

Council speeds up and waives fees for repair permits for flood-affected properties

At their Dec. 16 meeting, City Council directed staff to waive building permit fees and expedite permit processing to support property owners in Sumas Prairie impacted by December's flood.

In total, 485 properties across Sumas Prairie were placed under Evacuation Order. For the next 12 months, for eligible properties, the City will:

- Prioritize restoration building permits by advancing permits to the inspection stage immediately;
- Expedite demolition permits and building permits for structural repairs, with a review and issuance target of two working days or less;
- Expedite building permits for reconstruction of accessory structures, such as barns or sheds, with a review and issuance target of five working days, and;
- Waive flood restoration building permit and demolition permit fees.

This approach mirrors actions taken following the 2021 flooding, when Council also waived restoration-related fees to help ease the financial burden on affected residents.

See a map of eligible properties at abbotsford.ca/eligiblepropertiesmap.

Council endorses new Public Art Policy

At their Dec. 16 meeting, City Council adopted the new Public Art Policy.

In their report to Council, staff highlighted the key enhancements to the new Policy. These include:

- Improving how the Policy is governed by providing clearer processes for identifying and approving projects, improved criteria for when and how the City will work with selection panels, and clarity around community participation, artist selection and the final approval of major, long-term projects.
- Increasing opportunities for community and developer-led public art by streamlining the public art creation and implementation process and increasing options for developer participation.
- Supporting respectful cultural inclusion and representation by incorporating best practices for Indigenous and culturally focused public art.
- Strengthening the management of the Civic Collection by enhancing maintenance and conservation standards, clarifying criteria for artwork relocation and deaccession, and defining the process and parameters around public art donations.

View the staff presentation at abbotsford.ca/publicartpolicy2025.

Council adopts Historic Downtown Abbotsford BIA Bylaw

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council adopted the updated Abbotsford Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) Bylaw following opportunities for affected property owners to weigh in on the changes.

The amendments will see:

- 25 properties added to the BIA to better align it with the Historic Downtown Neighbourhood Plan, Zoning Bylaw and other administrative bylaws
- an increase in the annual revenue limit from \$600,000 to \$757,050, increasing by 3 per cent compound interest each year thereafter until the bylaw expires
- the renewal of the bylaw for a new 10-year term
- the word “East” removed from the original name of the bylaw (Abbotsford East Downtown Business Improvement Area Bylaw)

View the staff presentation at: abbotsford.ca/BIABylaw2025.

Council approves application for UBCM emergency preparedness grant

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council approved an application for a \$15,000 Union of BC Municipalities 2026 Community Emergency Preparedness Fund Emergency Support Services (ESS) grant.

In their report to Council, staff stated that the funding will support the ongoing training and development of the City's ESS team by sending four to six ESS team members to the annual Network of ESS Teams Conference in Kamloops.

The funding would also cover supplies for evacuees who are often unprepared during emergencies. This includes rain ponchos, mylar blankets and flip-flops to help protect against inclement weather and provide immediate footwear, as well as five neurological sensory kits to support evacuees with specific needs.

Council adopts Abbotsforward 2050 – the update to the Official Community Plan

At their Dec. 16 Meeting, City Council adopted the updated Official Community Plan (OCP), Abbotsforward 2050. This is the main planning document that outlines how the City will grow over the next 25 years, covering areas such as land use, housing, transportation, economic growth and the environment.

During the two-year process, extensive community outreach was done with residents, advisory committees, industry groups, external agencies and First Nations. The City held 23 in-person events attracting more than 1,900 people, and 650 surveys and 3,000 written comments were submitted online.

Some key OCP updates include:

- Providing more flexible Small Scale Multi-Unit Housing options.
- Strengthening policies that guide how the City plans for and acquires new parks.
- Adding and updating policies that support arts, culture, heritage, accessibility, climate resilience, and a strong local economy.
- Introducing new “Secondary Transit Corridors” connecting Highstreet and the hospital to the “Primary Transit Corridor,” which runs along South Fraser Way between Clearbrook and McCallum Road, and south to UFV.
- Establishing a new mixed-use centre between the hospital and Mill Lake Park to broaden housing options alongside complementary commercial uses.
- Adding new townhouse and apartment areas near mixed-use centres, south of the City Centre, and along major roads.
- Introducing new requirements for publicly accessible amenities and gathering spaces on larger Neighbourhood Centre development sites.
- Creating new opportunities for non-market housing on place of worship sites.
- Introducing a new Gateway Commercial land use that elevates design expectations at city entry points and enables tourist accommodation up to six stores.
- Establishing new opportunities for commercial truck parking near Fraser Highway.

Council amends Five-Year Financial Plan Bylaw

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council amended the 2025-2029 Financial Plan Bylaw to incorporate additional items that have arisen since the original bylaw and first budget amendment adopted in May.

The amendments cover the costs of Civic Plaza encampment reclamation, a temporary staff position to manage the Fraser Valley Highway 1 Corridor Improvement Program, the purchase of property on Gladys Avenue; additions to the Highstreet Transit Exchange including bus bays for articulated buses, charging stations for electric buses and a public plaza; and Mill Lake Park pathway widening.

The proposed budget amendments do not affect the property tax rate and will not increase the proposed property tax revenue increase for the year.

Council amends Intermunicipal Business Licence Bylaw

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council amended the Intermunicipal Business Licence (IMBL) Bylaw to add health care professionals and services to the Fraser Valley IMBL program so they can operate in the 12 participating communities with one licence.

In their report to Council, staff noted that this change will bring the Fraser Valley IMBL in-line with other provincial IMBL programs, contribute to greater regional coordination and promote a welcoming business climate.

The participating municipalities are the Cities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, Mission, Pitt Meadows and Surrey; the Districts of Hope and Kent, the Township of Langley, and the Village of Harrison Hot Springs. In 2024, 4,897 IMBLs were issued by participating municipalities.

Council approves Memorial Forest Initiative

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council approved a Memorial Forest Initiative, which could lead to the establishment of Abbotsford's first memorial forest where residents can work with the City to plant trees to commemorate loved ones.

In their report to Council, staff suggested 0.4-ha Hughes Park at 1395 Clearbrook Rd. as a possible location for the memorial forest, as it is the former site of Poplar Hall, which, among other things, hosted church services. Active recreational use of Hughes Park is challenging, in part due to a lack of ample parking and amenities which are unlikely to be built as the park is within the Agricultural Land Reserve. The nearby Albert Dyck Memorial Park serves the community very well with Walmsley Lake, walking trails, washrooms and ample parking.

Staff said there is space for 38 memorial trees and recommend poplar trees or Swedish columnar aspen as they are narrow and upright, allowing for close but not congested planting. The names of those being honoured would be etched onto a memorial wall as part of a small gathering space.

Council forwards Agricultural Land Commission application for Aldergrove Regional Park improvements

At their Dec. 9 meeting, City Council forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission with support an application to expand and improve facilities within Aldergrove Regional Park.

As the property owner, Metro Vancouver Regional District is seeking to increase the visitor capacity of existing park facilities while improving existing assets. This involves two distinct projects, on two separate properties:

1. Dog Off-Leash Area Proposal (27906 Huntingdon Rd.): Expand the existing gravel parking lot and add an outhouse.
2. Bowl Parking Lot Paving Proposal (501 Lefevre Rd.): Pave the existing parking lot at the Aldergrove Bowl and increase the tree canopy.

