cremation needs in Abbotsford's civic cemeteries. The existing market share is less than 20%. While very low, it is not surprising considering the limited options that are provided. A 30% market share is considered reasonable provided that additional cremation plots are made available in all four cemeteries, columbaria are introduced to Hazelwood and Musselwhite Cemeteries, a spreading ground/depository for ashes is provided and other memorialization options are introduced. With this market share, approximately 9,000 cremations can be accommodated (above ground and in-ground) over the next 30 years.

The vast majority of cemetery expansion opportunities (93.4%) are available in the Hazelwood Cemetery. The estimated area is at least 72,000 square metres (17.8 acres), mainly south and east of the existing developed cemetery area.

Mt. Lehman Cemetery also has significant expansion potential, although it is small compared to Hazelwood. Mt. Lehman's potential expansion of 4,100 square metres (1.0 acre) represents 5.3% of the total of all four cemeteries. This is based on road closures and the improved utilization of the adjacent municipal land, now used in part for parking. With road closures and the inclusion of the triangular municipal site to the east, 400-500 gravesites could be added to the Mt. Lehman Cemetery.

Musselwhite Cemetery has limited expansion potential of approximately 830 square metres. This consists of the westerly undeveloped part, part of the gravel parking areas

along Marshall Road and a memorialization walkway connecting the old and new sections. Most of the expansion potential will be for cremation plots and columbaria.

Finally the Aberdeen Cemetery has minimal expansion potential of 140 square metres. This is limited to utilization of the edges of the central access road. Significant expansion could take place only if additional land is acquired.

Overall, Abbotsford's civic cemeteries can accommodate all the anticipated demand for interments over the next 30 years. This includes interments both by burial and of cremated remains. The anticipated demand can be met with no additional land acquisition by the City of Abbotsford. However this assumes development of vacant lands within existing cemeteries improved utilization of existing cemeteries, road closures, freeing up of unknown graves, if applicable, and introduction of columbaria and other forms of memorialization.

### *3.12 CEMETERY PRICING*

The City of Abbotsford has participated in a joint survey of cemetery prices for many of the Lower mainland cemeteries. This has been updated where applicable. This updated survey is contained in Appendix E.

Currently City of Abbotsford rates are well below the average of other municipal cemeteries. The City of Abbotsford currently charges \$735.00 for an adult burial plot plus \$420.00 for perpetual care, \$695.00 for interment fees and \$195.00 for a liner for a total of \$2,045.00. The average for 12 other civic cemeteries that were surveyed is \$3,217.67. This difference is \$1,172.67 or 57% higher than Abbotsford's charges.<sup>7</sup> When compared with municipal cemeteries in the FRVD and the eastern part of the GVRD, the average of these 7 other municipal cemeteries is \$2,769.71 or 35% above the fees charged by the City of Abbotsford.<sup>8</sup>

For non-residents, Abbotsford's charges for a grave including opening and closing costs are \$2,835.00. This compares with an average of \$4,129.00 for 7 surveyed municipal cemeteries in the FVRD and eastern GVRD. These burial fees for non-residents are \$1,294.00 or 46% higher than those of the City of Abbotsford.

For cremation interments, the City of Abbotsford charges \$385.00 for the plot, \$185.00 for the perpetual care fund and \$220.00 in interment fees for a total of \$790.00. This compares with an average of \$1,034.86 for 7 surveyed municipal cemeteries in the FVRD and eastern GVRD. These burial fees are \$244.86 or 31% higher than those of the City of Abbotsford. Comparable cremation interment charges for deceased non-residents are \$835.00 in Abbotsford compared to an average of \$1,145.75 for the 7 surveyed municipal cemeteries in the FVRD and eastern GVRD. The difference is \$310.75 or 37% above those of the City of Abbotsford.

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<sup>7</sup> Consisting of the Cities of Surrey, New Westminster, Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, North Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops, Kelowna, the Districts of West Vancouver, Maple Ridge and Mission and the Township of Langley. The City of Vancouver burial rates are not available as a new rate scheduled is pending.

<sup>8</sup> Consisting of the Cities of Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, New Westminster, Surrey, the Township of Langley and the Districts of Mission and Maple Ridge as documented in Appendix E.

As a cautionary comment, it should be noted that there is a significant range in the quality of municipal cemeteries as some have undergone major capital improvements while others have not. Nevertheless Abbotsford's charges are at the low end of the municipal range. While some of the surveyed cemeteries provide a higher level of aesthetic amenities, there is no doubt that Abbotsford's price structure warrants upward revision. A phased increase to bring Abbotsford's cemetery pricing to the municipal average should take place. This should be undertaken in conjunction with scheduled improvements. That way, residents would see the added value that would be associated with a price increase.

Currently prices charged are the same for all four civic cemeteries. However the level of amenity is generally considered to be higher in the three smaller cemeteries. The costs of interment are likely higher in the three smaller cemeteries as well since all equipment is located at the Hazelwood Cemetery. The three smaller cemeteries also have limited or no additional capacity without new capital investment. In the case of Musselwhite Cemetery, higher development costs should be anticipated due to the significant topographic variations that are present. As a result, a variable price structure merits taking these factors into consideration.

Finally, a higher price structure for interment of deceased non-residents is a common feature in most municipal cemeteries. As long as some municipal revenues are required to support civic cemeteries, a two tiered price structure for gravesites and cremation plots is justified. A significant premium for burial graves for deceased non-residents should be maintained.

### ***3.13 CEMETERY CARE TRUST FUND***

The balance in the Cemetery Care Trust Fund was \$2,623,000 for the year ended December 31, 2006. This consisted of portfolio investments of \$2,146,000 plus accounts receivable of \$477,000. The fund has increased from \$1,967,774 at the end of 2000. Portfolio investments consist of long-term corporate and government investments with annual yields averaging 5.3 to 5.4%.

In 2002, the Cemetery Care Trust Fund began expending funds on the perpetual care and maintenance of the City's cemeteries. In 2005, \$107,000 was transferred from the general operating fund for the City's operations. This was reduced to \$89,000 in 2006.

### ***3.14 CEMETERY CAPITAL FUNDS***

Currently no capital funds are allocated for cemetery improvements. Consideration should be given in future budgets to address recommended improvements to Abbotsford civic cemeteries. An increase in cemetery fees will also generate additional revenue, some of which can be allocated for capital improvements.



## **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Individual Cemeteries**

- A. Develop an individual Master Plan for each of the four municipal cemeteries that diversifies the types of memorialization, details areas for expansion, and indicates planned improvements to parking, fencing, signage and planting. Site specific opportunities for each cemetery are documented in Section 3.9.1.

### **Interment Options**

- B. Consider adding new markers for existing gravesites that are unmarked and where the occupant is known.
- C. Initiate a program to identify and reclaim unknown graves in Aberdeen and Musselwhite Cemeteries.
- D. Introduce columbaria to Hazelwood and Musselwhite Cemeteries and possibly Mt. Lehman and Aberdeen as well.
- E. Explore diversified memorialization and interment options, recognizing evolving market trends. Capacity could be increased almost indefinitely through the addition of columbaria, ossuaries, scattering ground/depositary and other forms of memorialization.
- F. Amend the Cemetery Bylaw to allow for different styles and sizes of markers, including uprights, and above ground interment options to allow character development and visually interesting cemeteries, particularly in Hazelwood Cemetery.

### **Operations & Maintenance**

- G. Purchase an enhanced records management database. Information on the leading Canadian product, Stone Orchard Software, is contained in Appendix H.
- H. Brief staff and contractors responsible for cemetery maintenance on techniques that will ensure the best possible long-term conservation of historic elements.
- I. Brief staff and contractors on the importance of proper conservation procedures.
- J. Involve community volunteers in the ongoing restoration of grave markers.

### **Site Enhancements**

- K. Undertake a phased series of site improvements, including new entrance gates, fencing, and other improvements.
- L. Develop an identity for the four cemeteries that relates to that of the City of Abbotsford as a whole, including replacement of the existing signage.
- M. Add wayfinding systems, maps and directional signs. This may also include historical information.
- N. Consider the addition of lighting where needed.

### **Landscaping Inventory and Future Development**

- O. Undertake a landscape inventory that will identify the scope and range of plantings in each cemetery.
- P. Develop a phased planting plan.

### **Heritage Management, Education & Interpretation**

- Q. Include the four civic cemeteries on the City of Abbotsford Heritage Register and document their historic significance.
- R. Institute an interpretive sign program. These would include site-specific signs that tell the story of the site and also identify specific elements of interest.
- S. Hold periodic walking tours of each site and publish a walking tour brochure or guide of each cemetery in cooperation with interested stakeholders.
- T. Provide improved online information.
- U. Undertake an inventory of the historic context and specific heritage elements of each civic cemetery.

### **Crematorium**

- V. Support the concept of a community crematorium on a vacant portion of the Hazelwood Cemetery as outlined in Section 3.10.

### **Future Capacity**

- W. Review cemetery needs in 15 years and consider acquisition of new cemetery sites for future provision of cemetery services.

## **Financial**

- X. Introduce fee increases to Abbotsford's cemetery pricing with the objective of reaching the average of other comparable municipalities in conjunction with scheduled improvements.
- Y. Consider variable pricing for Abbotsford's civic cemeteries taking amenities, development costs and available supply into consideration.