

Council advances draft Aquatic Services and Facilities Strategy to public consultation

At their March 10 meeting, City Council directed staff to undertake community consultation on the draft Aquatic Service and Facilities Strategy, which aims to ensure Abbotsford's aquatic facility system can meet future demand while remaining accessible and inclusive.

The strategy proposes that the Abbotsford Recreation Centre (ARC) and Matsqui Recreation Centre (MRC) pools be redeveloped as community-scale facilities with multiple tanks and leisure-oriented amenities. An additional new facility at the MSA Arena site would feature a 50-metre training pool focused on competitive athlete development and swim club use, meeting demand for a significant portion of fitness and lap swimming. This approach would free up capacity at the community facilities to better support leisure, instructional and recreational programming.

The City measures aquatic demand in "swims per capita." This plan is estimated to nearly double the City's capacity from 555,000 to about 1,075,000 annual swims. The new MSA, MRC and ARC pools are estimated to be completed by 2032, 2038 and 2042, respectively.

Community members can share their feedback now until April 8 at letstalkabbotsford.ca/aquaticstrategy.

View the full staff presentation at abbotsford.ca/aquaticstrategystage3.



Council approves application for \$200K UBCM grant to support development

At their March 10 meeting, City Council authorized staff to submit a grant application to the Union of BC Municipalities, through the Local Government Development Approvals Program, asking for up to \$200,000 to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the City's development approval processes. In their report to Council, staff said the grant funding would support work on replacing Development Agreements with Servicing Agreements and reviewing the operations of the Development Application Review Team (DART).

A Development Agreement is part of the City's existing development application process. Development Agreements have been identified for review as they are unique to Abbotsford and form part of the building permit review process. Shifting to Servicing Agreements is expected to streamline the City's approach, reduce touch points for applicants and improve the transition from rezoning to building permit processes.

DART is an internal, cross-discipline, inter-departmental, decision-making table, where all development applications are discussed. The review of how DART functions is expected to improve the timeliness for development application reviews, increase organizational capacity, and create clearer expectations for both applicants and staff.

This work will build on work the City has already done to reduce wait times for building permits by modernizing development planning permits as well.

Council receives update on energy and climate action programs

At their March 10 meeting, City Council received an overview of the City's 2026 Energy and Climate Action program initiatives.

In their presentation to Council, staff described the following initiatives divided into five categories:

- 1. Climate action planning:** Staff is working on two strategy documents aimed at reducing emissions and building climate resilience: the Climate Resilience Strategy, a plan to protect our community from impacts of climate change; and the Fraser Valley Zero Emissions Mobility Strategy, a regional plan to reduce transportation-related emissions.
- 2. Energy efficiency and performance:** Guided by the Strategic Energy Management Plan, staff is completing energy studies to identify efficiency and carbon reduction opportunities at 10 City facilities, optimizing systems at Matsqui Recreation Centre and the Operations Yard, and implementing BC Hydro-funded cost-effective lighting upgrades. Staff is also advancing the Abbotsford Residential Retrofit Program to support residents in reducing their homes' carbon footprints.
- 3. Strengthening policies:** This year two policies are being updated and finalized: the Energy Policy, which covers energy-related planning and projects; and the Climate Action Reserve Fund Management Policy, which guides how the City allocates funds for climate action initiatives and is informed by the provincial Local Government Climate Action Program.
- 4. Collaboration and partnerships:** Staff is working with Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service to complete a citywide Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment; collaborating with Mission, Chilliwack and the Canadian Homebuilders Association to offer Energy Step Code and Zero Carbon Step Code education and outreach; connecting with schools, trades and local governments to develop and offer a building airtightness training course; and utilizing a BC Hydro-funded co-op position to develop a citywide corporate facility lighting inventory.
- 5. Celebrating progress and successes:** Energy and climate action updates are brought to Council annually and shared with utility partners like BC Hydro and FortisBC quarterly.

View the full staff presentation at abbotsford.ca/2026climateinitiatives.