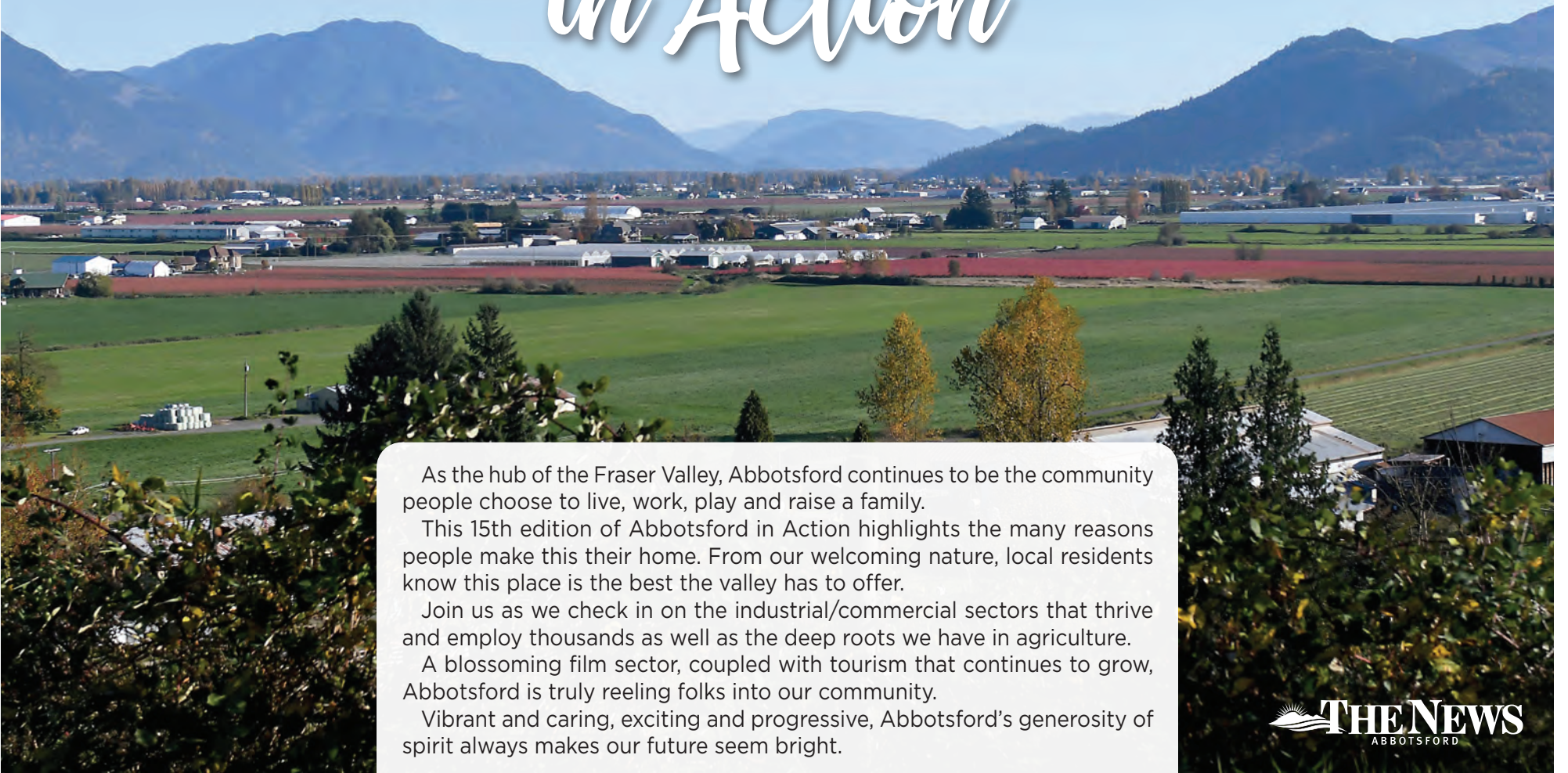




ABBOTSFORD RD

in Action



As the hub of the Fraser Valley, Abbotsford continues to be the community people choose to live, work, play and raise a family.

This 15th edition of Abbotsford in Action highlights the many reasons people make this their home. From our welcoming nature, local residents know this place is the best the valley has to offer.

Join us as we check in on the industrial/commercial sectors that thrive and employ thousands as well as the deep roots we have in agriculture.

A blossoming film sector, coupled with tourism that continues to grow, Abbotsford is truly reeling folks into our community.

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Message from the Mayor

Abbotsford city council is now officially more than halfway through our term, and I'm pleased to reflect on the progress we've made together in our second year of office.

Last year saw us continue to build on the strong foundation of our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, advancing many initiatives aimed at building a vibrant and more sustainable future for everyone in Abbotsford.

In our first year, we adopted the McKee Neighbourhood Plan and we are now processing a large development application for about 105 single-family lots and two large townhouse developments in that neighbourhood. Substantial growth and building are certainly on the horizon for our community as in 2024, we approved more than 2,100 residential units, with another 2,600 approved in principle. These strong numbers translate to creating more housing opportunities for individuals and families looking to put down roots in Abbotsford.

Additionally, in 2024, we digitized our building inspections and permits, which has reduced wait times, and we've been approving developments at a record-setting pace, culminating in a record-setting \$784 million in construction value for last year.

Economic growth remains strong for our city, and through our newly adopted Business Retention and Expansion Strategy, we will continue to see ongoing support and engagement with local businesses and industry sectors. We are well positioned to support long-term growth as a "city of choice" for development and sustainable investment.

In 2024, we negotiated with the province through BC Housing for more than 220 new shelter spaces and supportive housing units and, thanks to our federal Reaching Home program funding, we also invested more than \$1.78 million in projects that help to house vulnerable people.

We also led the way in innovation, creating a new app that supports our local community front-line social workers to improve their service delivery, while our Abbotsford ACCESS team worked to identify gaps in service and connect those dealing with mental health and addictions, and those experiencing homelessness, with help.

As a city, we continue to advocate for more support from senior levels of government for our most vulnerable residents and are constantly working closely with the Abbotsford Police Department to achieve their vision of Abbotsford as the Safest City in B.C.

Of significance last year, we secured \$76.6 million in provincial funding, which was the largest grant in the city's history, to upgrade the Barrowtown Pump Station and improve our flood resiliency.

We also saw the completion of the new Montrose Transit Exchange and finalized a turf field joint-use agreement with the Abbotsford school district. We've also added new facilities and playgrounds at several of our community parks.

However, like many cities, we continue to face challenging issues, from housing affordability, to mental health and addiction impacts, to inflation and rising costs.

These remain among our top priorities as city council, and we are determined to push for the resources, support and key partnerships required to address these challenges and support our dynamic community.

Looking ahead, 2025 will be a milestone year. We are marking the 30th anniversary of the City of Abbotsford, while also advancing the update of our Official Community Plan, which will shape how we grow as a community into the future.

Abbotsford is more than a city – it's our home. It's where we live, work and raise our families. Serving this community is a privilege, and I am so proud of what we've accomplished together so far.

There always will be more work to be done, but we remain committed to moving forward, advocating for the needs of our residents and businesses, and building Abbotsford into the culture and economic Hub of the Fraser Valley.

INSIDE

- A record year 6
- Reeling them in 9
- Nearing completion 10
- Celebrating 50 years 15
- Local, local, local 17
- Greenhouse growing 20
- Chamber challenge 22

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UPCOMING EVENTS

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March 5th, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

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BUILDING INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES
February 26th, 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM



FINANCIAL FITNESS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH WLC
March 6th, 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

MEMBER WEBINAR
THE END OF WINDOWS 10 & ITS IMPACT ON SECURITY
February, 28th, 12:00 PM - 1:15 PM



COURAGE TO RISE
THE POWER OF ONE STORY:
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
March 7th, 11:30 AM - 3:00 PM



New repair shop

The city has approved a 6,600-square-metre (71,000-square-foot) industrial building on Foy Street that will house a new repair shop and storage container warehouse for U-Haul and a 5,060-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) building in the Mt. Lehman industrial area for Northwest Stoves



The city approved building permits for 25,000 square feet of commercial space in 2024. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

Industrial and commercial sector growth continues to boom

Construction value of \$784 million breaks record for 2024

“

“We have one of the most diversified industrial bases of any municipality – everything from the aggregates to aerospace.”

- Mayor Ross Siemens



Building permit approvals in Abbotsford for 2024 amounted to a record-breaking construction value of more than \$784 million, including 17,000 square metres (183,000 square feet) of new industrial floor space and 2,300 square metres (25,000 square feet) of commercial space.

Mayor Ross Siemens said Abbotsford continues to be an attractive place for industry.

The community has plenty to offer – including proximity to the U.S. border, a thriving airport, and an ethnically diverse population and economy.

“We have one of the most diversified industrial bases of any municipality – everything from the aggregates to aerospace,” Siemens said.

A common challenge facing every community in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley is the growing shortage of industrial land. But Siemens said Abbotsford has some “longer term opportunities” to develop the sector, particularly as it pertains to farming.

“What we do need to put our head – our minds – toward is what does modern agriculture need to continue?” he said.

“That’s why our long-term flood mitigation plan, for instance, is not just about getting rid of water when it comes over too quickly, but how do we store water

and provide irrigation to make our prairie even more productive?”

In the meantime, several large projects are underway.

The city’s largest industrial development ever – Hungerford Properties’ 140-acre Xchange Business Park – was approved in early 2021 on Mt. Lehman Road north of Highway 1 and Highstreet Shopping Centre.

The project involves 11 buildings encompassing 1.3 million square feet of space. The buildings are mostly slated for industrial use, but the city has also changed its zoning bylaws to allow for up to 40 per cent of floor space to be used for office, retail, rental and product display – as long as the goods are manufactured or warehoused on site.

The first two buildings are now complete, and the site welcomed its first tenant – Cintas Corporation – in 2024, which provided about 100 new jobs.

Another massive project is a 143,500-square-foot expansion of the dairy processing operation at Vitalus Nutrition at the corner of Mt. Lehman and Downes roads. The provincial government announced in April 2024 that it was contributing \$25 million to the project.

The expansion is expected to increase the number of Vitalus employees from 135 to more than 230 when it is complete.

Construction is also continuing on the city’s second-largest industrial development – a 250,000-square-foot project on Riverside Road that will contain six buildings to be used for light industrial and warehousing. Possible industries that could use the site include transportation, logistics and distribution.

The city has also approved a 6,600-square-metre (71,000-square-foot) industrial building on Foy Street that will house a new repair shop and storage container warehouse for U-Haul and a 5,060-square-metre (54,000-square-foot) building in the Mt. Lehman industrial area for Northwest Stoves.

The commercial sector is also seeing continued growth, with 2,300 square metres (25,000 square feet) of new commercial space approved through development permits in 2024.

New commercial spaces approved last year were primarily composed of small areas within mixed-use developments in the historic downtown and city centre – for example, a business occupying the bottom level of an apartment building.

Agricultural innovation continues to be a main source of growth in the community.

The Abbotsford International Airport is another

Continued on page 5

Aerospace, trucking and gravel also important

Continued from page 4

crucial sector contributing to the city's industrial and commercial base.

More than 1,000 people are directly employed at companies based at the airport, which remains home to some of the city's biggest employers. Cascade Aerospace employs hundreds of workers at its maintenance facility, which is one of two Lockheed-Martin-authorized C-130 heavy maintenance centres in the world.

The company in July 2024 started its IMP Academy, a paid apprenticeship program to develop aircraft maintenance technicians.

Other major companies include Marshall Aerospace, which has its head office at YXX; Chinook Helicopters, which offers flight training; and Conair Group, which builds and operates aircraft used to fight forest fires in British Columbia and elsewhere.

Abbotsford is also a transportation hub and home to truck drivers working for companies such as Valley Carriers, Vedder Transport and Tri-Link Systems who facilitate the movement of goods around the Lower Mainland and Western Canada.

The rapid growth of the Lower Mainland has been, and continues to be, facilitated in part by another key industrial resource: gravel. Abbotsford provides much of the aggregate used by builders around the region, and its trucking companies and truck drivers are key players in getting that product to customers.



Cintas Corporation is the first tenant of the 140-acre Xchange Business Park on Mt. Lehman Road north of Highway 1. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

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Highstreet Village

Another major project under construction is the Highstreet Village apartment-and-townhouse project at Mt. Lehman Road and Cardinal Avenue, north of Highstreet Shopping Centre. The project consists of nine condo buildings and 147 townhouse units, amounting to more than 700 housing units in total.



Construction is underway on the Cooper Meadows development on the former Cooper Farm on McMillan Road. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

Highest number of housing units approved marks new record for city

Several massive housing projects currently underway

“

“What we’ve really seen an uptick on is the four- to six-storey apartment condos. A lot of young families like the idea of a townhouse as well ... and then for people who are downsizing, townhouses are a really good option.”
- Mayor Ross Siemens

Residential development flourished in Abbotsford in 2024, setting a record for the highest number of housing units approved in the city in any given year.

The total number of units – single-family lots, apartments and townhouses – increased from 980 in 2023 to 2,112 in 2024, representing a 115 per cent increase.

Of the 2,112 units approved, 156 were for single-family lots and the rest were for apartments and townhouses.

The total for 2024 also broke the prior record – set in 2018 – by 42 per cent, and compares to a five-year average of approximately 900 units.

Mayor Ross Siemens said there are a few reasons for the increase, one of them being a continued rise in construction since the pandemic.

He said, as well, tougher economic times means more young families from Vancouver-area suburbs are turning to more-affordable options in the Fraser Valley, and developers are responding to that demand.

“What we’ve really seen an uptick on is the four- to six-storey apartment condos. A lot of young families like the idea of a townhouse as well ... and then for people who are downsizing, townhouses are a really good option,” he said.

Siemens said developers also appreciate the work that the city has put into its various neighbourhood plans, which provide guidelines for how land can be used and how it will be serviced.

Construction is continuing on several large residential projects in Abbotsford.

The Rail District, which broke ground in 2021, is a massive development in the historic downtown core on the east side of the city.

The “master planned community” by developer Infinity Properties is located on the 19-acre site of the former Clayburn Brick Plant property east of McCallum Road and north of George Ferguson Way and Pine Street.

Construction of the first set of townhouses is now complete, and the second set is nearing completion.

Two apartment buildings are currently under construction, while another townhouse lot, two more apartment buildings and a mix-used apartment building are at various stages in the approval process.

In all, the project includes 650 residential units, as well as 80,000 square feet of retail and office space.

Another major project under construction is the Highstreet Village apartment-and-townhouse project at Mt. Lehman Road and Cardinal Avenue, north of Highstreet Shopping Centre.

The project consists of nine condo buildings and 147 townhouse units, amounting to more than 700 housing units in total.

The townhouses are a mix of two-, three- and four-bedroom units ranging in size from 1,317 to 1,819 square feet. Seven of the units include private rooftop amenity areas.

There will also be a two-storey amenity building of almost 3,000 square feet.

The apartment buildings are composed of one-, two- and three-bedroom units ranging from 500 to 974 square feet, and include a two-level underground parkade.

The development’s two parcels of land, totalling 12.5 acres, were sold to developers Alf and Bruno Wall – who are brothers – for \$26 million in 2018.

Another hub of residential development is Cooper Meadows on the 63-acre site of the former Cooper Farm on McMillan Road, where construction has begun on what will eventually become almost 400 units of housing, including single-family homes (some with secondary suites), duplex homes and townhouses.

A future 40-unit townhome site is also proposed at the south end of the property where the iconic red barn was located.

The project also calls for almost 18 acres of land being dedicated to the city as parkland.

Last year also saw the first application come in for development of the McKee neighbourhood.

Council in 2023 – following two contentious public hearings – approved an amendment to the Official Community Plan to provide a framework for the development and preservation of approximately 2,000 acres (842 hectares) on Sumas Mountain.


Continued on page 8



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Busy year for construction

Continued from page 6

With respect to that area, the city has received a rezoning application from Polygon Homes for land south of Ledgeview Golf Course. The proposal calls for the development of approximately 100 residential lots and two large townhouse parcels comprising some 11 acres (4.5 hectares).

Near that area, the city has also received – and is in the final stages of reviewing – a subdivision application for 150 lots in the West Highlands neighbourhood.

In addition, several applications have come forward for residential development in the

Auguston area, including a new apartment building and many new residential lots. Other housings projects approved in Abbotsford in 2024 include 104 affordable rental units on Horne Street, 130 townhouse units on McCallum Road in the District and 134 apartment units in a mixed-use building on Simon Avenue.



Construction is well underway for the Highstreet Village housing development near Highstreet Shopping Centre on Mt. Lehman Road. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)



The Rail District in the historic downtown core is being built over several years and consists of 650 residential units and 80,000 square feet of retail and office space. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

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The City of Abbotsford has produced a website and guide for companies to help them speed up the process to film locally.

Abbotsford sees big bump in filming numbers in 2024

City has created an Abbywood self-guided tour with 109 stops of locations used for filming over the years

After a slight dip in 2023 due to a nearly five-month writers' strike, filming numbers in Abbotsford for 2024 roared louder than King Kong.

Film productions days jumped from 197 to 306, local locations used rose from 125 to 170 and the economic impact ballooned from \$2.49 million in 2023 to \$3.614 million in 2024.

The economic impact is also up over \$1 million from 2022, which reached about \$2.6 million.

Some of the content filmed in Abbotsford last year included: Christmas-themed movies A Novel Noel, Leah's Perfect Gift and a Private Princess Christmas, TV series such as Happy Place and shorts like The Wicked Flee, Choices and Auganic.

The City of Abbotsford has created an Abbywood self-guided tour with 109 stops of locations that have been used for filming over the years. The tour can be found on the city's website. Top locations include local arenas, Clayburn Village, the old courthouse, parks, Tradex and more.

The city's filming resource guide, which was last revised in November 2023, says the growth of the film sector in Abbotsford is supported by lower costs for productions compared to other areas of B.C.

"These lower costs typically make up for the additional costs incurred by lower budget films that see the additional time and money spent on transporting cast, crew and equipment as a barrier to their production work in Abbotsford," the guide states.

The guide also states that Abbotsford is home to a host of unique under-filmed locations, has access to talented labour, and is both affordable and accessible to the industry. According to the guide, a key selling feature to Abbotsford is its proximity to Vancouver. There are also a number of popular filming locations nearby such as Mission, Langley, Maple Ridge and Harrison.

"Abbotsford also boasts an active and engaged city council who are committed to fostering an economically diverse and resilient community," the guide adds. "Being

a key economic driver, the film sector in Abbotsford aligns with the vibrant economy cornerstone of council's 2022-2026 strategic plan."

According to the guide, growth of the film sector in Abbotsford is supported by lower costs for productions. Film permitting costs are typically lower in Abbotsford as well as location costs and other associated fees when compared to other municipalities in British Columbia. These lower costs typically make up for the additional costs incurred by lower budget films that see the additional time and money spent on transporting cast, crew, and equipment as a barrier to their production work in Abbotsford.

Productions companies that film in Abbotsford are also eligible to apply for the BC Film Tax Credit. The City recommends six steps for companies to complete in the approval process. Those steps consist of:

- completing a film application, business licence and insurance
- paying a security deposit
- completing a highway use permit
- fulfilling community engagement and filming notification responsibilities
- complete filming and payment of services
- fill out the filming wrap sheet

Abbotsford's film industry has experienced a surge in recent years, but it has been a destination for decades.

The News recently looked at the top five box office grossing locally filmed movies and they consisted of:

1. Good Boys (2019) – \$111.2 million
2. Shooter (2007) – \$95.7 million
3. Dreamcatcher (2003) – \$81.2 million
4. Miracle (2004) – \$64.5 million
5. Homeward Bound II: Lost in San Francisco (1996) – \$32.7 million

For more information on filming locally, visit abbotsford.ca/business-development/filming.



Cop shop addition

The 105,000-square-foot addition is expected to be ready for occupancy in March 2025. The renovation of the existing building will follow and is expected to be complete by the spring of 2026.



The two options presented to council in March 2020 were a new building with an estimated cost of \$84.5 million or an addition/renovation to the current building for a cost of almost \$60 million.



A 105,000-square-foot addition to the Abbotsford Police Department is nearing completion and is expected to be ready for occupancy in March 2025. (Abbotsford Police Department)

Abbotsford Police Department making sure to grow with the future

Work is nearing completion on the first phase of an expansion and renovation of the Abbotsford Police Department headquarters.

The 105,000-square-foot addition is expected to be ready for occupancy in March 2025. The renovation of the existing building will follow and is expected to be complete by the spring of 2026.

The budget for the project has grown – as is normal with any project that can take years from city approval to construction completion – and now comes in at \$87.1 million.

Funding comes in the form of a long-term loan from the Municipal Finance Authority, with the rest to be covered by internal general capital reserves.

The new site significantly expands the size of the original headquarters, which was built in 1988 for the Matsqui Police Department when just 74 officers – along with a complement of support staff – served

a population of 58,000 residents.

The APD, which was created after the amalgamation of Matsqui and the District of Abbotsford, now has almost 350 officers and staff supporting a community of 157,000.

Over the next 20 years or so, the APD expects to add 100 more total staff.

The APD is currently split over six buildings, and council was previously told that the department is outgrowing its current headquarters – located on Justice Way east of Clearbrook Road.

The space issues include jail services that are often full, halls and corridors being used as storage areas because storage areas are being used for other purposes, and change rooms that are cramped and overflowing with gear.

The new building will provide additional workspace, change rooms, parking, jail cells, bail hearing rooms

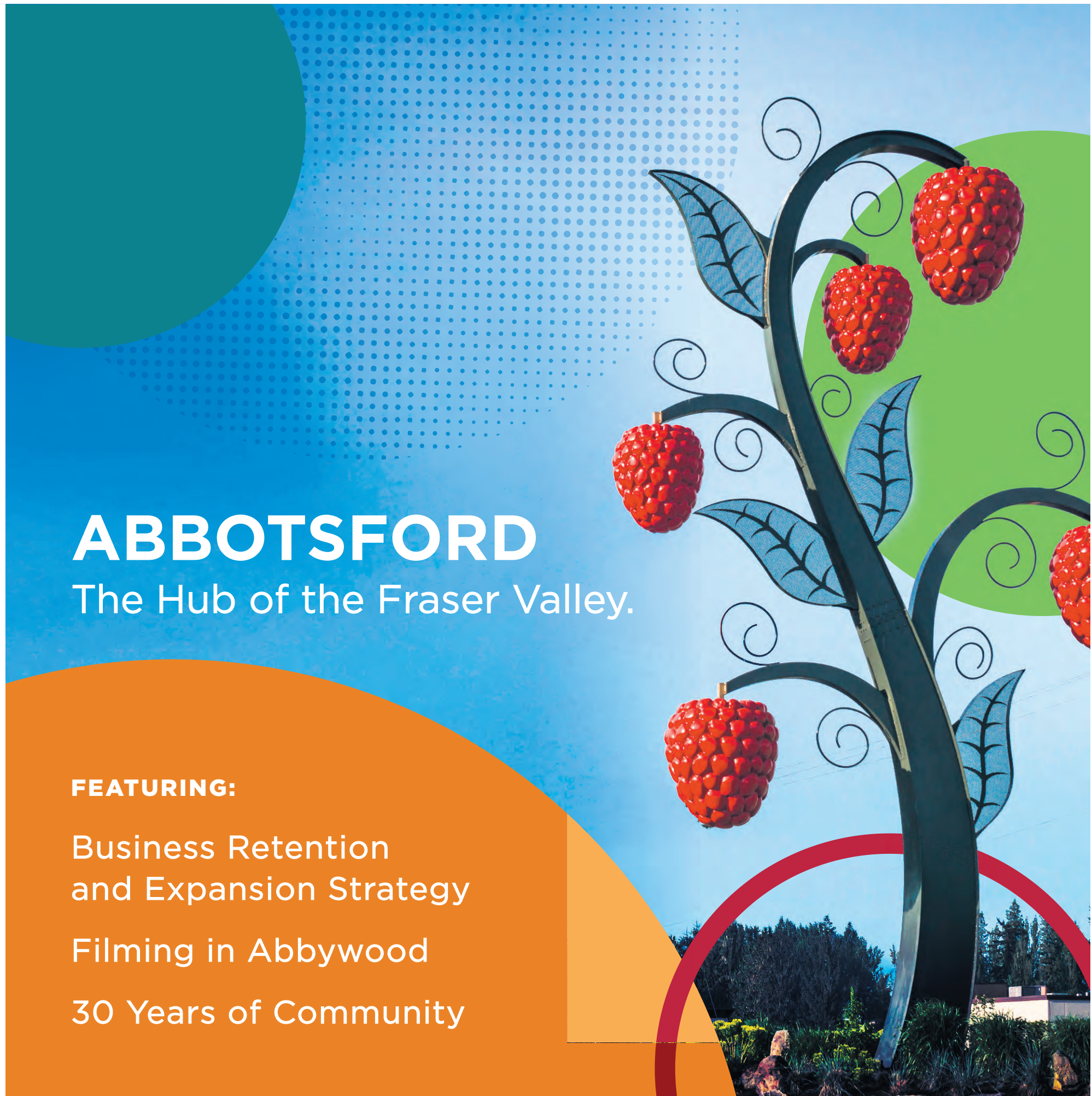
and a breathalyzer room.

As well, the expansion will increase the capacity of investigative space, enhance and modernize the forensics and digital forensics labs, and improve training space.

The building is also more accessible for those with accessibility challenges.

The two options presented to council in March 2020 were a new building with an estimated cost of \$84.5 million or an addition/renovation to the current building for a cost of almost \$60 million.

Council voted on the latter option, saying the expansion was sorely needed. Costs have since jumped due mainly to the pandemic, including disruptions in the supply chain, commodity costs for construction materials, a shortage of qualified labour, and inflationary pressures.



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Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) Strategy

Abbotsford is a rapidly growing community with a large, balanced and diversified economy and serves as the economic and employment hub of the Fraser Valley. There are currently over 7,700 businesses and 1,250 farms operating in Abbotsford. These businesses have made investments in the community, contribute to the vibrancy and resiliency of the community, and provide employment that allows the community to grow and prosper.

Last fall, Council approved an updated **Business Retention and Expansion Strategy and Action Plan** that is designed to support and grow local businesses and reinforce Abbotsford's position as the economic Hub of the Fraser Valley.

Key areas of focus and goals of the new strategy and supporting action plan include:

- Enhanced support for Abbotsford businesses navigating municipal processes;
- Enhanced and new online resources for businesses centralized in one location through the creation of a "one-stop shop" webpage;
- Strengthened relationships and communications with businesses through an enhanced business visitation program and regular surveys;
- Facilitated collaboration between businesses and education/training providers to share workforce needs and develop marketing initiatives to support employee recruitment and retention; and,
- Facilitated and enhanced collaboration and information sharing with local First Nations on economic development matters.



SCAN CODE TO ACCESS:
BR+E Strategy and Action Plan

Economic Development Table

The Economic Development Table is an initiative of the City of Abbotsford and includes organizations that have a role in local economic development. Core partners include the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, Abbotsford Downtown Business Association, Business Development Bank of Canada, Community Futures South Fraser, Fraser Valley Métis Association, Fraser Valley Indo-Canadian Business Association, Leq'á:mel First Nation, M̓athxwi First Nation, Rotary Club of Abbotsford-Sumas, Semá:th First Nation, Stó:lō Community Futures, Tourism Abbotsford and the University of the Fraser Valley School of Business and Computing. The Table meets monthly to build on collaborative work, increase information sharing and to identify opportunities where we can work together.

One-Stop Shop

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBPAGE

One of the first deliverables of the BR+E Strategy is the redesigned Economic Development webpage that uses a "one-stop shop" business hub approach to curate multiple resources to make it easier for businesses to find the assistance they need. The **Business Resource Guide** is available online and includes information on local, provincial, federal and First Nations grant and funding opportunities; local and provincial programs, events and workshops; business planning tool kits and templates; business directories and memberships; and workforce resources.

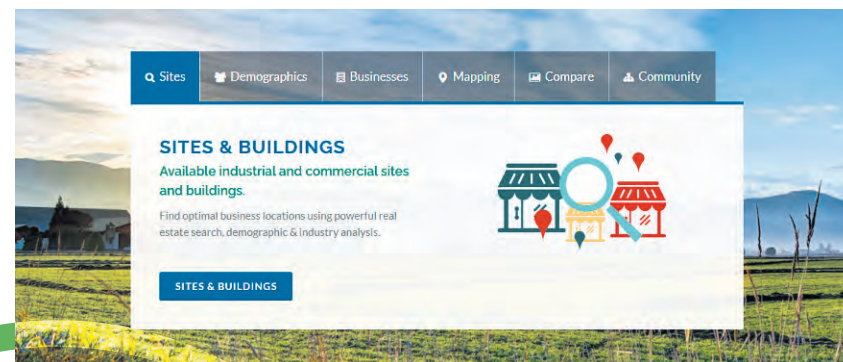


SCAN CODE TO ACCESS: Business Resource Guide

GIS Sitefinder

The City of Abbotsford's online sitefinder, offers a variety of advanced mapping, data, and analytic tools. The sitefinder is a robust data resource that assists in finding available industrial and commercial sites; provides demographic, labour force and consumer spending information; and provides a community profile. It also allows users to compare data from Abbotsford to communities across Canada. This tool is especially useful for businesses looking for new markets and to identify new business opportunities.

abbotsfordsitefinder.ca



KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES WORKING GROUP

The Indigenous Businesses Working Group is a sub-group of the Economic Development Table and is chaired by Stó:lō Community Futures. The Indigenous Businesses Working Group collaborates to address gaps in services, supports and opportunities for Indigenous businesses in Abbotsford and surrounding areas, helping to ensure that First Nations' perspectives are represented in economic development matters.

In 2024, the working group hosted their first LET'SE Q'ÉP, Let's Gather Together Event at Ravens Brewing. Several Indigenous businesses were in attendance and were able to learn about experiences from other Indigenous-owned businesses. Attendees were able to provide feedback on what they would like to see at future networking events.

INAUGURAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BUS TOUR

On October 4, the City of Abbotsford partnered with the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce to host the inaugural Manufacturing Tour, highlighting Abbotsford's diverse and innovative manufacturing sector.

The day-long bus tour was held on Canada's annual Manufacturing Day, and featured stops at homegrown successes and leading manufacturers in Abbotsford including BARR Plastics, RAD Torque Tools, Reimer Hardwoods and StructureCraft. Attendees on the tour included Mayor and Council, Chamber of Commerce members, manufacturing

industry representatives, local businesses, UFV faculty and students and members of the public.

The day included guided tours of the four manufacturing facilities, speakers from the manufacturing sector, and a networking lunch hosted at Chinook Helicopters. The manufacturing sector is the fourth largest employment sector in Abbotsford and plays a key role in the local economy by supporting other sectors including transportation, construction, professional services and hospitality. The next Manufacturing Industry Bus Tour is scheduled for October 3, 2025, which is the next scheduled Canadian Manufacturing Day.

CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

The City's Corporate Partnerships program works with Abbotsford businesses and organizations to enhance and reduce costs for City activities and programs. In 2024 these partnerships provided over \$90,000 of in-kind services that made our programs even better. A great example of how these partnerships can enhance a community event was the Summer in the Park Day Camp, where generous support from McDonalds provided campers with fishing lessons at Mill Lake using equipment from Freshwater Fisheries Societies of BC and instruction from Fred's Custom Tackle in Abbotsford. The City also partnered with McDonalds, Choices Market and Starbucks for Halloween Howl, a free family event where families enjoyed prizes, hot chocolate and cookie decorating.

Want to know how your business can impact community programs?

Check out partnership opportunities for Canada Day and other City events online.

abbotsford.ca/corporatepartners

TABLE TALK NEWSLETTER

Table Talk is a monthly economic newsletter that supports the mandate of the Economic Development Table by increasing information sharing with local businesses. Table Talk offers a forum to promote and share news focused on economic development including business resources and grants, programs, updates and events for the business community. The mission of Table Talk is to cultivate and grow economic development relationships.



SCAN CODE TO SUBSCRIBE:
Table Talk Newsletter

ABBYFRESH

The AbbyFresh Directory was created by the Economic Development Table and is hosted by Community Futures South Fraser. AbbyFresh is a free, marketing directory that was created to support local farms, producers, processors and markets in Abbotsford through the power of connection — connecting local producers with local consumers, building relationships, nurturing traditions, and forging a path toward a sustainable and vibrant future for our agricultural industry.

abbyfresh.southfraser.com

Filming

Film production in Abbotsford enjoyed a banner year in 2024, bouncing back from industry-wide labour disruptions that curtailed filming activity in 2023.

61 TOTAL PRODUCTIONS

170 FILMING LOCATIONS

306 TOTAL PRODUCTIONS DAYS

\$3.61M IN ECONOMIC IMPACT (BASED ON WRAP SHEETS)

THIS INCLUDED:

- 8 Feature Films
- 12 Series
- 29 Movies of the Week
- 9 Commercials
- 3 Independents/Other Productions

NOTABLE PRODUCTIONS:

Tracker, Virgin River, Happy Face, School Spirits, Allegiance, Heretic, The Monkey, The Wrong Paris and Playdate.

INTERESTED IN HOSTING FILMING?

Many Abbotsford businesses and homes already have starring roles as a film location in Feature Films or TV Series. Would you like to join them? Registration is free and easy with Creative BC.

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ABBOTSFORD CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF COMMUNITY 2025

Explore some of the milestones that have defined our legacy over the past 30 years.

1995

The Districts of Matsqui and Abbotsford amalgamated to form the City of Abbotsford.



2005

The City of Abbotsford established a Community Heritage Register with five sites: **Trethewey House**, **Clayburn School**, **Clayburn Church**, the **Gur Sikh Temple** and the **Old South Poplar School**.



1998

The new Terminal building was opened on December 10, 1998 and further expanded in 2002 and again in 2004 and 2019.

2019

YXX surpassed the one million passenger mark on December 30, 2019.



2016

Abbotsford launched a new curbside collection app.



2008

The Reach Gallery Museum opened.

2012

Hosted Canadian Senior Curling Championship



2021

City signs agreement for Abby Canucks AHL franchise – Abby Canucks win their inaugural home opener.



2025

City of Abbotsford celebrates 30th anniversary of amalgamation.



Scan the QR code to check out **30 years in action!**





A special logo to celebrate 50 years was released by the mall in January.

Sevenoaks Shopping Centre celebrating 50 years of business in 2025

Abbotsford's largest mall honouring its rich history with golden anniversary year of events

It's set to be a golden anniversary year for one of Abbotsford's best places to shop till you drop.

Sevenoaks Shopping Centre celebrates 50 years of business in 2025 and the mall is planning for a year filled with celebrations and nods to the past.

The centre officially opened on Oct. 15, 1975 at 10 a.m. and featured Woodward's, Eaton's and 40 other retailers.

The original discussion for the construction of the mall began in 1972 when developers met with city council to discuss planning concepts.

The general public got a first sneak peek at what the mall would look like through pictures released in 1973. It's believed that the Abbotsford News reported on its development plans at that time.

Some of the design elements spoken about included: three levels, a curve design, contemporary interior, excellent store frontage for tenants and closed-circuit television for increased security. The mall boasted 350,000 square feet of stores and more than 1,750 parking spots. Oakie the squirrel was the mall's original mascot.

The Sevenoaks name was chosen because Grosvenor International, the property development group that originally built the mall, had developed and named Surrey's Guildford Town Centre a few years prior and Sevenoaks is a town in England that is just east of Guildford.

Seovenoca, which dates back as far as 1114, was a small trading village in England located in the middle of a rich agricultural area – just like Abbotsford.

The original food court at Sevenoaks was named The Shambles and that name was inspired by one of the oldest covered shopping areas in Europe. The Shambles

was found in the town of Sevenoaks for centuries.

Sevenoaks still exists today and has a population of close to 30,000. It's found in the county of Kent and is southeast of London.

Significant changes arrived to the mall in 1984, with The Bay replacing Woodward's, centre court being created and the food court relocated. More upgrades occurred in 1989 with the northeast entry and skylights added. The east wing was built in 1991 and the customer service centre was created in 1994. Sears arrived in 1999 and that included a second floor and a three-level parkade. Sport Chek entered the mall in the year 2000 and the food court was relocated to its current location.

The years 2005 to 2008 saw several interior changes, an updated colour palette, new lighting and store fronts, store expansions and parkade painting.

The mall's logos have also evolved over the years. The original logo was an orange seven wrapping around the Sevenoaks name and that lasted until the 90s when a brighter design featuring the mountains and sun was created. The early-2020s saw a more sleek design and that design has been recently enlarged to give a more modern feel. The mall has also released a 50th anniversary logo to commemorate 2025. They worked with Langley's Jelly Marketing for the anniversary design.

The mall has several events planned to celebrate the golden anniversary, with more details expected to be released in the near future. They are also asking Abbotsford residents to share their memories and photos about time at the mall. Some of those chosen will be featured during the year.

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Wineries & flowers

While Tourism Abbotsford works to promote all kinds of local events and attractions, they made a concentrated effort last year to spotlight the local wineries and flower shops as part of the Bouquets and Barrels initiative, which they plan to continue this year as well.



The Reach Gallery Museum hosts art exhibits and interactive classes that draw people to Abbotsford from all over the Lower Mainland and beyond.

Tourism Abbotsford wants to amp up local events to draw in visitors

Bouquet and Barrels initiative helped concentrate on spotlighting local wineries and flower shops in our city

“

For 2025, our primary focus will be driving overnight visitation, a strategy designed to benefit all tourism stakeholders and bolster the local business economy.”

- Clare Seeley



For Tourism Abbotsford, 2024 was a year of introducing a lot of new events or promotional tools to support local happenings, but executive director Clare Seeley said that the community can expect even more to come in 2025.

“Our creative and dedicated team worked collectively this year to develop the 2025 work plan, leveraging individual strengths and interests to set a clear and strategic direction for the year ahead,” Seeley said.

She said that one of the tools that Tourism Abbotsford rolled out last year that received an overwhelmingly positive experience from the public was the Go! Abbotsford website, which was developed in partnership with the City of Abbotsford.

This new website serves as a comprehensive calendar with community, signature, and specialized events across the region, and will be joined this year by the launch of the Explore Abbotsford Guide.

“This will replace the Community Guide as a fresh, comprehensive resource,” Seeley said. “We will also be introducing a custom-designed trailer to showcase Abbotsford’s experiences and offerings at events and locations both locally and regionally.”

While Tourism Abbotsford works to promote all kinds of local events and attractions, they made a concentrated

effort last year to spotlight the local wineries and flower shops as part of the Bouquets and Barrels initiative, which they plan to continue this year as well.

“As we all look for ways to support Canadian businesses, we encourage people to consider Abbotsford wines as a fantastic addition to their shopping list,” Seeley said.

Another side to Abbotsford that the group plans to heavily promote in 2025 is the film industry happenings, which take place year-round throughout the community.

According to the City of Abbotsford, the film industry is responsible for bringing more than \$3.6 million to Abbotsford in 2024 alone thanks to the 61 projects that were filmed in the community last year, which is an increase from the 59 projects and \$2.5 million in economic impact in 2023.

It’s this popularity with the film industry that has many people referring to this city as Abbywood, which Seeley said she would like to see encouraged even further with the new upcoming program.

“We are proud to partner on Cineventure, a new B.C. initiative that will focus much of our marketing efforts on promoting Abbotsford as a premier destination for film tourism,” Seeley said.

While certain aspects of tourism in Abbotsford have

been thriving in recent years, Seeley explained that the community is struggling with maintaining the same number of accommodation stays that had been recorded post-pandemic, which is a problem area that she and the Tourism Abbotsford team will work hard to overcome this year.

“In 2024, accommodation stays experienced a decline as post-COVID travel demand stabilized, pipeline workers left the community, and economic uncertainty grew,” she said. “For 2025, our primary focus will be driving overnight visitation, a strategy designed to benefit all tourism stakeholders and bolster the local business economy.”

Seeley emphasized that having a healthy supply and popularity of events is a vital component of Abbotsford’s tourism landscape, so her team plans to do whatever they can to help local events thrive.

“We remain committed to working alongside our Events Advisory Committee to refine policies and practices that support our event strategy, while fostering growth in sports and community events. Together, these efforts will continue to enhance Abbotsford’s reputation as a vibrant destination.”

Continued on page 19

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A message from your local MLA's

Plenty to see and do around town

Continued from page 17

10 Things to Do on a Rainy Day in Abbotsford

Rainy days are a regular occurrence throughout the Lower Mainland, but Tourism Abbotsford doesn't want the fun to stop just because things get a little wet outside, which is why they've put together this list of exciting rainy day activities throughout the city.

- 1) Break out the board games and tasty food at Boardwalk Cafe and Games
- 2) Get in a round of (miniature) golf at Castle Fun Park's indoor course
- 3) Sip local wines from the inside of a cozy glass dome
- 4) Explore the world of art at The Reach Gallery Museum
- 5) Knock down a few pins at Galaxy Bowl
- 6) Fill up on tasty beer and pub food at Trading Post Eatery
- 7) Meet some furry friends at EcoFarm
- 8) Unleash your inner artist at The Clay Cottage
- 9) Carve up some ice at the Abbotsford Recreation Centre
- 10) Get your blood pumping at TopSpin Pickleball Club



Tourism Abbotsford encourages people to stop by the Abbotsford Recreation Centre and strap on some skates during the rainy weather.





Greenhouse growing

According to the 2024 Vital Signs Report by the Abbotsford Community Foundation, the amount of Abbotsford farmland being used for greenhouses has increased by more than 45 hectares in the past 12 years, marking a 37 per cent increase in greenhouse growing capacity.



Abbotsford is responsible for producing a third of the province's blueberry supply, with dairy cows and egg production also major components of the local agricultural sector.



"Agriculture is now a technologically advanced industry, requiring significant research and development capabilities to survive modern challenges, including climate change."
- Dr. Lenore Newman



Farmers lean on greenhouses to keep up with food demand

Almost half of Abbotsford residents can't afford enough of preferred food for family

With the growing population, changing climate, and rising inflation of prices, Abbotsford and many other agricultural-based cities in B.C. are having to get more creative in how they attempt to keep up with the constantly increasing demand for food.

For the city's 1,254 farms, this has meant embracing a variety of emerging trends, including the transition towards using greenhouses.

According to the 2024 Vital Signs Report by the Abbotsford Community Foundation, the amount of Abbotsford farmland being used for greenhouses has increased by more than 45 hectares in the past 12 years, marking a 37 per cent increase in greenhouse growing capacity.

This is especially useful for a community that is so involved in berry farming, with Abbotsford responsible for producing a third of the province's entire blueberry crop.

In addition to producing a significant supply of

blueberries, Abbotsford also contains approximately 14,000 dairy cows and produces nearly 650 million eggs per year.

It's this diversity in farming land use that makes the region such an important part of the agricultural sector for both the province and country as a whole, explained Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce CEO Alex Mitchell.

"The Fraser Valley is key to Canada's food security," Mitchell said, calling on all levels of government to dedicate more funding to the local agricultural industry.

While utilizing more greenhouse facilities has helped local farmers, Dr. Lenore Newman, research chair of the UFV Food and Agriculture Institute, explained that this isn't enough to address the prominent issue of food security in the province.

"Agriculture is now a technologically advanced industry, requiring significant research and development capabilities to survive modern challenges, including climate change," Newman said.

She agreed with Mitchell's statement that all levels of government need to come together to properly fund the agricultural industry in the Fraser Valley, explaining that agriculture is the only technological area that doesn't have a national funding body for post-secondary institutes.

A survey run by the Abbotsford Community Foundation in the summer of 2024 revealed that Abbotsford residents want to be able to help local farmers, with 62 per cent of people agreeing that they would be willing to pay more for locally grown food in order to support those involved in the Abbotsford agricultural sector.

This is especially significant given the fact that the same survey reported that only 55 per cent of Abbotsford residents were able to comfortably purchase enough of their preferred foods to support their household.

One of the most common ways that residents continue

Continued on page 21

Farm Market makes impact

Continued from page 20

to support local farmers is through the Abbotsford Farm and Country Market, which generates approximately \$700,000 annually in sales, with a total estimated impact of more than \$1 million on the Abbotsford economy, according to a recent study released by the BC Association of Farmers' Markets.

The Abbotsford Farm and Country Market features between 35 and 40 local vendors each week, and will return for the 2025 season on Saturday, May 3, with plenty of local produce and other agricultural items expected to be on display.



Agrifair celebrates all things agricultural in Abbotsford every summer. (John Morrow/Abbotsford News)

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Tariff strategy

In response to these hefty 25 per cent tariffs, the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce is encouraging Canadian residents to shop local as much as possible while the chamber continues its work advocating against these tariffs.



The Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce is expanding the services offered in its Women's Leadership Council and Company of Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs Program in 2025.



"We have been very intentional in reaching our next generation of entrepreneurs and empowering women in leadership."

- Acting CEO
Craig Toews



Strengthening our economy: The power of supporting local

As British Columbia's fifth-largest municipality, Abbotsford is home to a thriving community of over 164,500 residents. With 64% of the workforce employed within the city, supporting local businesses is more than just a choice; it is a fundamental driver of economic stability and community well-being.

However, Abbotsford's local businesses face mounting challenges. Rising rent, increasing labour costs, and growing operational expenses are putting pressure on retailers and service providers. Additionally, global trade uncertainties and potential tariffs on goods are affecting supply chains and pricing, making it harder for small businesses to remain competitive.

Now more than ever, Abbotsford residents have a crucial role to play. Choosing to shop, dine, and invest locally helps create jobs, strengthen the tax base, and encourage reinvestment in the city's economy, fostering sustainable growth. With 7,700 businesses operating in Abbotsford, these enterprises are a major



Global trade uncertainties are slowing traffic at the Sumas border crossing. (Abbotsford News file photo)

businesses not only sustains livelihoods but also fosters innovation, helping local entrepreneurs turn ideas into thriving enterprises. A strong, engaged community is essential to maintaining Abbotsford's reputation as a centre for business growth and opportunity.

"Our local businesses are the heart of our community; they create jobs, support local initiatives, and shape the unique character of our neighbourhoods. By choosing to shop local, we invest in our economy, strengthen connections, and ensure a vibrant future for the place we call home," said Craig Toews, Acting CEO of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce.

How to Support Local Businesses in Abbotsford

Shop Local First – Before heading to a big-box store or making an online purchase, consider a local business for groceries, day-to-day items, and gifts.

Dine at Local Restaurants – Supporting locally

Continued on page 23

Several business events planned

Continued from page 22

owned restaurants, cafes, and bakeries helps keep the city's culinary landscape vibrant and diverse.

Hire Local Services – Whether you need a plumber, contractor, accountant, or personal trainer, hiring locally keeps money circulating within the community.

Promote Local Businesses Online – A simple review, social media post, or word-of-mouth

recommendation can significantly boost a local business.

Supporting these businesses ensures continued economic growth, job creation, and a thriving community. By choosing to shop, dine, and hire locally, Abbotsford residents can make a lasting impact on the city's future—one purchase at a time.



Craig Toews is the acting CEO of the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce and has helped guide the chamber through a tumultuous year for many local businesses.



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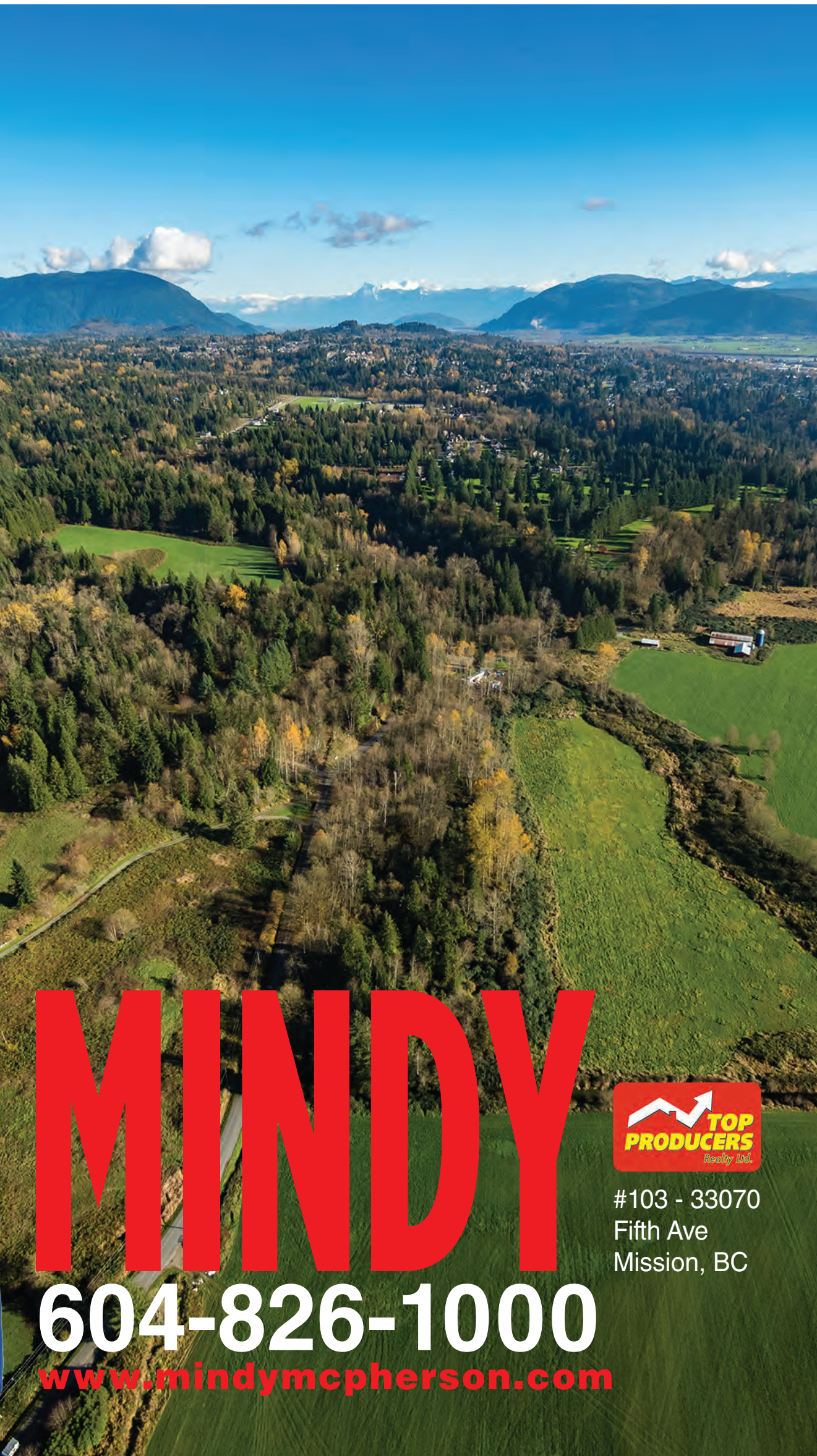
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