

City Council approves reports on housing needs and targets

On Nov. 5, City Council directed staff to submit their first annual Housing Target Progress Report to the Minister of Housing and publish it, and their Interim Housing Needs Report (HNR), on the City’s website.

The Housing Target Progress Report found that from Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024, 602 net new units were completed in Abbotsford. This is 59 per cent of the Year 1 target of 1,022 new units.

During this timeframe, the City approved 2,079 new housing units, with 817 of them having been issued building permits. A further 2,687 units have been approved in principle and there are 1,152 in-stream applications. All residential development applications have been supported by Council. If we continue to process applications at this rate, we will achieve the Year 5 targets.

This past year the City has undertaken many initiatives to help reach the Province’s housing targets, some of which include accessing the Housing Accelerator Fund, proceeding with a Secondary Suites Incentive Program, reviewing its development application process, digitizing building permits and contributing land for supportive housing.

The Interim HNR covers three new legislated requirements: A list of actions taken by the City to reduce housing needs since the last HNR, a statement about the need for housing near transportation infrastructure, and the number of housing units required to meet current and anticipated need for the next five and 20 years. According to the HNR calculation method, Abbotsford will need 11,066 and 37,185 new units in five and 20 years, respectively.

Commercial Truck Parking Strategy advances to final stage

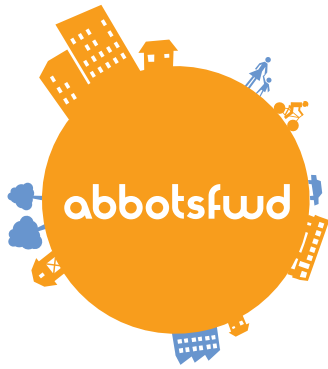
On Nov. 26, City Council directed staff to move forward with finalizing the Commercial Truck Parking Strategy. In their presentation to Council, staff shared the following five proposed strategies that were developed through engagement workshops, open houses and the City’s Let’s Talk Abbotsford online tool, as part of Stage 2, the Draft Strategy Phase.

1. **Reduce the amount of vehicle parking in industrial areas and introduce truck parking minimums:** This plan follows the example of Lower Mainland municipalities that have lower minimum staff or customer parking requirements. This solution could be implemented quickly and would be a good option for short-haul local truckers.
2. **Advocate for provincial plans that address overnight truck parking and services on provincial land:** Contrary to best practices throughout North America, BC does not have a comprehensive freight-movement strategy that includes overnight truck parking. This plan involves continued advocacy through political channels and staff-to-staff planning efforts to move the Province to include overnight truck parking in its transportation plans, including along Highway 1.
3. **Allow commercial truck parking on non-ALR land on the Fraser Highway Corridor:** This plan involves the City re-designating privately-owned land and

creating new land use regulations through the OCP update to permit truck parking on the Fraser Highway Corridor. This solution received overwhelming public support, aligns with public desire for parking in agricultural areas, plus there already is authorized truck parking in the area.

4. **Allow overnight truck parking within regional commercial uses:** Requiring a minor text amendment to the Zoning Bylaw, this plan would allow some “Big Box” property owners to permit truck parking on their land. This solution removes zoning barriers, could be implemented quickly and would be a good option for short-haul local truckers.
5. **Enable commercial truck parking on industrial streets:** This plan follows Surrey’s example in allowing overnight truck parking on specific industrial streets. This solution is supported by the trucking industry and requires no new infrastructure or land, only regulatory changes.

Staff will now engage with the public on the City’s Let’s Talk page and present the finalized Commercial Truck Parking Strategy to the Business, Innovation and Public Affairs Advisory Committee, and the Development, Transportation and Infrastructure Advisory Committee, before presenting the Strategy to City Council for final approval.



Official Community Plan proceeds to next stage

On Nov. 26, City Council directed staff to begin Stage 3 of the Abbotsford 2050 Official Community Plan (OCP), the Prepare New Policy stage, as well as the related public engagement.

Staff presented Stage 2 of the OCP, the New Directions Report. The report was informed by public engagement, including in-person open house and pop-up events and the Let's Talk Abbotsford web page. The three key themes that were identified are:

1. **Refine the big picture:** This refers to updating the OCP's vision to reflect a regional role, strengthening the City's climate policy, exploring expansion of the Primary Transit Corridor, increasing opportunities for housing, jobs and economic development, and exploring adding a new mixed-use area between Mill Lake Park and the hospital.
2. **Increase housing affordability, diversity and supply:** This looks at expanding small-scale multi-unit housing (SSMUH) options and allowing more SSMUH development in certain areas, re-designating lands to support diverse housing options like townhouses and apartments, and exploring opportunities for below-market or non-market housing on place of worship sites.
3. **Support and guide growth:** This involves improving guidance for considering new institutional land uses such as schools and places of worship, exploring policies that support job growth and the local economy, reviewing and updating park and open space policies, updating guidance and tools for development near steep slopes, hazards and natural areas, and strengthening multi-family development design guidelines.

Stage 3 involves preparing and testing draft policy and regulation changes based on the New Directions, followed by further in-person and online engagement with the community, agencies, local First Nations and special interest organizations in mid-2025.

Visit the project page at letstalkabbotsford.ca/OCP to learn more and get involved.

Mill Lake Park Master Plan moves to next stage

On Nov. 5, City Council directed staff to proceed to the third stage of the Mill Lake Park Master Plan, the Draft Master Plan, including further community engagement.

In their presentation to Council, staff shared the results of Stage 2 of the Plan, the Exploring Options phase. This included the findings from public engagement in fall 2023, as well as staff's proposed preferred concept plan for the park.

Staff collected public feedback through surveys, open houses and meetings with park user groups. The top five takeaways from the written comments revealed a desire for the maintenance and improvement of the boardwalk and pool, parking options that consider factors like ability and safety, improved baseball facilities and safer paths and trails.

The top five park elements, activities or amenities respondents would like to see in the park are a dog park, disc golf, retaining the pool, rebuilding the trestle bridge and retaining the boardwalk. Eighty per cent of respondents also want to see food service in the park.

Stage 3 of the plan will prioritize programs and amenities, planned renewal or removal of infrastructure, and improve perceived safety and accessibility in the park over the coming decades. This will involve engaging the public through advisory committees, Let's Talk Abbotsford, social media and meetings with interested parties.