



Figure 1: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

City of Abbotsford

Cemetery Strategy

LEES
+
ASSOCIATES



Status: Final Report
July 17, 2026

Executive Summary

Project Introduction

The City of Abbotsford (the City) commissioned LEES+Associates to create a Cemetery Strategy to guide the long-term development of Abbotsford's four cemeteries: Aberdeen Cemetery, Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, and Musselwhite Cemetery. The Strategy was designed to provide a roadmap for the cemeteries' respective developments, ensuring that they meet the shifting needs of the community.

Projected Sales

This report assumes the historic sales trends will remain consistent and continuous over the next 25 years. The table below summarizes the projected interment numbers and inventory sales during that time.

Interment Services			Inventory Sales	
	Average Per Year (2025–2049)	Total (2025–2049)	Average Per Year (2025–2049)	Total (2025–2049)
Casket Lots	90	2,250	92	2,300
Cremation Lots	142	3,550	72	1,150
Columbaria Niches	34	850	46	1,150
Ossuary	3	75	4	100
Scattering	11	275	18	450

Table 1: 25-Year Interment Services and Inventory Sales Projections, Source: LEES+Associates.

Cemetery System Interment Capacity

The table below summarizes the estimated remaining cemetery capacity across all Abbotsford municipal cemeteries, including existing inventory and future capacity from infill and expansion areas. The cemetery system has enough land and development potential to meet the community's needs for the next 50 years. However, long-term planning will still be important. As land becomes more limited and expensive, the City will need to explore strategies that support the continued delivery of cemetery services. Proactive planning today will help ensure residents have access to burial and interment options for generations to come.

Inventory Type	Existing Years of Sales Remaining	Potential Infill Capacity Years of Sales	Potential Expansion Capacity Years of Sales	Total Years of Sales
Casket Lots	7–11 years	20–22 years	26–28 years	53–61 years
Cremation Lots	44–54 years	19–22 years	26–29 years	89–103 years
Columbaria Niches	27–31 years	19–22 years	26–29 years	89–103 years
Scattering	10–14 years	N/A	70–72 years	80–86 years

Table 2: 25-Year Interment Services and Inventory Sales Projections, Source: LEES+Associates.

Inventory Type	Inventory Required to Meet 25 Years of Demand	Undeveloped Land Required to Meet 25 Years of Demand (acres)	Potential Infill Land Available	Potential Expansion Land Available
Aberdeen Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	40–50	0.1 acres	0.1 acres	N/A
Cremation Lots	Exceeds Demand	N/A		
Hazelwood Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	1,250–1,300	2.5 acres	2.25 acres	3.0 acres
Cremation Lots	410–420	0.2 acres		
Mt. Lehman Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	700–710	1.4 acres	0.15 acres	N/A
Cremation Lots	170–180	0.1 acres		
Musselwhite Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	110–120	0.2 acres	N/A	N/A
Cremation Lots	310–320	0.2 acres		
Total				
Casket Lots - Adult	2,100–2,180	4.2 acres	2.5 acres	3.0 acres
Cremation Lots	890–920	0.5 acres		

Table 3: Summary of Land Required to Meet 25-Year Sales Demand, Source: City of Abbotsford Records and LEES+Associates.

Engagement

The Abbotsford Cemetery Strategy followed a four-stage planning process. Community and stakeholder engagement took place during Stage 1: Background Research and Community/Stakeholder Engagement and Stage 3: Draft Strategy and Community/Stakeholder Engagement.

Stage 1 Engagement

Stage 1 engagement focused on understanding existing conditions and gathering feedback from the community and stakeholders. Engagement activities included an online survey, stakeholder consultations, one virtual open house, and three in-person open houses held at Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Elementary School, and Musselwhite Cemetery. Input was also gathered from City staff and senior leadership.

Feedback from this stage helped inform the conceptual cemetery plans and recommendations.

Stage 3 Engagement

Stage 3 engagement focused on sharing preliminary conceptual site plans and gathering additional feedback on cemetery needs and service expectations. Engagement activities included an online survey, stakeholder consultations, five in-person open houses held at Aberdeen Cemetery, Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, Musselwhite Cemetery, and Sevenoaks Shopping Centre, as well as two online feedback sessions with religious, cultural, and faith-based organizations.

Feedback from this stage helped inform the final cemetery plans and recommendations.

Conceptual Plans

The Cemetery Strategy includes several system-wide proposals and recommendations to guide future decisions as Abbotsford's cemetery system is developed over the coming years. These recommendations are intended to support long-term sustainability, service delivery, and community needs.

- Maximize the use of available cemetery land while maintaining dignity and a positive visitor experience.
- Expand interment and memorialization options to respond to changing community preferences and increasing cremation rates.
- Improve accessibility, circulation, aesthetics, and visitor comfort throughout the cemetery system.
- Preserve and enhance the park-like character and natural beauty of Abbotsford's cemeteries.
- Create welcoming spaces for gathering and reflection that support remembrance, ceremonies, and community connection.
- Support environmental sustainability through responsible land stewardship, biodiversity enhancement, and thoughtful cemetery development.
- Improve operational efficiency and support the long-term sustainability of the cemetery system.

Implementation Plan

The table below outlines the key recommendations for the future development of Abbotsford's cemeteries, organized by priority.

Short-Term: 1–5 Years
Task
Bylaw Review and Update / Rewrite
Benchmarking and Fee Study
Financial Plan
Grave Reclamation Plan
Hazelwood Cemetery - Infill and Expansion
Hazelwood Cemetery - General Upgrades
Mt. Lehman Cemetery - Infill and Expansion

Medium-Term: 5–10 Years
Task
Hazelwood Cemetery - Infill and General Upgrades
Musselwhite Cemetery - Expansion
Musslewhite Cemetery - General Cemetery Upgrades
Mt. Lehman Cemetery - General Upgrades

Long-Term: 10+ Years
Task
Update the Cemetery Strategy

Table 4: Implementation Plan, Source: LEES+Associates.

Conclusion

The Abbotsford Cemetery Strategy provides a long-term framework to expand cemetery capacity through infill development and targeted expansion areas, while introducing new interment and memorialization options. It supports proactive land-use planning to meet future demand and helps ensure the City can continue providing cemetery services in a sustainable, efficient, and respectful manner for generations to come.

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Project Introduction

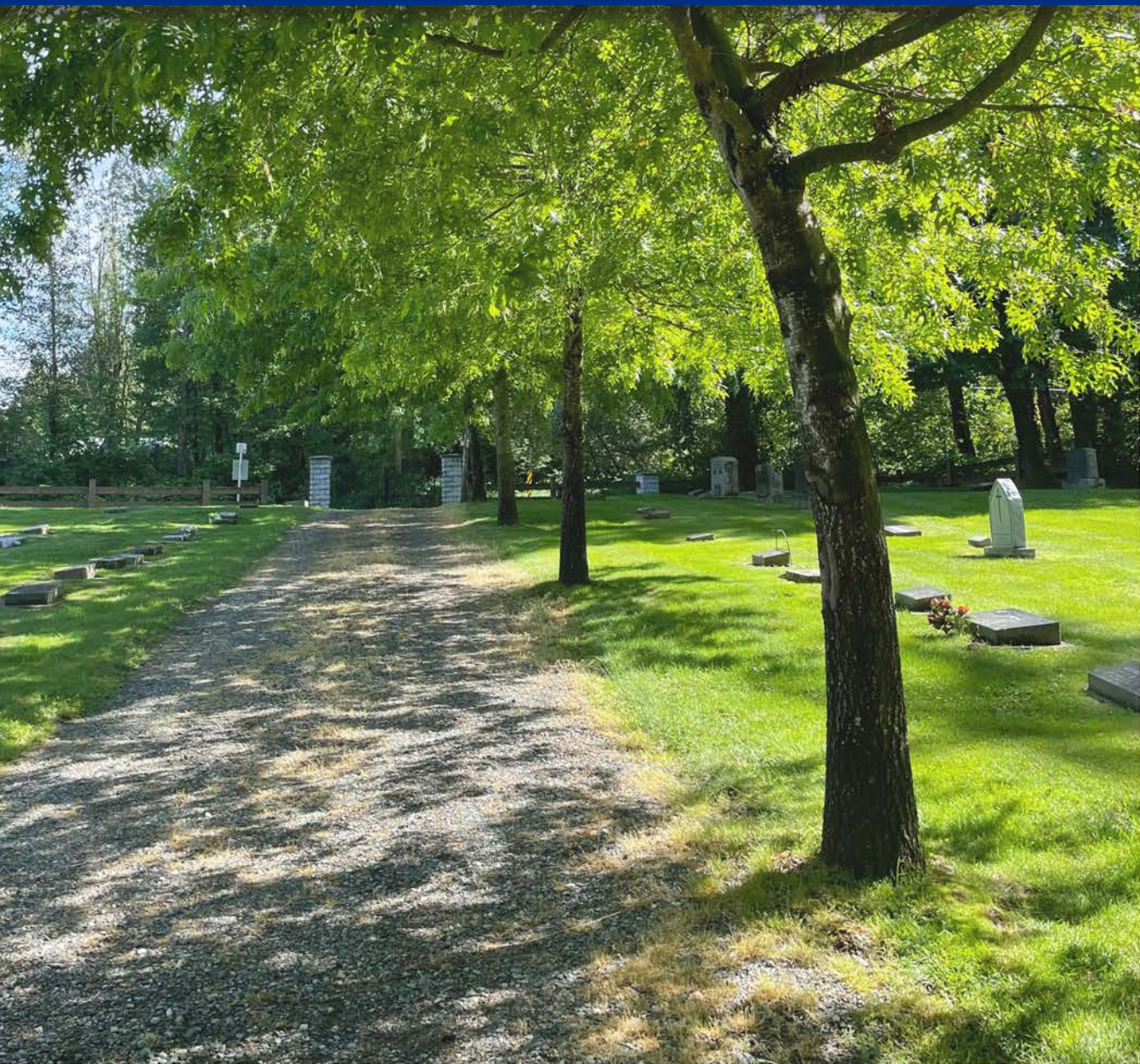


Figure 2: Mt. Lehman Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Project Outline

The City of Abbotsford's four municipal cemeteries, Aberdeen Cemetery, Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, and Musselwhite Cemetery, are important cultural, historical, and community assets that provide essential interment and memorialization services.

As these cemeteries approach capacity, the City faces important decisions about how to maintain a cemetery system that is socially, financially, and environmentally sustainable while meeting the community's evolving needs.

The City retained LEES+Associates to develop a comprehensive Cemetery Strategy. The study examined future interment needs, demographic and population trends, and changing interment and memorialization preferences. It also identified opportunities to maximize the lifespan of the existing cemetery system and explore how remaining land can be used to create additional interment and memorialization capacity.

Vision

To provide a framework for a sustainable, inclusive, and meaningful cemetery system that meets the evolving needs of the community through thoughtful planning and management.

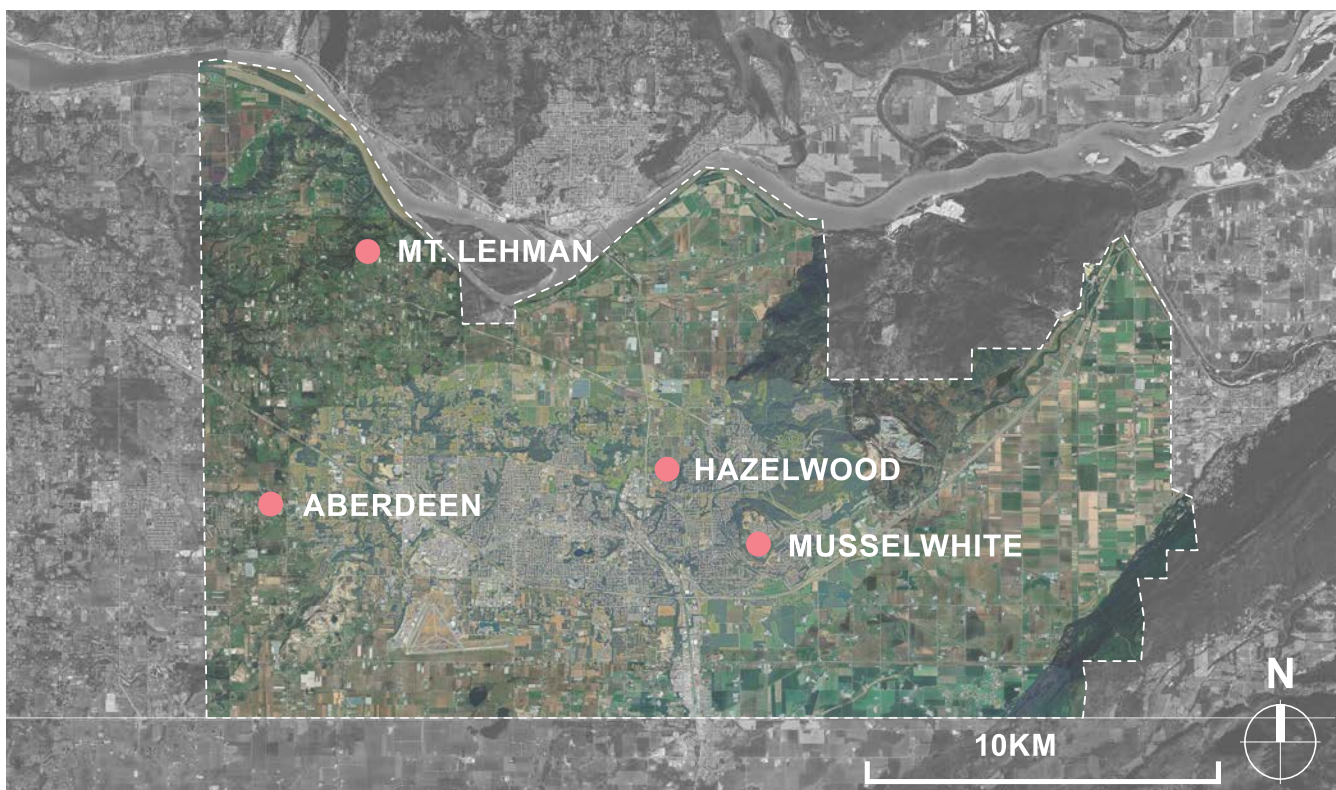


Figure 3: City of Abbotsford Cemetery Locations, Source: Google Earth and LEES+Associates.

Project Timeline

The Cemetery Strategy was completed in four stages, with community engagement and Council review taking place throughout the project.

- Stage 1 - Research and Understanding: Q2 2025
- Stage 2 - Analysis: Q3 2025
- Stage 3 - Concept Options: Q4 2025 & Q1 2026
- Stage 4 - Final Concepts: Q2 2026



Demand and Needs Analysis



Figure 4: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Introduction

This section examines the market area served by Abbotsford's cemeteries, including the City of Abbotsford and the surrounding rural area. It defines the market area and reviews its demographic profile, projected population growth, mortality rates, and religious and cultural diversity.

The trends identified through this demand and needs analysis are key factors influencing the need for additional cemetery capacity and a range of interment and memorialization options over the next 25 years and beyond.

The findings are based on an analysis of historical and projected data, including:

- Population and death rates
- Market area dispositions by type
- Sales and interments at the four cemeteries owned and operated by the City of Abbotsford: Aberdeen, Hazelwood, Mt. Lehman, and Musselwhite

Key Findings

Inventory Type	Existing Years of Sale Remaining	Potential Infill Capacity Years of Sale	Potential Expansion Capacity Years of Sale	Total Years of Sale
Aberdeen Cemetery¹				
Casket Lots	Sold Out	<1 year	N/A	<1 year
Cremation Lots	35–37 years	N/A	N/A	35–37 years
Columbaria Niches ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Scattering ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Mt. Lehman Cemetery³				
Casket Lots	1–3 years	1–2 years	N/A	2–5 years
Cremation Lots	4–6 years	1–2 years	1–2 years	6–10 years
Columbaria Niches	12–14 years	N/A	N/A	12–14 years
Scattering	4–6 years	N/A	N/A	4–6 years

Musslewhite Cemetery ¹				
Casket Lots	6–8 years	N/A	N/A	6–8 years
Cremation Lots	4–6 years	N/A	N/A	4–6 years
Columbaria Niches ²	N/A	N/A	6–8 years	6–8 years
Scattering ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hazelwood Cemetery ⁴				
Casket Lots	<1 year	18–20 years	26–28 years	44–48 years
Cremation Lots	1–3 years	18–20 years	25–27 years	44–50 years
Columbaria Niches	15–17 years	N/A	30–32 years	45–49 years
Scattering	6–8 years	N/A	70–72 years	76–80 years
Abbotsford Cemetery System Total				
Casket Lots	7–11 years	20–22 years	26–28 years	53–61 years
Cremation Lots	44–54 years	19–22 years	26–29 years	89–103 years
Columbaria Niches	27–31 years	19–22 years	26–29 years	89–103 years
Scattering	10–14 years	N/A	70–72 years	80–86 years

Table 5: Estimated Remaining and Projected Years of Sale, Source: LEES+Associates and Abbotsford Cemeteries' Records.

¹ Calculations are based on the average annual sales over the past five years at each cemetery. Where sales data is unavailable (either because inventory is sold out or the interment type is not currently offered) projections are based on the combined average annual sales from other Abbotsford cemeteries with available historical data.

² These options are not offered at the listed location.

³ For mixed interment areas for infill and expansion at Mt. Lehman Cemetery, approximately 5 per cent has been allocated to cremation so that casket and cremation sales conclude at roughly the same time.

⁴ For mixed interment areas for infill and expansion at Hazelwood Cemetery, approximately 8 per cent has been allocated to cremation so that casket and cremation sales conclude at roughly the same time.

The timeline below shows the estimated number of years that existing casket lot inventory will remain available for sale at each cemetery. It also identifies the additional years of inventory that could be created through infill development and expansion opportunities.

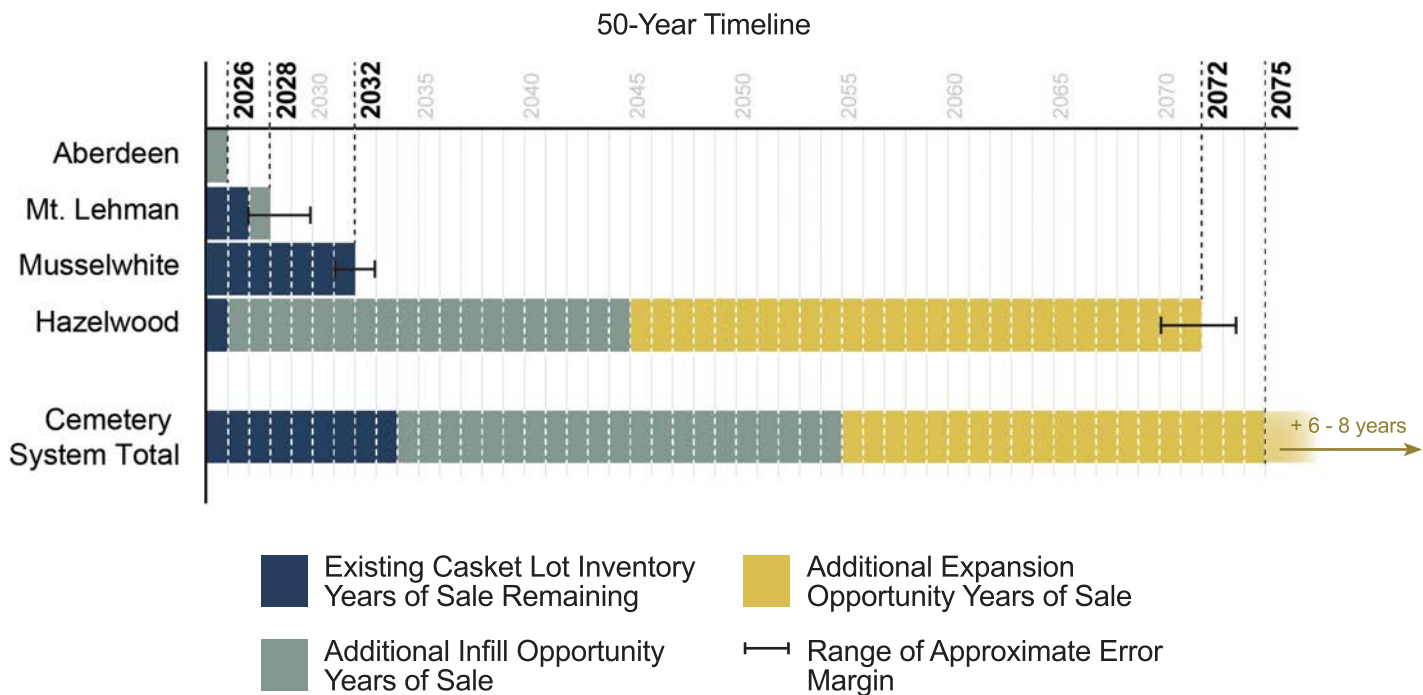


Figure 5: 50-Year Timeline of Remaining and Projected Years of Casket Lots Sales at Abbotsford Cemeteries, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 6: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Demographics and Community Preferences

This section describes the market area served by the City's cemeteries. The market area profile is based on demographic data and vital statistics from federal and provincial sources, including Statistics Canada and BC Vital Statistics.

The analysis identifies the market area's geographic boundaries, population, number of deaths, disposition trends, and religious and cultural demographics. These factors help inform future demand for cemetery land, interment services, and memorialization options.

Geographic Area Served

Feedback gathered by LEES+Associates through community engagement activities and client surveys between 2015 and 2025 indicates that people generally prefer to be interred in or near the community where they lived.

This analysis assumes the City's cemeteries primarily serve residents within British Columbia's Local Health Area (LHA) 213: Abbotsford. This area includes the City of Abbotsford and the surrounding rural area.

The market area was selected based on available demographic data, the proximity of residents to the City's cemeteries, and the connection between local health areas and death certificate records.

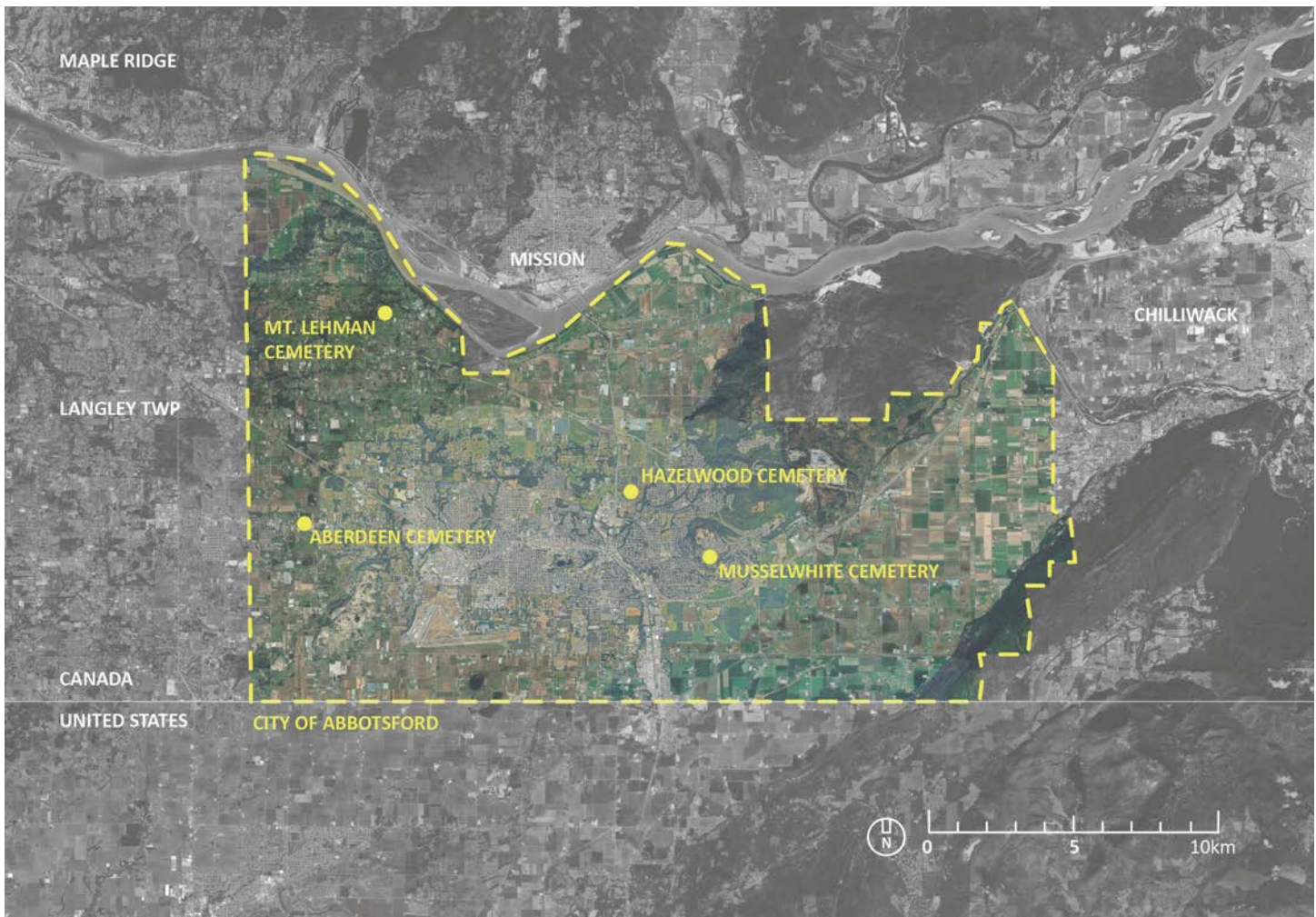


Figure 7: Local Health Area (LHA) 213 - Abbotsford, Source: Google Earth and LEES+Associates.

Religious and Ethnic Profile

Interment and memorialization choices are influenced by personal values, family traditions, and social and financial considerations. These decisions are highly personal and can vary widely among individuals. Religious and cultural practices can also have a significant influence on interment preferences.

This section provides an overview of Abbotsford’s religious and cultural demographics to help identify local demand for different interment and memorialization options. The analysis is based on data from the 2021 Statistics Canada census.

Religious Profile

The City has a diverse religious population, including significant Sikh, Christian, and Catholic communities, as well as many residents who do not identify with a religion. Religious beliefs and cultural practices may influence interment and memorialization preferences.

For example, some Sikh residents may prefer cremation-based interment options, while some Muslim residents may prefer graves that are oriented to allow the deceased to face Mecca. Given these considerations, engagement with religious and cultural communities is important to better understand their interment and memorialization preferences and service needs.

Abbotsford’s population identifies as:

- 30 per cent with no religious affiliation
- 25 per cent Sikh
- 27 per cent Christian (other denominations and unspecified Christians)
- 7 per cent Catholic
- 3 per cent Anabaptist
- 2 per cent Hindu
- 2 per cent Anglican
- 2 per cent United Church
- 1 per cent Other religions
- 1 per cent Muslim

Ethnic Profile

While Abbotsford has long been a diverse community, its ethnic profile is continuously shifting. The City of Abbotsford’s ethnic profile reveals that nearly 50 per cent of its population are visible minorities with significant South Asian communities. The top five most common places of birth for immigrants who immigrated after 2016 are India, the Philippines, Syria, Pakistan, and South Korea. Inuit, Métis, and First Nations communities make up approximately 5 per cent of Abbotsford’s population, a relatively similar proportion compared to British Columbia’s 5.9 per cent.

While not all residents of non-European heritage have significantly different interment and memorialization practices than what is currently offered at the City’s cemetery, some of these community members may desire new religious and ethnic sections and custom interment and memorialization services. It would be valuable for the City to establish an engagement process to engage with emerging communities and periodically assess their evolving needs.

Abbotsford’s population identifies as:

- 55 per cent European
- 30 per cent South Asian
- 5 per cent Other minorities
- 5 per cent Other Asian
- 5 per cent Inuit, Métis, and First Nations

Disposition

Disposition describes how human remains are handled after death. The most common forms of disposition in North America are in-ground casket burial and cremation.

Historical Market Area Summary

An analysis of historical population, death, cremation, and casket burial trends is important for understanding demand for cemetery services. Demographic data and vital statistics were collected from federal and provincial government sources, including Statistics Canada, BC Vital Statistics, and the Cremation Association of North America.

Over the past five years, from 2020 to 2024, the market area population increased from 159,458 to 172,029. This represents an average annual growth rate of 1.8 per cent. Annual deaths also increased during this period, from 1,280 to 1,328 per year.

The graph below shows the total number of deaths, casket burials, and cremations over the past five years.

Projected Market Area Summary

Based on the trends identified in the historical market area analysis, the market area population is projected to increase from 172,029 to 242,500 over the next 25 years.

The number of annual deaths is also expected to increase. Deaths are projected to rise steadily, with growth accelerating after 2026 as the oldest members of the baby boomer generation reach age 80. Annual deaths are forecast to increase from 1,328 in 2024 to 2,250 in 2049.

The graph below compares the total number of deaths, casket burials, and cremations recorded between 2020 and 2024 with the projected number of deaths, casket burials, and cremations from 2025 to 2049.

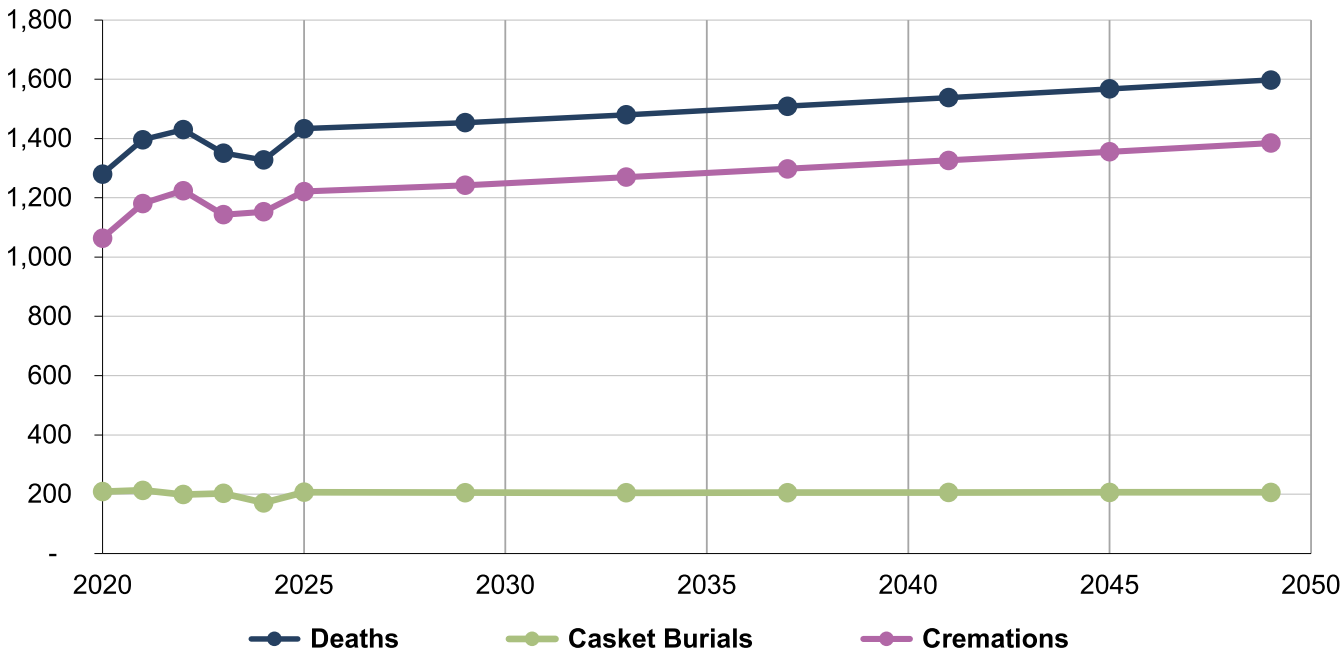


Figure 8: Market Area Summary of Deaths and Disposition Types, Source: LEES+Associates.

The graph shows that the number of deaths is expected to increase steadily between 2020 and 2049. Cremation rates are projected to remain relatively stable as a share of total deaths, resulting in a gradual increase in the number of cremations over time.

The number of casket burials is expected to remain relatively consistent, showing little overall growth or decline. As a result, casket burials will represent a smaller share of total interments over time.

These trends suggest that demand for cremation services will continue to increase as the population grows and the number of annual deaths rises.

Interment and Disposition Trends

Cremation Trends

Cremation has become the popular choice of final disposition for most Canadians. The graph below shows the upward trend of cremation in British Columbia. Although cremation is the most popular choice for final disposition, some families will continue to require in-ground casket burials due to religious traditions influencing their interment preferences.

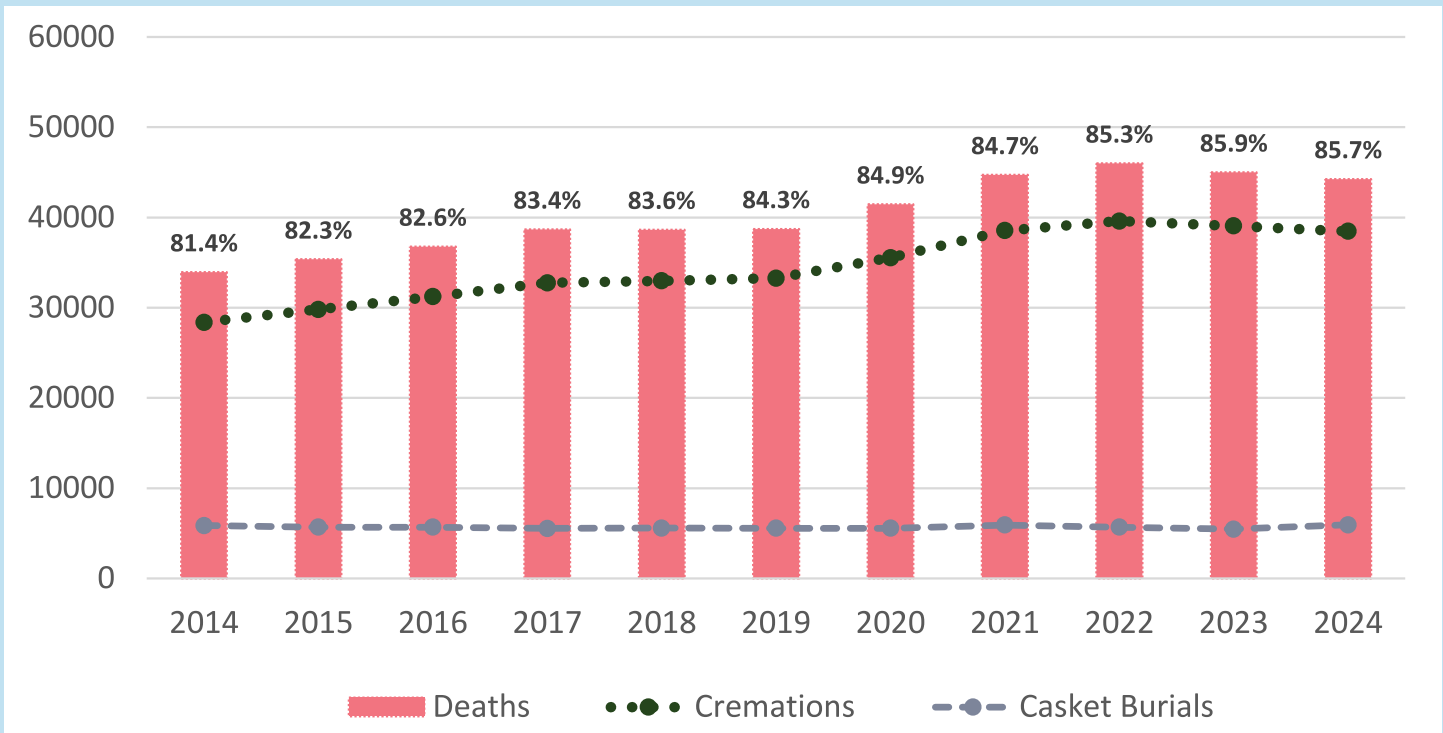


Figure 9: British Columbia Cremation Trends, Source: LEES+Associates and Cremation Association of North America.

Baby Boomers’ Effect on the Cemetery

Statistics Canada projects that the number of older adults will continue to increase, resulting in greater demand for cemetery and funeral services. This trend is expected to begin in 2026, when the oldest members of the baby boom generation reach age 80.

The number of annual deaths is projected to increase until approximately 2045, when the youngest members of the baby boom generation reach age 80. As a result, demand for interment and memorialization services is expected to continue growing throughout this period.

Cemetery Demand

This section outlines projected sales and interments for casket lots, cremation lots, and columbarium niches over the next 25 years at the four cemeteries owned and operated by the City of Abbotsford.

These projections are based on historical sales and interment data. They assume that recent trends in disposition preferences, service selection, market capture rates, and the relationship between sales and interments will continue over the planning period.

Measures of Demand - Market Capture

Market Capture

Market capture is the percentage of community member deaths in a market area that are interred by a cemetery over a defined period. Market research by LEES+Associates over the past two decades finds that most Canadian municipal cemeteries serve a market area that consists of one community and its surrounding rural area. These cemeteries typically provide service for 80 to 90 per cent of those choosing casket burial, and 10 to 20 per cent of those who choose cremation in their community.

These service rates decline in large urban centres such as those communities within Metro Vancouver. Communities within Metro Vancouver have multiple service providers within their market area. A cemetery within this market typically provides services for 15 to 35 per cent of those choosing casket burial and 1 to 10 per cent of those who choose cremation in their community.

There are several factors that could influence the proportion of residents who choose to be buried at Abbotsford cemeteries, including the following:

- Attractiveness of the cemetery site
- Diversity of the product and service options
- Frequency of the cemetery operator's community engagement
- The cemetery's proximity to residential areas and residents
- The cemetery's level of universal accessibility
- The cemetery's ability to meet religious/ethnic burial practices and traditions
- Pricing

Findings

Over the past five years, Abbotsford's cemeteries have provided services for 38 per cent of residents in the market area who chose casket burial and 12 per cent of those who chose cremation.

These market capture rates are higher than those typically observed at municipal cemeteries in large urban centres that offer similar services. This suggests that Abbotsford's cemeteries play a significant role in meeting the interment and memorialization needs of the local community.

Interment to Sales Ratio

Interment refers to the placement of human remains in a burial lot, columbarium niche, or other designated location.

Sales refer to the purchase of interment rights for casket lots, cremation lots, and columbarium niches. These purchases often occur before an interment takes place as part of advance planning and end-of-life arrangements.

A low interment-to-sales ratio indicates a strong demand for pre-purchased lots and niches. In these cases, the City may need to develop new inventory sooner than interment projections suggest to ensure lots and niches remain available for purchase.

Findings

Analysis of interment and sales data from 2020 to 2024 found that Abbotsford's cemeteries:

- Sold nine casket lots for every five casket interments.
- Interred three cremated remains in in-ground cremation lots for every one cremation lot sold.
- Sold four columbarium niches for every three cremated remains interred in niches.
- Placed three cremated remains in ossuaries or scattering gardens for every two ossuary or scattering garden rights sold.

At Abbotsford's cemeteries, the annual number of cremated remains interred is higher than the annual sales of cremation inventory. This may indicate that in-ground lots are being used for more than one interment of cremated remains.

In contrast, annual casket lot sales are higher than the annual number of casket interments. This indicates that many residents are choosing to purchase burial plots in advance, rather than at the time of need. This shows demand for advance purchase of casket lots.

Historical and Projected Interments and Sales

This section summarizes historical trends and future projections for cemetery inventory sales and interment services across Abbotsford’s cemetery system.

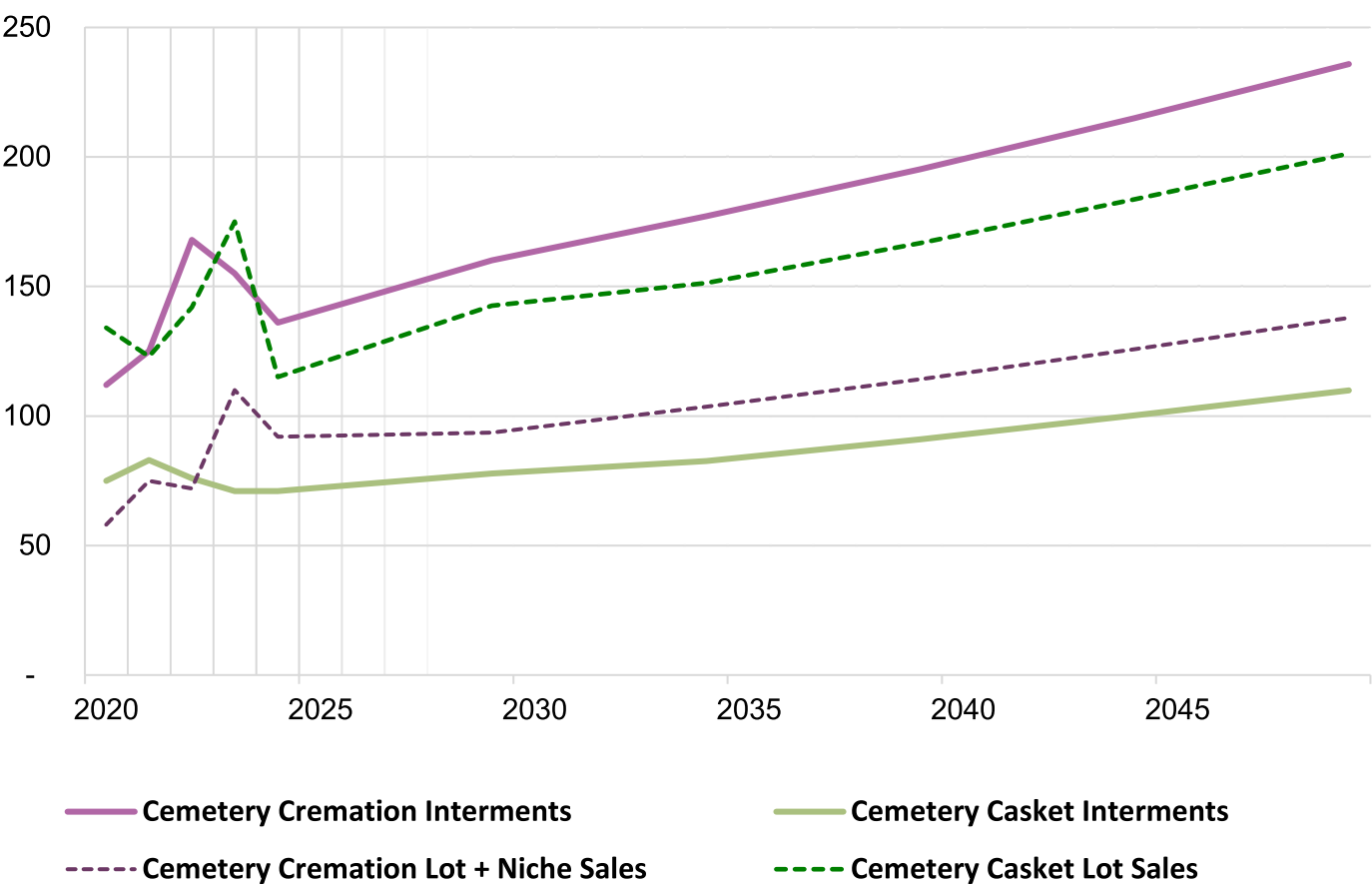


Figure 10: Historical and Projected Cemetery Activity - Disposition, Sales, and Interment, Source: LEES+Associates.

Historic Trends (2020–2024)

Over the past five years:

- The total casket sales and interments have steadily increased.
- The total cremation sales and interments have steadily increased.

These trends suggest stable overall demand for sales and interment services in Abbotsford. The increase in cremation inventory sales reflects the upward trend of cremation as choice for final disposition in Abbotsford.

25-Year Projections

The following projections outline the expected inventory sales and interment services at Abbotsford's cemeteries over the next 25 years, from 2025 to 2049. The projections include casket burials, cremation burials, columbarium niche interments, and other disposition services.

These estimates are based on historical sales and interment data. They assume that trends in disposition preferences, market capture rates, and the relationship between sales and interments will remain generally consistent throughout the planning period.

The table below summarizes the interment services and inventory sales that the Abbotsford cemetery system is projected to provide over the next 25 years.

Interment Services			Inventory Sales	
	Average Per Year (2025–2049)	Total (2025–2049)	Average Per Year (2025–2049)	Total (2025–2049)
Casket Lots	90	2,250	92	2,300
Cremation Lots	142	3,550	72	1,150
Columbaria Niches	34	850	46	1,150
Ossuary	3	75	4	100
Scattering	11	275	18	450

Table 6: 25-Year Interment Services and Inventory Sales Projections, Source: LEES+Associates.

Cemetery System Interment Capacity

This section examines the existing inventory of casket lots, cremation lots, and columbarium niches within Abbotsford's cemetery system. The purpose is to compare the available inventory with projected demand over the next 25 years.

Inventory Years Remaining

The table below summarizes the available inventory, projected average annual sales over the next 25 years, and the estimated years of remaining inventory at the four cemeteries owned and operated by the City of Abbotsford.

Note: Remaining inventory is based on sales rather than interments because interment rights can be purchased or reserved in advance. As a result, interments may continue for many years after the last lot or niche has been sold.

Interment Type	Available Inventory for Sale	Average Sales Per Year	25-Year Demand	Years of Sales Remaining
Aberdeen Cemetery				
Casket Lot	1	1	36	1
Cremation Lot	70	2	48	35–37
Hazelwood Cemetery				
Casket Lot	59	53	1,315	1
Cremation Lot	58	19	469	1–3
Columbaria Niche	533	31	768	15–17
Ossuary	246	4	95	60–65
Scattering Garden	109	14	347	16–18
Mt. Lehman Cemetery				
Casket Lot	98	32	792	1–3
Cremation Lot	55	9	224	4–6
Columbaria Niche	167	12	229	14
Scattering Garden	80	4	109	16–18
Musselwhite Cemetery				
Casket Lot	50	6	161	6–8
Cremation Lot	99	16	408	4–6

Table 7: Years of Sales Remaining, Source: LEES+Associates.

Inventory Expansion Strategies

This section outlines the strategies available to increase interment inventory within a cemetery. Each strategy will be evaluated for its potential application at Abbotsford's four municipal cemeteries in the Cemetery Concepts section.

Infill and Densify Strategy

Cemeteries often have opportunities to increase capacity by developing areas that were not previously used for interments and by making more efficient use of existing space. Potential strategies include:

- Converting low-use paths, roads, and other amenities into interment space.
- Replacing some traditional in-ground burial lots with options that require less land, such as cremation lots and ossuaries.
- Adding above-ground interment and memorialization options, such as family vessels, columbaria, and memorial wall niches.

Reclamation Strategy

Some cemeteries increase capacity and conserve land by reclaiming and reselling unclaimed or abandoned lots that were purchased many years ago. These are typically lots where the owner or their family has had no contact with the cemetery for an extended period.

Determining whether unclaimed lots are available for resale can require significant research and staff resources. Best practices include:

- Identifying lots that were purchased more than 50 years ago.
- Attempting to locate the current owner or the owner's heirs using available records.
- Advertising through local media and other appropriate channels to contact potential claimants.

The circumstances under which an unclaimed lot may be reclaimed and resold must be clearly defined in the Cemetery Bylaw. Once a lot is determined to be available, it may be resold at the current market value.

Cemetery Expansion Strategy

Some cemeteries have opportunities to expand into adjacent, undeveloped space, which is part of the cemetery lands. This approach can be beneficial because it allows new cemetery areas to be planned and designed for efficient land use, accessibility and a range of interment and memorialization options.

Although planning and developing a new cemetery section requires significant time and investment, expansion often provides capacity for a much longer period than infill development or lot reclamation.

LEES+Associates commonly uses a planning guideline of 500 casket lots per acre and 2,000 cremation lots per acre when assessing cemetery capacity. These benchmarks are based on experience working with municipal cemeteries across Canada.

Potential cemetery capacity is typically measured by the number of additional casket lots that can be developed, as casket burials require the greatest amount of land. This approach provides a consistent method for assessing the capacity of future expansion and development areas.

Inventory Type	Inventory Required to Meet 25 Years of Demand	Undeveloped Land Required to Meet 25 Years of Demand (acres)	Potential Infill Land Available	Potential Expansion Land Available
Aberdeen Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	40–50	0.1 acres	0.1 acres	N/A
Cremation Lots	Exceeds Demand	N/A		
Hazelwood Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	1,250–1,300	2.5 acres	2.25 acres	3.0 acres
Cremation Lots	410–420	0.2 acres		
Mt. Lehman Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	700–710	1.4 acres	0.15 acres	N/A
Cremation Lots	170–80	0.1 acres		
Musselwhite Cemetery				
Casket Lots - Adult	110–120	0.2 acres	N/A	N/A
Cremation Lots	310–320	0.2 acres		
Total				
Casket Lots - Adult	2,100–2,180	4.2 acres	2.5 acres	3.0 acres
Cremation Lots	890–920	0.5 acres		

Table 8: Summary of Land Required to Meet 25-Year Sales Demand, Source: City of Abbotsford Records and LEES+Associates.

If a specific type of inventory becomes unavailable at one cemetery, it may be possible to accommodate the request at another City-operated cemetery. Based on projected sales demand, the City will need approximately 4.7 acres of additional inventory over the next 25 years. Existing undeveloped land and infill opportunities within the cemetery system are sufficient to meet this projected demand.



Engagement Summary: Stage 1

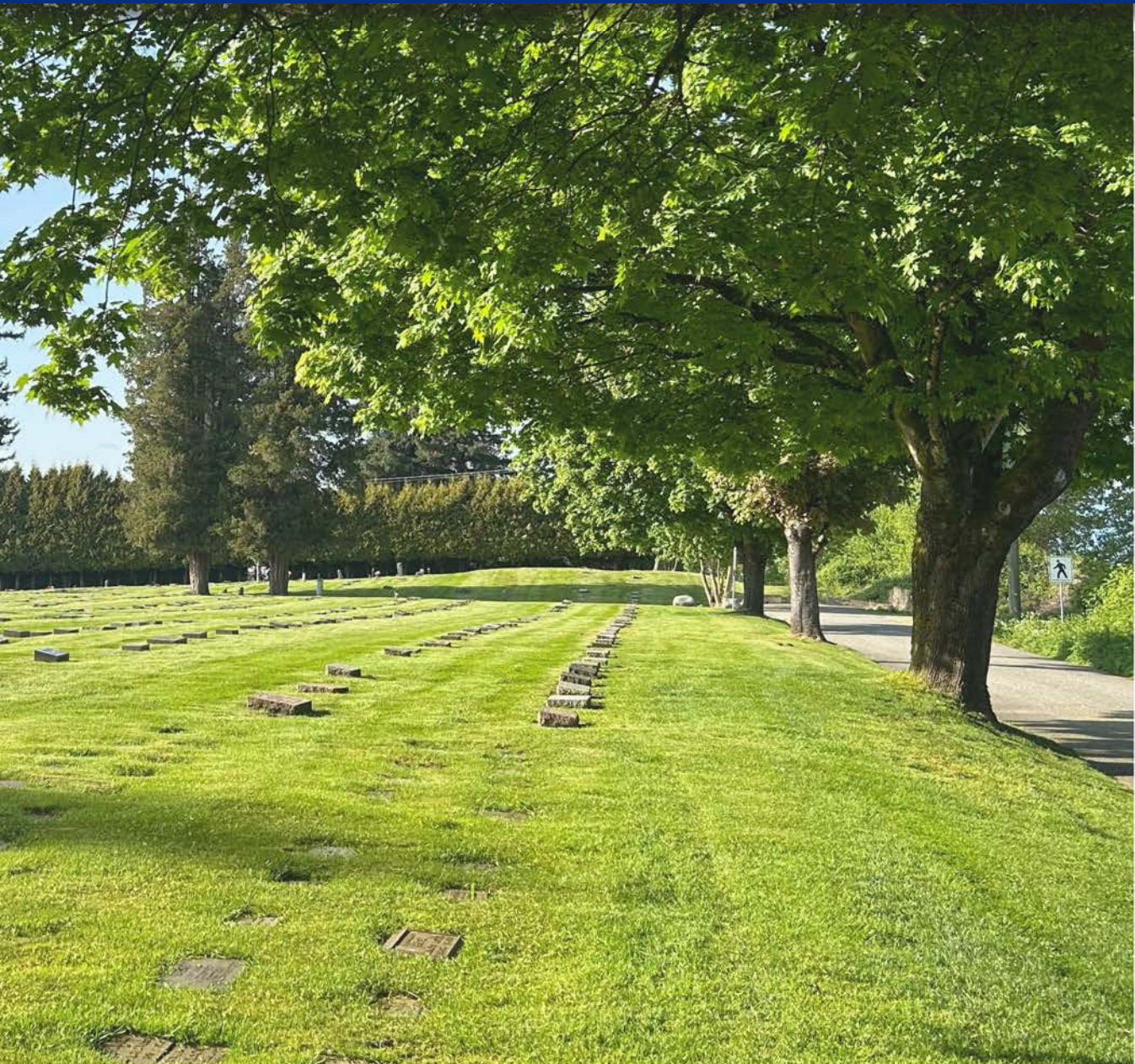


Figure 11: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Introduction

The Abbotsford Cemetery Strategy was completed through a four-stage process, with community engagement taking place during Stage 1: Background Research and Key Findings and Stage 3: Draft Strategy.

This section summarizes the engagement activities and feedback gathered during Stage 1 consultations with City staff, senior leadership, cemetery stakeholders, and community members. Public input was collected through open houses and an online survey. To support project coordination and maintain progress throughout this stage, the consulting team also met biweekly with the City's project manager.

Stage 1 included the following engagement activities:

- An online survey hosted on the City's Let's Talk Abbotsford platform
- Consultation with interested parties and key stakeholders
- One virtual public open house
- Three in-person public open houses held at Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Elementary School, and Musselwhite Cemetery



Figure 12: Aberdeen Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Public Online Survey - Stage 1

To better understand community needs and perspectives, the project team developed a public survey focused on existing cemetery services in Abbotsford and future service needs. The survey was available on the City's Let's Talk Abbotsford platform for four weeks, from April 16 to May 16, 2025.

The survey included 22 questions, with a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended responses. The City promoted the survey through its online engagement platform and encouraged participation from residents and stakeholders. Funeral homes and local religious organizations were also contacted directly and invited to participate.

Survey Key Findings - Stage 1

Key Findings

Environmental considerations: Respondents expressed support for environmentally-responsible cemetery practices, including green burial options, land conservation, and the protection of natural areas. There was interest in incorporating native plant species, pollinator meadows, and forested landscapes within cemetery sites. These responses reflect a desire for cemetery spaces that support environmental stewardship while continuing to provide interment and memorialization services.

Balancing interment preferences and cemetery capacity: Feedback indicated support for cremation and alternative interment options, while also identifying an ongoing interest for traditional in-ground casket burial among some respondents. Responses highlighted the importance of maintaining a range of interment and memorialization options to accommodate different needs and preferences within the community.

Views on double-depth burial lots for unrelated individuals were mixed. Responses indicated support for expanding double-depth burial options and exploring opportunities for grave reuse to extend cemetery capacity.

Maintenance and operations: Respondents provided positive feedback about the City's cemetery services. The professionalism and compassion of cemetery staff was highlighted, as well as the overall condition and appearance of cemetery grounds.

Respondents also identified opportunities for improvement. Suggestions included increased maintenance in less visible areas of the cemeteries, such as perimeter areas and back sections, more frequent grave leveling, and clearer guidelines regarding cemetery ornamentation and the disposal of items left at gravesites.

"It's great that the city is exploring new and different options, as people's views and needs for these are changing."

"Love the idea of having green spaces that turn into meadows to support local biodiversity."

"Conserve and protect the land."

"We have to be mindful that we are a diverse community and not be too restrictive."

"The parks staff members are very kind and considerate. They work hard to maintain a beautiful space."

"I don't think 'one size fits all' works. People need options."

"Sustainable after-death practices that do not compete with land use are preferred."

Cemetery amenities and visitor experience: Respondents expressed a desire for enhanced amenities and landscape features that support comfort, accessibility, and a park-like atmosphere.

Suggestions included adding more trees and benches (particularly near columbaria), expanded walking paths, and improved landscape planting. Practical improvements such as better parking, fenced areas for off-leash dogs, and more visible information kiosks and grave location maps were also requested.

Affordability and long-term capacity: Respondents expressed concerns about the long-term availability of cemetery land and supported exploring land acquisition opportunities to help meet future demand. Respondents noted the importance of balancing capacity improvements with the preservation of the cemetery's character and visitor experience.

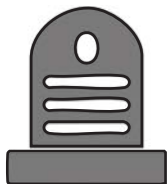
There was also interest in advance purchase options and the importance of affordable cemetery services. Feedback indicated a desire to reduce the financial burden on families and improve access to interment and memorialization services. Respondents also identified a need for greater public awareness of the options and services available through the City's cemetery system.

Survey Response Summary - Stage 1



Who Answered the Survey

- The survey received 887 visits, with 298 participants submitting responses.
- A broad range of age groups participated. The majority of respondents were 45 years of age or older, with particularly strong participation from older adults.
- Nearly all respondents, 95 per cent, identified as Abbotsford residents.



Cemetery Usage

- Awareness of Abbotsford's four cemeteries varied among survey respondents. Hazelwood Cemetery and Musselwhite Cemetery were the most widely recognized, while Aberdeen Cemetery had the lowest level of public awareness.
 - A total of 35 per cent of respondents reported visiting a cemetery at least a few times each year, while 11 per cent reported visiting monthly or more often.
 - Hazelwood Cemetery was the most frequently visited site. In addition to memorial visits, some respondents reported using the cemetery regularly for walking and dog walking.
 - Musselwhite Cemetery was most often visited for funeral services or to visit loved ones. Many respondents also noted its visibility because they regularly travel past the site.
 - Mt. Lehman Cemetery and Aberdeen Cemetery were visited less frequently and were most often used for funeral services or visits to loved ones.



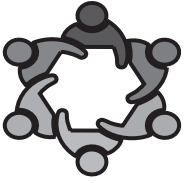
End-of-Life Plans

- More than half of respondents, 54 per cent, indicated they had not yet made end-of-life plans. Among those who had, 44 per cent planned to be interred at an Abbotsford cemetery, while 56 per cent planned to be interred elsewhere.
- Among respondents who selected an Abbotsford cemetery for their end-of-life plans, 75 per cent preferred cremation. The most common choices were cremation lots and columbarium niches. The remaining 25 per cent preferred casket burial. The majority of respondents indicated a preference for Hazelwood Cemetery, followed by Musselwhite Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, and Aberdeen Cemetery.
- Some respondents identified cultural or religious preferences that are not currently accommodated within the City's cemetery system. Suggestions included memorial shrines for reflection and prayer, incense-burning areas, chapels, and ensuring Mennonite cemetery traditions and spaces continue to be recognized and respected. These preferences were identified by 7 per cent of survey participants.
- Most respondents, 45 per cent, did not consider designated children's sections in cemeteries to be important. A total of 21 per cent supported the idea, while 34 per cent were unsure.
- Support for double-depth burial lots for unrelated individuals was limited. While 29 per cent of respondents supported this approach as a land conservation measure, the majority were either opposed or uncertain.
- Interest in green burial was mixed. 36 per cent of respondents expressed interest in green burial as an end-of-life option, while 20 per cent wanted more information and 14 per cent were unsure. In comparison, 30 per cent indicated they were not interested in green burial. These findings suggest an opportunity to increase public awareness and education about green burial options.



Amenities, Products, and Services

- The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the interment and memorialization options available at the City's cemeteries, as well as the level of care, maintenance and customer service provided. Those who had interacted with City cemetery staff typically felt their needs had been met. Respondents who expressed uncertainty often cited limited awareness of available services and options.
- Respondents were asked which amenities should be added or enhanced at Abbotsford's cemeteries. The most frequently selected amenities were:
 - Small outdoor gathering spaces: 63 per cent
 - Sheltered gathering spaces or covered seating areas: 54 per cent
 - Altar stones or reliquary shelves: 32 per cent
 - Incense-burning areas: 8 per cent
- Opinions on allowing pet cremated remains in City cemeteries were mixed. A total of 47 per cent of respondents were opposed, 34 per cent were supportive, and 19 per cent were unsure. The results indicate diverse views within the community and suggest an opportunity for further discussion and public education on this topic.
- There was strong support for prioritizing cremated remains lots and columbarium niches as a way to conserve land and help manage costs. Overall, 67 per cent of respondents were either somewhat supportive or strongly supportive of this approach. The number of respondents who were uncertain highlights the importance of ongoing communication and education.
- Feedback indicated support for ecological and sustainable cemetery landscaping practices, particularly pollinator meadows, but careful planning and maintenance will be important to balance biodiversity goals with community expectations for a respectful and well-kept environment.
- Additional amenity and feature suggestions included:
 - Dedicated spaces for tea and coffee gatherings following interment ceremonies
 - Private areas for family gatherings and reflection
 - Community volunteer events focused on cemetery upkeep, including headstone cleaning
 - Continued respectful, knowledgeable, and compassionate support for families during interment services
 - Quiet seating areas for reflection, remembrance, and personal contemplation



Community and Commemorative Events

- Respondents viewed the cemetery as an important place for remembrance and reflection. Respondents also recognized its role as a cultural landmark, a passive recreation space, and a community gathering place.
- Interest in cemetery-based community events was more limited, with 23 per cent of respondents expressing support. While this suggests interest among a segment of the community, other respondents emphasized that cemeteries should remain quiet spaces focused on remembrance and visits with loved ones.
- Respondents suggested a range of community and commemorative events that could take place within cemetery spaces, particularly on dates such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, All Souls' Day, Christmas, and Día de los Muertos. Additional suggestions included:
 - Candlelight walks and candle lighting ceremonies
 - Musical performances
 - Seasonal events, such as Christmas tree lighting, holiday decorating, summer solstice events and full moon gatherings
 - Historical cemetery tours
 - Birthday and death day remembrances
 - Community clean-ups
 - Veterans' and Remembrance Day commemorations
 - Family Day gatherings

Consultation with Interested Parties and Stakeholders

Project team members contacted six local funeral homes by telephone and invited them to participate in the online survey. Representatives from the funeral homes were also invited to attend a stakeholder meeting held on April 28, 2025.

Two funeral home representatives attended the meeting. However, technical issues prevented them from unmuting their microphones and participating in the discussion.

Following the meeting, attendees were encouraged to complete the online survey. A separate questionnaire was also emailed to funeral home representatives to gather additional feedback. No responses were received.

Public Open Houses - Stage 1

One virtual and three in-person public open houses were held between April 24 and May 1, 2025. The purpose of these sessions was to share information about existing cemetery services and gather initial feedback on community needs, preferences, and interests related to cemetery services in Abbotsford. At each open house, display boards were available for review, and City staff and LEES+Associates representatives were present to answer questions and engage with participants.

A recording of the virtual open house was posted on the Cemetery Strategy project webpage on the City’s Let’s Talk Abbotsford platform. The session included introductions to the project team, a project overview, a presentation of the display boards, and information about how to provide feedback through the online survey.

Feedback received during the in-person open houses was generally positive. Participants expressed support for proposed features such as outdoor gathering spaces and initiatives that promote biodiversity and environmental sustainability, including the conversion of areas unsuitable for burial into pollinator meadows.

Participants also expressed interest in alternative memorialization options, including memorial walls, family columbaria, and green burial. There was additional interest in community-focused activities such as art installations and commemorative events.

Interest in passive recreation activities within cemeteries was more limited. However, participants responded more positively to activities such as walking, running, and jogging, which some viewed as compatible with the cemetery setting.



Figure 13: Open House Setup at Hazelwood Cemetery, Source: LEES+Associates.

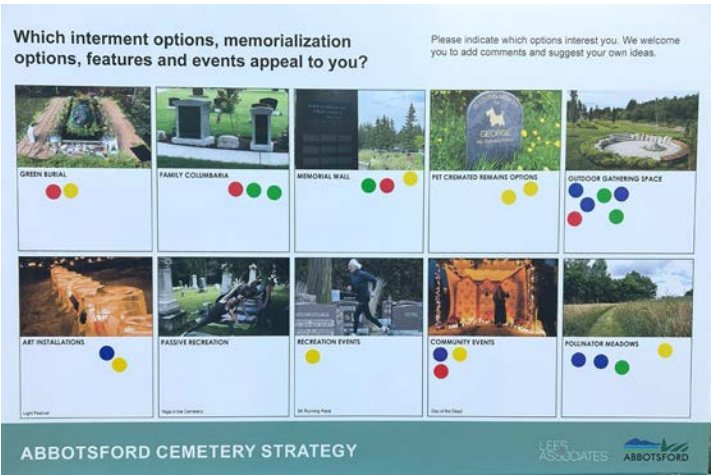


Figure 14: Interactive Open House Board Results, Source: LEES+Associates.

Engagement Summary: Stage 3

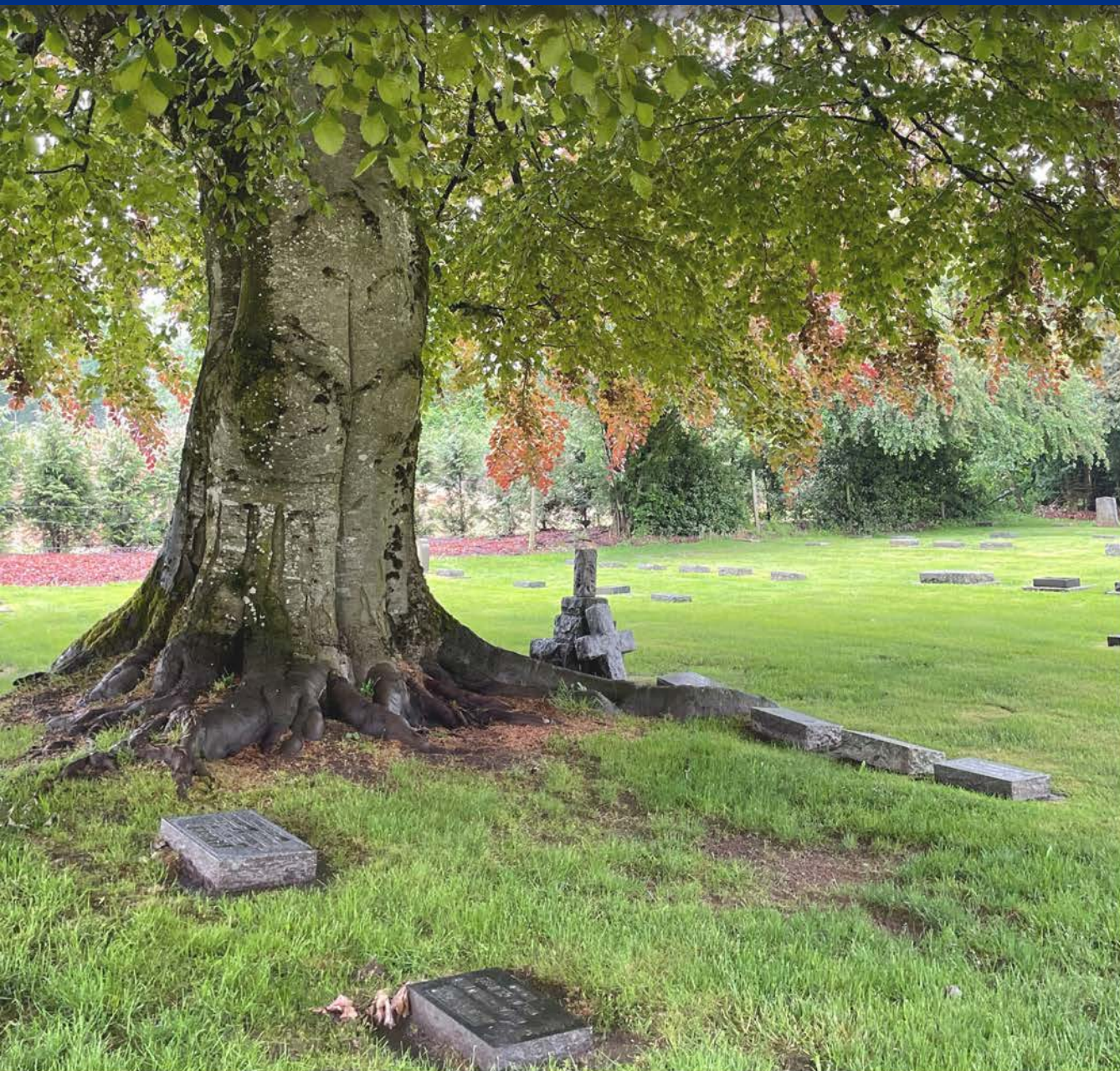


Figure 15: Aberdeen Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Introduction

This section summarizes engagement activities and feedback gathered during Stage 3 consultations with cemetery stakeholders and community members through public open houses and an online survey.

Stage 3 included the following engagement activities:

- An online survey hosted on the City's Let's Talk Abbotsford platform
- Consultation with interested parties and key stakeholders
- Five in-person public open houses held at Aberdeen Cemetery, Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, Musselwhite Cemetery, and Sevenoaks Shopping Centre
- Two virtual information and feedback sessions with religious, cultural, and faith-based organizations

Stage 3 focused on presenting the preliminary cemetery concept plans and gathering additional feedback on community needs, preferences, and priorities related to cemetery services in Abbotsford.

This stage also included targeted outreach to religious, cultural, and faith-based organizations to better understand community needs and identify opportunities to improve inclusivity and service delivery within Abbotsford's cemetery system.

Public Online Survey - Stage 3

To gather feedback on the preliminary cemetery concept plans, a second public survey was conducted. The survey sought input on the proposed concepts, including features and design elements that respondents supported or felt should be reconsidered. The survey was available on the City’s Let’s Talk Abbotsford platform for three weeks, from May 15 to June 4, 2026.

The survey included a description of each cemetery concept plan and featured 18 questions, using a combination of multiple-choice and open-ended response formats.

Survey Key Findings

Landscape enhancements and environmental features: Respondents expressed support for landscape improvements and environmental features within the cemetery system. These elements included pollinator meadows, habitat enhancements, native plantings, memorial gardens, and additional tree planting.

Respondents noted that these features could enhance the appearance of cemetery spaces, support biodiversity, and create peaceful settings for reflection, remembrance, and visitation.

Visitor Amenities: Respondents expressed support for a range of visitor amenities across all cemetery concepts. These features included walking paths, gathering spaces, seating areas, and improved pedestrian circulation.

Respondents indicated that these amenities would make cemeteries more comfortable, accessible, and welcoming for visitors while preserving their primary role as places of remembrance. Additional benches, pathways, wayfinding maps, and gathering spaces were identified as priorities for future improvements.

Support for cremation, scattering, and alternative memorialization options: Respondents expressed support for cremation gardens, scattering gardens, green burial areas, and expanded columbaria. These features were identified as important additions that reflect changing community preferences and provide greater flexibility for future interment needs.

Respondents also expressed interest in additional memorialization options and more affordable alternatives to traditional burial. These responses suggest a desire for a broader range of interment and memorialization choices within Abbotsford’s cemetery system.

“Love all the development that encourages flowers, bees, park, nature, community.”

“Love the pollinator meadow and boulders. It’s a great natural space.”

“Making the space park-like for walkers and dog walking is nice.”

“Love the pollinator meadow and boulders. It’s a great natural space.”

“People just want a beautiful space to scatter ashes.”

“The option of having your ashes buried under/beside a tree would be nice.”

“Another cemetery created so once all these cemeteries in Abbotsford are full there will still be a place for additional burials.”

Accessibility and long-term cemetery planning considerations: While feedback on the cemetery concept plans was generally positive, respondents identified accessibility as an important consideration for future planning.

Concerns included the removal of roadways, walking distances, mobility challenges, parking availability, and ensuring cemetery spaces remain accessible to all visitors. Respondents emphasized the importance of balancing cemetery improvements with the needs of seniors, people with mobility challenges, and other visitors who rely on convenient site access.

Participants also highlighted the need for continued planning to ensure adequate cemetery capacity and a range of interment and memorialization options to meet future community needs.

Survey Response Summary - Stage 3

While several themes applied across the cemetery system, each cemetery also received site-specific feedback. Key findings for each cemetery, along with a summary of respondent demographics, are provided below.

Overview

- The Stage 3 survey received 1,125 visits, with 57 participants submitting responses.
- A broad range of age groups participated. The majority of respondents were 45 years of age or older, with particularly strong participation from older adults.
- The majority of respondents expressed a positive impression of the proposed improvements across all four cemeteries.
- The majority of respondents, 65 per cent, indicated they do not identify with a religious, spiritual, or cultural tradition that influences their end-of-life or burial preferences.

Aberdeen Cemetery

- A total of 61 per cent of respondents reported a positive or very positive impression of the proposed improvements, 28 per cent were neutral or unsure, and 11 per cent reported a somewhat or very negative impression.
- Respondents supported proposed seating areas, walking paths and other features intended to improve visitor comfort and accessibility.
- The mature beech tree was identified as an important feature that contributes to the cemetery's character and identity.
- Respondents supported additional landscaping, seating, and opportunities for passive recreation, such as walking and dog walking, while maintaining the cemetery's quiet and reflective character.
- The most common concern related to the proposed removal of the internal roadway. Respondents requested additional information about accessibility, circulation, and access for visitors with mobility challenges.

Hazelwood Cemetery

- A total of 88 per cent of respondents reported a positive or very positive impression of the proposed improvements, 7 per cent were neutral or unsure, and 5 per cent reported a somewhat or very negative impression.
- Respondents supported proposed seating areas, walking paths, and other features intended to improve visitor comfort and accessibility.
- Pollinator meadows, habitat restoration, native plantings, and green burial opportunities were positively received by respondents.
- Respondents supported proposed gathering spaces, the memorial walk, and scattering garden features as valuable additions that contribute to remembrance and reflection.

- Respondents recognized Hazelwood Cemetery's role as both a cemetery and a community green space. Support was expressed for additional walking paths, seating, and visitor amenities, provided these enhancements preserve the site's respectful character.
- Additional suggestions included more benches near columbaria, expanded scattering garden opportunities, and additional spaces for contemplation and reflection.

Mt. Lehman Cemetery

- A total of 65 per cent of respondents reported a positive or very positive impression of the proposed improvements, 33 per cent were neutral or unsure, and 2 per cent reported a somewhat or very negative impression.
- The proposed improvement of the existing scattering garden was one of the most frequently supported elements of the concept plan. Respondents viewed it as an important improvement that reflects growing interest in cremation-based interment options.
- Respondents expressed support for the overall appearance of the concept plan, including landscape improvements and measures intended to enhance the visual character of the cemetery.
- Respondents emphasized the importance of planning for future interment needs and maintaining adequate cemetery capacity.
- Interest was expressed in expanded green burial opportunities, additional columbaria, and other memorialization options.

Musselwhite Cemetery

- A total of 81 per cent of respondents reported a positive or very positive impression of the proposed improvements, 12 per cent were neutral or unsure, and 7 per cent reported a somewhat or very negative impression.
- Respondents identified improved pedestrian entrances, walking loops, wayfinding features, and cemetery maps as positive additions that would enhance accessibility and the visitor experience.
- Pollinator meadows, gardens, tree planting, and vegetated buffers were positively received. Respondents supported efforts to create a more attractive setting while enhancing the character of the cemetery.
- Respondents indicated that the concept plan provides an opportunity to improve the appearance, functionality, and overall visitor experience of the cemetery.
- Additional scattering gardens, columbaria, memorial walls, and seating areas were requested, reflecting interest in a broader range of interment and memorialization options.

Consultation with Interested Parties and Stakeholders

Funeral Industry Representatives

As part of the Stage 3 stakeholder engagement process, representatives from the bereavement industry were invited to review the preliminary cemetery concept plans and provide feedback on opportunities to improve Abbotsford's cemetery system.

Seven funeral homes that regularly work with the City and serve the Abbotsford area were invited to participate. Each funeral home received three email invitations that encouraged participation in the consultation process.

Stakeholders were invited to participate in a 30-minute virtual interview to discuss the project, receive an update on the concept plans and share their experiences with the City's cemetery services. Those unable to attend an interview were provided with the option to submit written feedback.

The consultation period took place from March 16 to March 27, 2026. During this time, two virtual interviews were completed with funeral home representatives, and one additional funeral home provided written feedback through the questionnaire.

Key Findings

Key findings from the bereavement industry engagement included:

- Cremation continues to increase in popularity, with growing demand for simple and affordable cremation and memorialization options.
- Families are seeking greater flexibility and a wider range of cremation interment and memorialization choices, including columbaria that can accommodate multiple urns.
- Affordability was identified as an important factor influencing end-of-life decisions and service selection.
- Interest in green burial and environmentally responsible practices continues to grow. However, cost was identified as a potential barrier for some families.
- Participants emphasized the importance of creating welcoming cemetery environments that serve both as places of remembrance and community gathering spaces. Suggested amenities included gathering areas, reception spaces, and sheltered facilities.
- Participants identified a need for non-denominational gathering spaces that can accommodate memorial services and receptions, particularly for families who do not use traditional religious venues.
- Cemeteries that provide flexible service options, family-focused support, and a broad range of memorialization choices were viewed positively.
- Participants indicated that families are generally satisfied with the condition and maintenance of Abbotsford's cemeteries.
- No significant concerns were identified regarding Abbotsford's cemetery system. However, occasional staffing and scheduling challenges related to weekend services were noted.
- Smaller family sizes and an aging population may create challenges in securing pallbearers for casket burials. Additional support options may help address this need.
- Participants noted that families increasingly value cemetery spaces that are welcoming, accessible, and connected to the broader community, while continuing to serve as places of interment and remembrance.

Cultural and Faith-Based Organizations

As part of the Stage 3 stakeholder engagement process, cultural and faith-based organizations in Abbotsford were invited to review the preliminary cemetery concept plans and provide feedback on the Abbotsford Cemetery Strategy.

With assistance from the City, 67 organizations were identified and invited to participate. Outreach included an initial email invitation, a follow-up email and telephone contact. Participants were offered the opportunity to attend a virtual discussion session or provide written feedback through a questionnaire.

Five organizations submitted completed questionnaires. In addition, 18 individuals and organizations expressed interest in learning more about the project or participating in a virtual discussion session.

Two virtual engagement sessions were held on June 2, 2026. Two participants attended the first session, while no participants attended the second session. Feedback from participants was collected through discussion and polling activities during the session.

Key Findings

Key findings from the cultural and faith-based organizations engagement included:

- Cemetery selection is often influenced by family connections, familiarity with a particular cemetery and, in some cases, affordability.
- Affordability was identified as an important consideration for some communities, particularly for cremation and interment services.
- One respondent identified a need for greater accommodation of cultural and religious practices and expressed interest in a crematorium and expanded cremation services.
- Participants emphasized the importance of maintaining attractive, well-kept and respectful cemetery environments. Ongoing maintenance was identified as a priority.
- Improvements that enhance the visitor experience, including landscaping, beautification, seating, pedestrian access and gathering spaces, were generally viewed positively.
- Several respondents supported creating cemetery spaces that encourage visitation and provide opportunities for families and friends to gather and reflect.
- Accessibility, parking, and overall site usability were identified as important considerations for future improvements.
- Participants expressed interest in a broader range of cremation-related options, including scattering gardens, cremation gardens, columbaria, and additional memorialization opportunities.
- Respondents generally supported the draft cemetery concepts and appreciated efforts to expand capacity while maintaining the long-term sustainability of the cemetery system.
- Participants emphasized the importance of planning cemetery facilities with consideration for the needs of Abbotsford's diverse cultural and faith communities.
- Overall, respondents highlighted the importance of providing dignified, accessible and welcoming spaces that support remembrance, reflection, and community connection.

Public Open Houses - Stage 3

The purpose of the Stage 3 public open houses was to present the preliminary cemetery concept plans and gather feedback on the proposed designs. Participants were invited to share what they liked, what they felt could be improved, and whether any important considerations were missing from the concepts.

Five in-person public open houses were held between May 21 and May 27, 2026, at Aberdeen Cemetery, Hazelwood Cemetery, Mt. Lehman Cemetery, Musselwhite Cemetery, and Sevenoaks Shopping Centre. Display boards were available at each location, and City staff and LEES+Associates representatives were present to answer questions and discuss the proposed concepts with participants.

A total of 22 attendees were recorded across the five open houses. Attendance varied by location. Participants were encouraged to complete the online survey to provide additional feedback and comments on the proposed concepts.

Key findings from the public open houses:

- Feedback received during the Stage 3 public open houses was generally positive, with participants expressing support for many of the proposed cemetery improvements and concept plans.
- Participants recommended further review of the BC Hydro corridor and overhead power lines at Hazelwood Cemetery to better understand any impacts on future cemetery development, operations and permitted land uses.
- Participants expressed interest in adding columbaria at Aberdeen Cemetery, where this option is not currently available.
- Participants supported the proposed improvements to the Musselwhite Cemetery frontage and highlighted the importance of ongoing landscape maintenance, including hedge trimming and site cleanup following maintenance activities.
- Interest was expressed in additional lighting and visibility improvements at Musselwhite Cemetery to support safety, security, and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles.
- Participants appreciated the opportunity to pre-plan cemetery arrangements and recognized the value this can provide to families and loved ones.
- Additional cremation and memorialization options, particularly columbaria at Aberdeen Cemetery, were identified as desirable additions to the cemetery system.



Figure 16: Graphic Open House Boards, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 17: Open House Engagement at Musselwhite Cemetery, Source: LEES+Associates.

- Representatives from the Aldergrove Heritage Society and the Aldergrove Legion participated in the discussion and highlighted the importance of Aberdeen Cemetery as a community and commemorative space.
 - Participants expressed support for ongoing remembrance and commemorative activities at Aberdeen Cemetery, particularly programs that honour veterans and involve local students and volunteers.
 - Participants highlighted the value of the No Stone Left Alone remembrance program and its role in supporting education, community involvement and remembrance.
 - Concerns were raised about the potential infilling of pathways at Aberdeen Cemetery and the impact this could have on spaces currently used for commemorative events and gatherings.
 - Participants requested that a dedicated area be preserved or designated for remembrance ceremonies and community gatherings associated with veteran commemorations. A flagpole was also suggested as a potential addition to the cemetery.
 - Ongoing maintenance, care and upkeep of the City's cemeteries were identified as important priorities.



Figure 18: Open House Engagement at Aberdeen Cemetery, Source: LEES+Associates.

Concept Plans

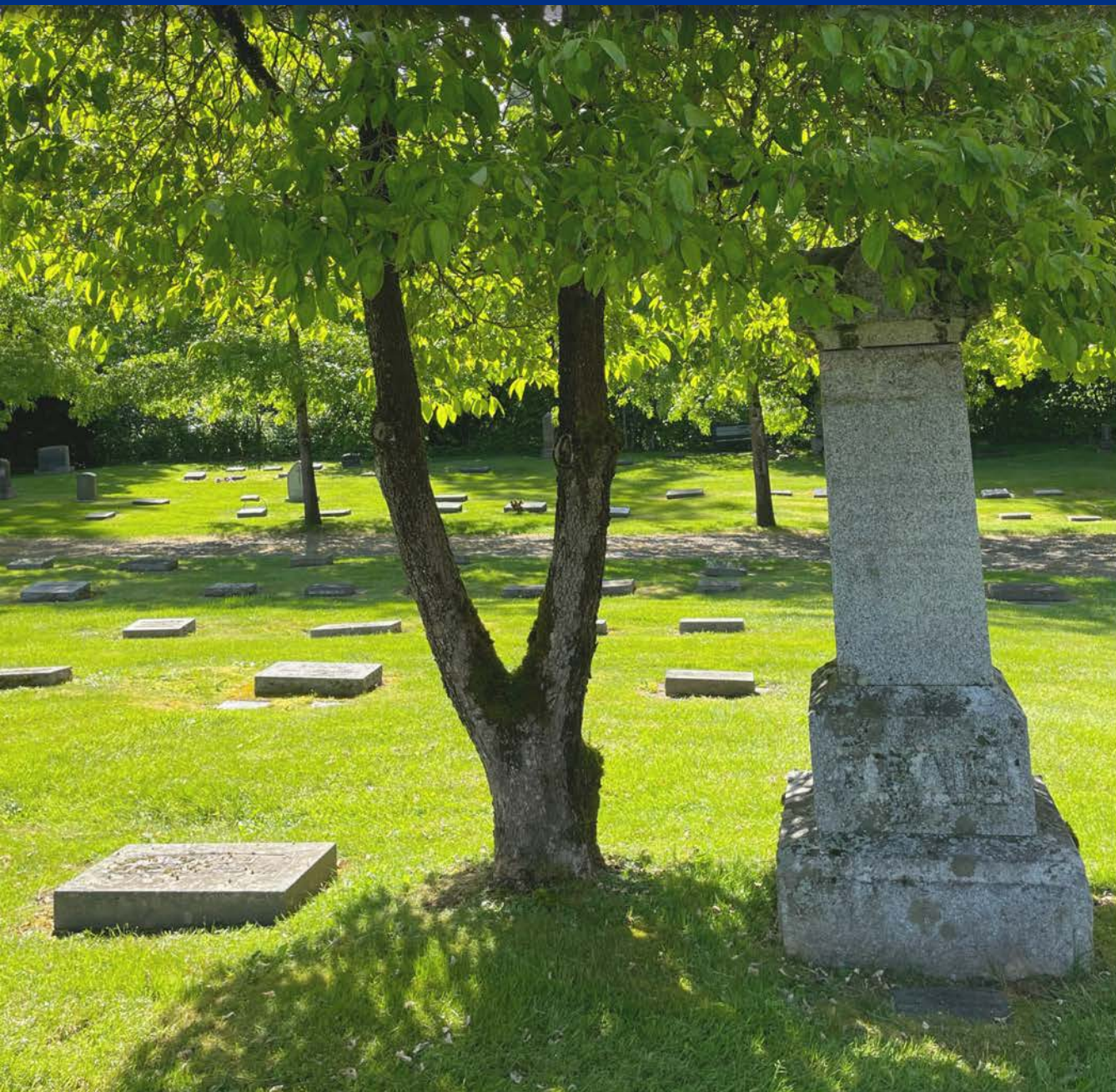


Figure 19: Mt. Lehman Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Introduction

This section presents concept design plans for Aberdeen, Hazelwood, Mt. Lehman, and Musselwhite Cemeteries. The plans have been informed by the findings of the demand and needs analysis, stakeholder and public engagement, and site-specific opportunities and constraints identified throughout the project.

The section is laid out under the following headings:

- Design Principles
- Aberdeen Cemetery Improvements
- Hazelwood Cemetery Improvements
- Mt. Lehman Cemetery Improvements
- Musselwhite Cemetery Improvements

The proposed cemetery improvements are organized on a cemetery-by-cemetery basis. Each cemetery section includes site-specific recommendations related to access and circulation, landscape character, amenities, operations and maintenance, interment and memorialization opportunities, and cemetery capacity. These recommendations are followed by a concept plan overview of each cemetery.

Design Principles

The following design principles were developed in collaboration with the City to guide the Cemetery Strategy and concept plans for each cemetery:

- Preserve and enhance the park-like character and natural beauty of Abbotsford's cemeteries.
- Maximize and optimize limited space for cemetery inventory while maintaining dignity and visitor experience.
- Expand interment and memorialization opportunities to respond to changing community preferences and growing cremation demand.
- Improve accessibility, circulation, aesthetics, and visitor comfort throughout the cemetery system.
- Create gathering and reflection spaces that support remembrance, ceremonies, and community connection.
- Support environmental sustainability through land stewardship, biodiversity enhancement, and responsible cemetery development.
- Enhance operational efficiency and long-term sustainability of the cemetery system.

Aberdeen Cemetery Improvements

Context

Established in the 1880s and approximately 2.2 acres, Aberdeen Cemetery has historically served residents of both the Aldergrove area and neighbouring communities on the Abbotsford side of the municipal boundary, including the former District of Matsqui. The site is Abbotsford's oldest municipal cemetery.

A number of pioneer families are represented in this cemetery and it serves as an important local commemorative space with strong connections to the surrounding community and its history. Aberdeen Cemetery also includes Veteran graves, and is part of the Maple Leaf Legacy Project for Veteran graves. The cemetery brings together students, veterans, local officials, and community members for the annual No Stone Left Alone ceremony. Refer to page 40 for the Conceptual Site Plan.



Figure 20: No Stone Left Alone ceremony at Aberdeen Cemetery, Source: Kyler Emerson, Aldergrove Star, 2024.



Figure 21: Headstones of pioneer families in Aberdeen Cemetery, Source: LEES+Associates.

Access and Circulation

To enhance the cemetery's presence, and to improve access for pedestrians, the following is recommended:

- Establish a formalized pedestrian connection with a defined pathway to the front entrance and added planting to the vegetated buffer.
- Establish a suitable setback to accommodate future Fraser Highway expansion.



Figure 22: Aberdeen Cemetery entrance gate and sign, Source: LEES+Associates.

Landscape Character

To protect the cemetery's landscape character, the following is recommended:

- Add the existing beech tree to the Significant Tree Register.

Amenities

To offer the best visitor experience possible and ensure that visitors feel welcome and comfortable in the cemetery, the following is recommended:

- Add a flagpole or other commemorative feature to a gathering space to support Veteran commemoration ceremonies, with the final design determined through a public consultation and design process.
- Provide additional seating to enhance the user experience.



Figure 23: Beech tree to be added to the Significant Tree Register, Source: LEES+Associates.

Interment and Memorialization

Aberdeen has limited capacity with casket lots sold out, no available columbaria, and limited available cremation lots. To help extend the cemetery's service life, the following is recommended.

- Infill a portion of the cemetery driveway with mixed interment options to increase cemetery capacity, while preserving space for community gathering and commemorative activities associated with veteran remembrance programs.
- Begin the planning and design process for a future cremation garden featuring columbaria.

Added Cemetery Capacity

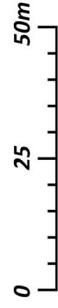
Through the proposed recommendations, Aberdeen Cemetery will gain less than one year of casket lot sales. Further design is required to understand the potential columbaria niche capacity.

Aberdeen Cemetery Improvements

Conceptual Site Plan



- Legend**
- Existing**
- Cemetery Boundary
 - City-Owned Lot
 - Cemetery Driveway, (Limited Access)
 - Information Kiosk
- Proposed**
- Pedestrian Entrance
 - Pedestrian Pathway
 - Mixed Interment Cemetery Driveway Infill
 - Trees and Shrubs
 - Gathering Space



Hazelwood Cemetery Improvements

Context

Hazelwood Cemetery is the largest cemetery in the Abbotsford Cemetery System. Established in the 1920s, Hazelwood is located adjacent to the Maclure Road Mennonite Cemetery. At just over 30 acres, including approximately 5 acres of undeveloped land, Hazelwood offers the greatest opportunity for future expansion, innovation, and long-term service within the cemetery system. The cemetery accommodates a wide range of interment and memorialization options and plays an important role in meeting both current and future cemetery needs. The site is also traversed by the Discovery Trail, which is an important connection through the cemetery and contributes to its role as a valued community green space.

While Hazelwood contains the largest area available for future development, several site constraints influence how the remaining land can be used. A BC Hydro right-of-way crosses a portion of the cemetery, which prohibits burials and permanent structures within the corridor. A section of the right-of-way may accommodate a future road connection associated with planned residential development in the surrounding area. In addition, a steep ravine located in the southern portion of the site is generally unsuitable for traditional burial. Improvements in these areas focus on enhancing the space through ecological, functional, and operational upgrades to create a park-like setting with pollinator meadows and forested memorial boulder walk. Refer to page 44 for the Conceptual Site Plan.

Access and Circulation

To enhance the cemetery's presence, and to improve access for vehicles and pedestrians, the following is recommended:

- Protect and enhance the Discovery Trail corridor as it passes through the existing cemetery and future development areas.
- Create additional pedestrian pathways throughout the cemetery land, including along future infilled road corridors, and through the BC Hydro right-of-way to improve accessibility and enhance the cemetery's park-like character and passive recreation opportunities.
- Develop the southern ravine area as a forested memorial boulder walk that protects ecological features, expands memorialization opportunities, and provides an additional pedestrian connection through the site.
- Maintain a primary loop road within the cemetery following future road infill to support visitor access, funeral processions, and operational requirements.



Figure 24: BC Hydro Right-of-Way, Source: LEES+Associates.

Landscape Character

To protect the cemetery's landscape character, the following is recommended:

- Protect and enhance the cemetery's existing tree canopy, including retaining significant trees and introducing additional tree planting and vegetation in the new development area along Hazelwood Avenue to protect the cemetery's sacred space.
- Establish pollinator meadows within areas of the cemetery unsuitable to burial to support local biodiversity, enhance ecological function, and provide seasonal visual interest.
- Use native and drought-tolerant plant species where appropriate to improve long-term sustainability and reduce maintenance requirements.

Amenities

To offer the best visitor experience possible and ensure that visitors feel welcome and comfortable in the cemetery the following is recommended:

- Establish a gathering space with temporary or permanent structures for community or ceremonial uses within the new development area and in the BC Hydro right-of-way (if permitted). Optimize northern view corridors towards the mountains where feasible.
- Develop parking within the BC Hydro right-of-way, where permitted, to support cemetery services, ceremonies, and day-to-day visitor use.
- Incorporate seating, shade, and other amenities within gathering areas to enhance visitor experience.

Operations and Maintenance

In order to facilitate operations and maintenance of the cemetery the following is recommended:

- Establish allocated space for operations and materials storage within the BC Hydro Right-of-Way (if permitted by BC Hydro).



Figure 25: Pollinator Meadow, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC, Source: Wayne Worden.



Figure 26: Pollinator Meadow, North Vancouver, BC, Source: City of North Vancouver.



Figure 27: Gathering Space, Royal Oak Burial Park, Saanich, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Interment and Memorialization

Hazelwood Cemetery has limited remaining inventory and requires additional casket lot and cremation lot capacity to meet future demand. At the same time, it contains the largest area of undeveloped land within the Abbotsford Cemetery System, providing the greatest opportunity to accommodate future inventory needs and expand the range of interment and memorialization options available to the community. To help extend the cemetery's service life, the following is recommended:

- Expand into the northeast corner of the cemetery to increase capacity, including mixed interment options, green burial, and an expanded cremation garden with a vegetated buffer to screen Hazelwood Avenue.
- Introduce additional memorialization opportunities with a scattering garden and memorial boulder walk in the forested steep southwest portion of the site.
- Once sections of the cemetery reach capacity, infill underutilized cemetery driveways with interment capacity.
- Prioritize efficient land use and flexible interment formats to maximize the long-term service life of the cemetery while responding to evolving community preferences.



Figure 28: Scattering and Memorial Boulder Walk, Whistler, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 29: Green Burial, Royal Oak Burial Park, Saanich, BC, Source: Wayne Worden.

Added Cemetery Capacity

Through the proposed infill recommendations, Hazelwood Cemetery will gain:

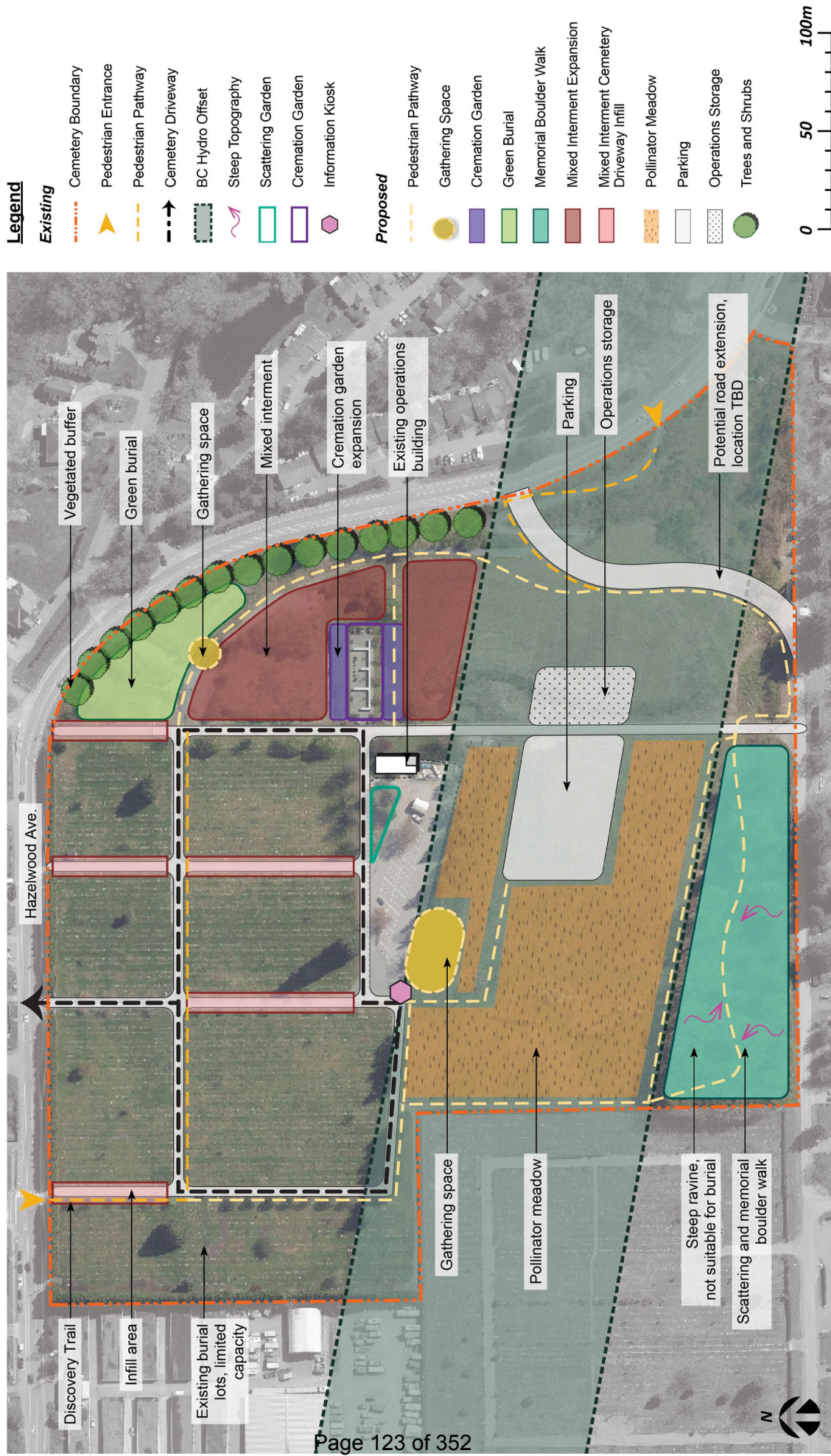
- 18–20 years of casket lots
- 18–20 years of cremation lots

Through the proposed expansion recommendations, the cemetery will gain an additional:

- 25+ years of casket lots
- 25+ years of cremation lots
- 30+ years of columbaria niches
- 70+ years of scattering

Hazelwood Cemetery Improvements

Conceptual Site Plan



Mt. Lehman Cemetery Improvements

Context

Mt. Lehman Cemetery is a well-established cemetery in West Abbotsford known for its beautiful and peaceful rural setting. At a little over 1.5 acres, Mt. Lehman is the smallest municipal cemetery managed by the City of Abbotsford. The cemetery is bordered by Taylor Rd. to the south, a steep forested ravine to the east, and a forested buffer along its northern boundary. Mt. Lehman's concept focuses on maximizing existing space and continuing to improve aesthetics and accessibility. Refer to page 47 for the Conceptual Site Plan.

Landscape Character

To protect the cemetery's landscape character, the following is recommended:

- Assess all trees and shrubs, and replace as necessary to maintain a healthy screen.
- Enhance the existing cremation and scattering gardens to improve aesthetics and ceremonial qualities by adding additional planting and benches. Introduce planting that will give seasonal interest. Soil amendments may be needed to support vegetation growth.
- Install a memorial boulder with an epitaph to offer a meaningful focal point within the scattering garden, enhancing its ceremonial and commemorative qualities.

Operations and Maintenance

In order to facilitate operations and maintenance of the cemetery the following is recommended:

- Provide ongoing monitoring and regular assessments of slopes to ensure the long-term stability, identify any signs of erosion or movement, and to inform potential mitigation measures.
- Assess the performance of the existing rain garden and implement measures to reduce sediment accumulation, improve drainage function, and minimize ongoing maintenance requirements.



Figure 30: Mt. Lehman scattering garden to be enhanced, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 31: Existing rain garden and intended location of memorial wall, Source: LEES+Associates.

Interment and Memorialization

Mt. Lehman Cemetery is nearing capacity, and due to its constrained surroundings, has very limited opportunities for additional inventory. Two new columbaria, each with a central ossuary, have recently been added to the cemetery. A memorial wall is also planned, further expanding the range of cremation memorialization options available on-site.

- Confirm the lot layout and inventory allocation for the future interment expansion area remain aligned with future community needs.
- Once the cemetery is full, infill the existing driveway with a mix of interment options to maximize remaining capacity.



Figure 32: Mt. Lehman internal driveway, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 33: Mt. Lehman cremation garden, Source: LEES+Associates.

Added Cemetery Capacity

Through the proposed infill recommendations, Mt. Lehman Cemetery will gain:

- 1–2 years of casket lots
- 1–2 years of cremation lots

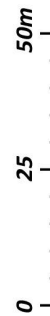
Through the proposed expansion recommendations, the cemetery will gain an additional 1–2 years of cremation lots.

Mt. Lehman Cemetery Improvements

Conceptual Site Plan



- Legend**
- Existing**
- Cemetery Boundary
 - Pedestrian Entrance
 - Pedestrian Pathway
 - Cemetery Driveway
 - Steep Slope
 - Slope Direction
 - Cremation Garden
 - Scattering Garden
 - Information Kiosk
- Proposed**
- Mixed Interment Cemetery
 - Driveway Infill



Musselwhite Cemetery Improvements

Context

Musselwhite Cemetery, established in 1892, is approximately 4.3 acres and one of Abbotsford's oldest cemeteries. Due to its prominent location and visibility from the road, the cemetery is not only a place of remembrance, but an important community landmark. The steep slopes of the cemetery are a distinct feature, contributing to a unique visitor experience and landscape character, while also creating challenges associated with burial development, and circulation. Musselwhite's concept enhances the site's visual appeal and introduces a cremation garden to extend service life. Refer to page 50 for the Conceptual Site Plan.

Access and Circulation

To enhance the cemetery's presence and to improve access for pedestrians, the following is recommended:

- Strengthen the sense of arrival at pedestrian entrances to emphasize the transition from public to sacred space through updated signage, pedestrian entrance gates, and planting.
- Improve wayfinding by installing cemetery maps at the two primary pedestrian entrances.
- Create and formalize internal pedestrian pathways throughout the cemetery, incorporating stairs where appropriate, to improve accessibility across steep terrain and enhance opportunities for passive recreation.

Landscape Character

To protect the cemetery's landscape character, the following is recommended:

- Improve the overall aesthetic and boundary definition of the cemetery by replacing the existing chain link fence or upgrading it.
- Improve the cemetery frontage by adding additional trees and planting along the cemetery boundary.
- Utilize steep and unsuitable burial areas to enhance ecological value by planting a pollinator meadow and supporting local biodiversity. To ensure the gardens remain visually intentional and well-maintained, incorporate a clean, crisp edge. This defined boundary will help distinguish the meadow from adjacent turf or burial areas, to convey a sense of care and order within the cemetery landscape.



*Figure 34: Steep slopes at Musselwhite Cemetery,
Source: LEES+Associates.*



*Figure 35: Precedent image of stairs and sloped
pathways, Air India Memorial, Vancouver, BC,
Source: LEES+Associates.*

Amenities

To offer the best visitor experience possible and ensure that visitors feel welcome and comfortable in the cemetery the following is recommended:

- Reconfigure and formalize the existing parking area to improve circulation and parking efficiency while creating opportunities for a cremation garden.
- Add lighting and visibility improvements in the parking area to reduce vandalism and enhance safety and security through CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design).

Operations and Maintenance

In order to facilitate operations and maintenance of the cemetery the following is recommended:

- Reconfigure and formalize operations storage and screen with fencing.

Interment and Memorialization

Musselwhite Cemetery is nearing capacity and does not currently offer columbaria niches. The following is recommended to help extend the service life of the cemetery:

- Establish a cremation garden along the upper terrace of the reconfigured parking area featuring a range of cremation options, including columbaria, cremation lots, and scattering areas. Integrate seating and a gathering space to enhance the visitor experience and optimize the use of areas that are otherwise unsuitable for traditional burial.

Added Cemetery Capacity

Through the proposed expansion recommendations, the cemetery will gain an additional 6–8 years of columbaria niches.



Figure 36: Precedent image of Legacy Gardens Cremation Garden, Kelowna, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.



Figure 37: Parking area and steep slopes at Musselwhite Cemetery, Source: LEES+Associates.

Musselwhite Cemetery Improvements

Conceptual Site Plan



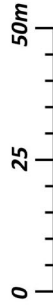
Legend

Existing

- Cemetery Boundary
- Pedestrian Entrance
- Pedestrian Pathway
- Cemetery Driveway, (Funeral Service and Operations Only)
- Steep Topography

Proposed

- Pedestrian Pathway
- Gathering Space
- Cremation Garden
- Pollinator Meadow
- Parking
- Operations Yard
- Trees and Hedge
- Upgraded Fence
- Information Kiosk



Implementation Plan



Figure 38: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Introduction

A phased implementation approach is recommended for the proposals and recommendations outlined in the Cemetery Concepts section. This section describes the work included in each phase and identifies the conditions that would trigger implementation of subsequent phases.

Recommended budget allowances for the proposed improvements are provided in Appendix F: Recommended Budget Allowances.

Short-Term: 1–5 Years	
Task	Description
Bylaw Review and Update / Rewrite	Best practice recommends reviewing the Cemetery Bylaw every five years to ensure it reflects current industry practices, provincial requirements, and evolving service needs. The Abbotsford Cemetery Bylaw was last updated in 2007 and is now overdue for review. Based on the findings of the review, amendments or a complete rewrite of the bylaw may be required. A comprehensive rewrite would support modernization through the use of plain language, the inclusion of additional interment and memorialization options, and improved clarity. This would help ensure the bylaw remains accessible, relevant, and effective in meeting current and future community needs.
Benchmarking and Fee Study	The City should undertake a comprehensive benchmarking study and fee review to ensure cemetery services and pricing remain aligned with current market conditions and comparable service providers. The review should evaluate both the range of services offered and the fees charged for those services. This assessment will help ensure the City's cemetery fees remain competitive, support long-term financial sustainability, and provide fair value to residents.
Grave Reclamation Plan	The City should develop and implement a grave reclamation plan to increase available interment capacity across its cemetery system. The plan should include a comprehensive review comparing interment rights sales with actual interments to identify graves that have been purchased but remain unused. For graves purchased more than 50 years ago that have not been used, the City should consider initiating a reclamation process, where appropriate. Any grave reclamation process must be carried out in full compliance with Consumer Protection.

Hazelwood Cemetery - Infill and Expansion	Over the next five years, the City should focus on infill and expansion opportunities at Hazelwood Cemetery. Hazelwood Cemetery has the greatest potential for additional capacity through both infill development and expansion. The following actions are recommended to increase inventory and support future interment needs. <u>Design Development for Infill and Expansion</u> • Building on the conceptual plans, prepare a detailed design development package for the proposed infill and expansion areas. • Confirm grading, materials and site features, and develop a detailed interment layout. • Prepare a phased implementation plan for the expansion areas and the infill of redundant cemetery roadways. • Ensure operational access is maintained to cemetery sections that have not yet reached capacity. <u>Construction Drawings (Phase 1)</u> • Prepare detailed construction drawings for Phase 1 of the expansion and roadway infill improvements. • Phase 1 should prioritize mixed interment areas that provide a range of burial and memorialization options. • The objective should be to create sufficient inventory to meet approximately 20 years of projected demand. <u>Tendering and Construction</u> • Proceed with the tendering process for Phase 1 improvements. • Complete construction of the Phase 1 expansion and infill works.
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Hazelwood Cemetery - General Cemetery Upgrades	In addition to expanding interment capacity, Hazelwood Cemetery should be enhanced to improve its character, functionality, and visitor experience. Over the next one to five years, and as funding becomes available, the following improvements are recommended. <u>Access and Circulation</u> • Enhance the Discovery Trail and develop additional pedestrian pathways that connect existing cemetery areas with future expansion sections. • Improve pedestrian circulation throughout the cemetery to support accessibility and site connectivity. <u>Landscape Character</u> • Develop and implement a tree management strategy to protect and enhance the cemetery's tree canopy. • Establish a pollinator meadow within the BC Hydro corridor area to support biodiversity and enhance the landscape. <u>Amenities</u> • Add seating in high-use areas throughout the cemetery.
Mt. Lehman Cemetery - Infill and Expansion	Mt. Lehman Cemetery has limited interment capacity remaining. Over the next five years, the City should focus on expanding interment capacity and improving site function through the following actions. <u>Interment Expansion</u> • Build on the conceptual plans by preparing a detailed interment layout for the proposed expansion area. The layout should maximize land use efficiency while providing a range of interment and memorialization options. • Prepare a comprehensive inventory map identifying all lots that have been sold but not yet used for interment. • Using this information, review existing cemetery roadways to identify opportunities for interment infill while maintaining operational and visitor access throughout the cemetery. <u>Cremation and Scattering Garden Enhancements</u> • Enhance the existing scattering and cremation garden through additional landscaping, planting, and seating. • Install a memorial boulder with an engraved inscription to strengthen the commemorative character of the existing scattering garden.

Aberdeen - General Cemetery Updates	Aberdeen Cemetery has limited opportunities to add new interment capacity. However, it continues to have several years of remaining cremation interment capacity and remains an important community asset. To improve site function, accessibility, and the visitor experience, the following actions are recommended. <u>Access and Circulation</u> • Establish a formal pedestrian connection from the fire hall parking area to improve access to the cemetery.
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Medium-Term: 5–10 Years	
Task	Description
Hazelwood Cemetery - Infill and General Upgrades	Continue to expand and enhance Hazelwood Cemetery to meet future interment needs and improve overall site function. <u>Interment and Memorialization</u> • Continue increasing interment capacity through planned infill development, columbaria expansion, and mixed interment areas. • Develop the proposed cremation garden and memorial boulder walk. <u>Operations</u> • Upgrade the parking area to improve access and functionality. • Improve operations storage to support ongoing cemetery maintenance and service delivery.
Musselwhite Cemetery - Expansion	Musselwhite Cemetery has limited remaining capacity for new in-ground interments. However, it continues to play an important role within the City's cemetery system and should be enhanced to support future community needs and visitor use. <u>Cremation Garden Development</u> • Develop a dedicated cremation garden that provides a range of cremation interment and memorialization options. • Design the garden to complement the existing character of Musselwhite Cemetery while creating an attractive and peaceful setting for remembrance and reflection. • Incorporate a variety of cremation interment and memorial features to respond to changing community preferences and growing demand for cremation services.

Musselwhite Cemetery - General Cemetery Upgrades	In addition to developing new cremation inventory, the City should undertake improvements that enhance the cemetery's appearance, character, and environmental value. <u>Cemetery Frontage Enhancements</u> • Improve the appearance and identity of the cemetery entrance and street frontage through targeted landscape improvements, updated signage, and gateway features. • Enhance the arrival experience and increase the visibility and recognition of the cemetery within the community. <u>Landscape Character and Ecology</u> • Increase the environmental value of the cemetery through pollinator gardens, strategic tree planting and expanded tree canopy coverage. • Develop and implement a tree management strategy to guide the protection, maintenance, and long-term succession of cemetery trees.
Mt Lehman Cemetery - General Cemetery Upgrades	As funding becomes available, the City should continue to enhance the landscape character and environmental value of Mt. Lehman Cemetery. <u>Tree Canopy Enhancement</u> • Increase tree canopy coverage throughout the cemetery through strategic tree planting to improve shade, visual appeal, and environmental benefits. <u>Tree Management Strategy</u> • Develop and implement a tree management strategy to guide the long-term protection, maintenance, and replacement of cemetery trees. • The strategy should help maintain the health, safety, and character of the cemetery landscape over time.

Long-Term: 10+ Years

Task	Description
Update the Cemetery Strategy	Over time, changes in demographics, interment preferences, and rates of interment may affect how quickly cemetery inventory is used. To support proactive planning and ensure sufficient long-term capacity, the Cemetery Strategy should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Conclusion



Figure 39: Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford, BC, Source: LEES+Associates.

Conclusion

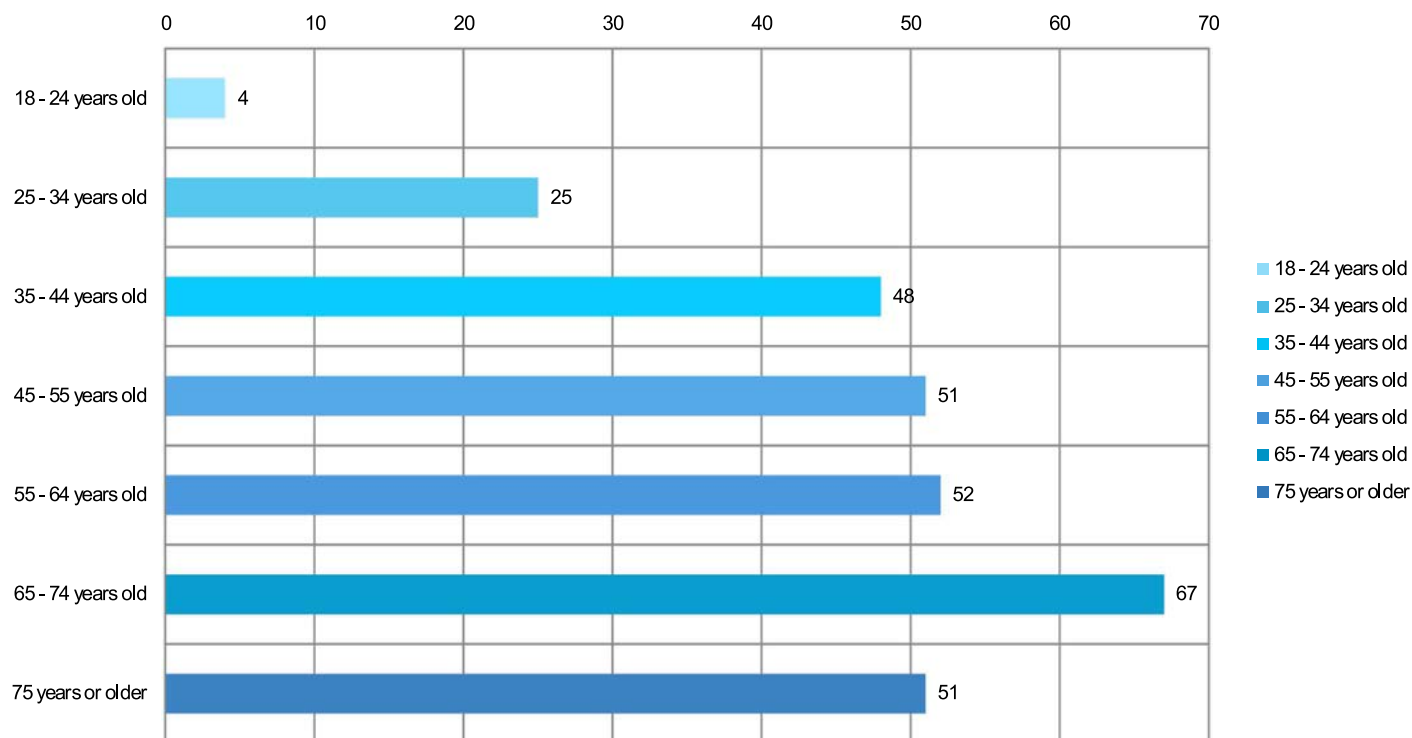
The Abbotsford Cemetery Strategy provides a clear framework for the sustainable management and future development of the City's four municipal cemeteries. Through an assessment of existing capacity, future demand and changing community preferences, the strategy identifies opportunities to extend the lifespan of cemetery assets while improving functionality, accessibility, and service delivery.

The recommended approach focuses on making efficient use of existing land through infill development, targeted expansion, and the introduction of new interment and memorialization options that reflect the community's evolving needs. It also recognizes the importance of balancing operational requirements with environmental stewardship, landscape improvements, and the preservation of cemetery character.

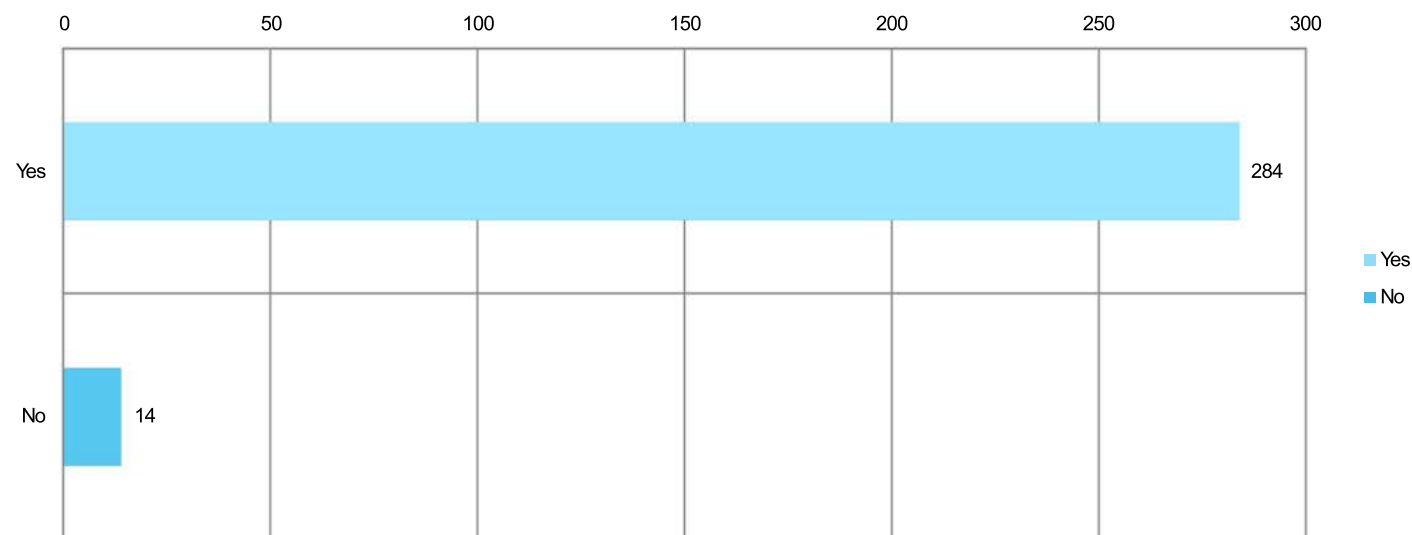
The strategy supports informed, proactive decision-making related to long-term land planning and cemetery service delivery. By implementing the recommended actions in a phased and coordinated manner, the City can help ensure its cemetery system remains sustainable, respectful, and responsive to community needs for generations to come.

Appendix A: Stage 1 Engagement Survey Responses

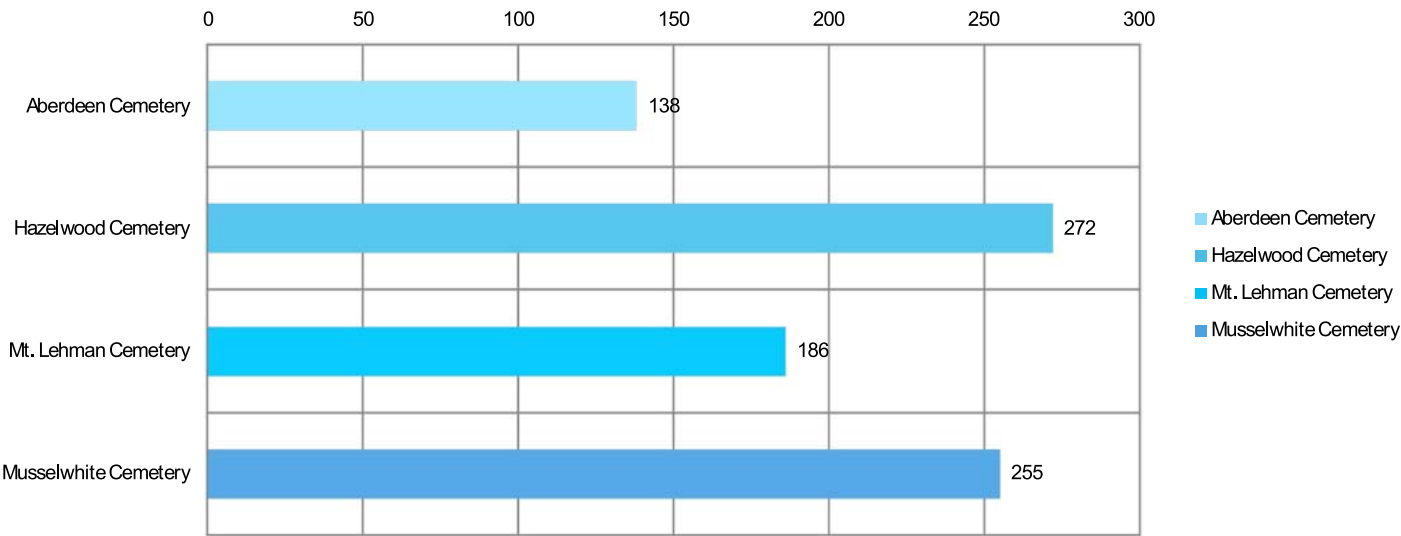
1. What is your age?



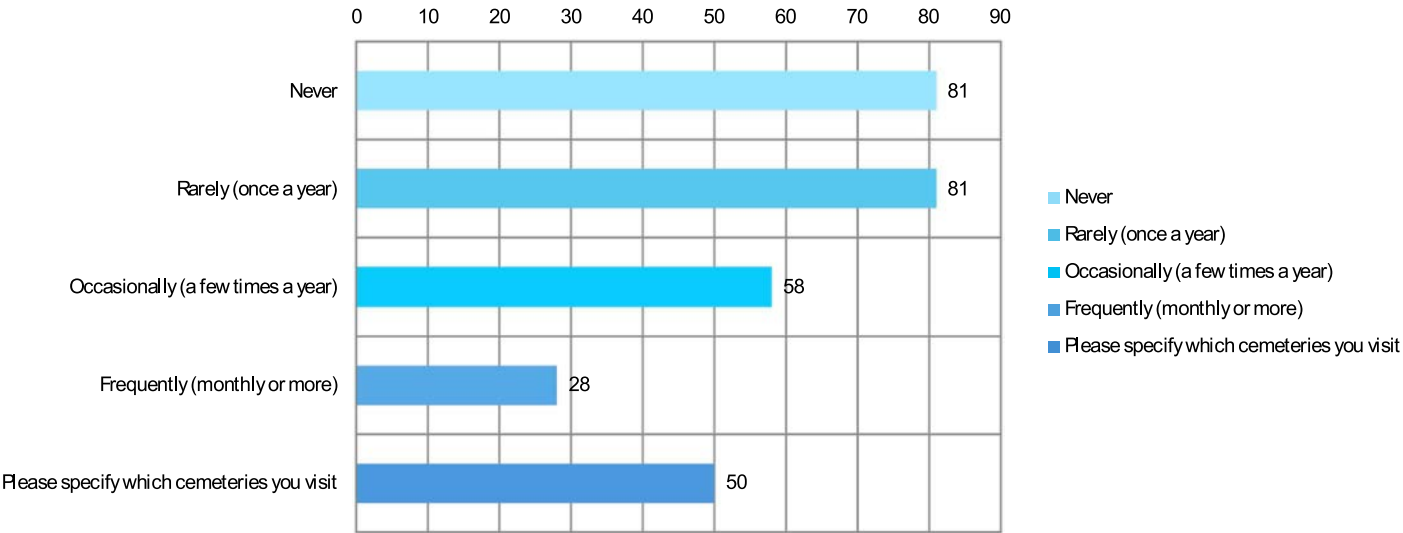
2. Are you a resident of Abbotsford?



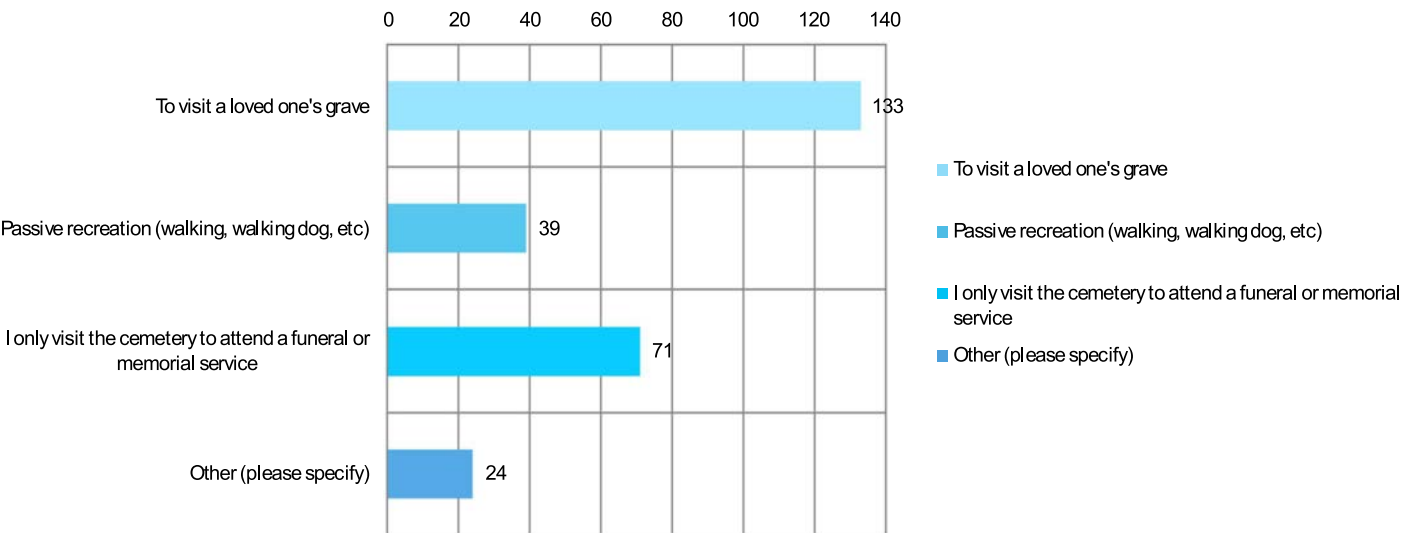
3. Before this survey, were you aware that Abbotsford has 4 cemeteries? Please specify which ones you were aware of.



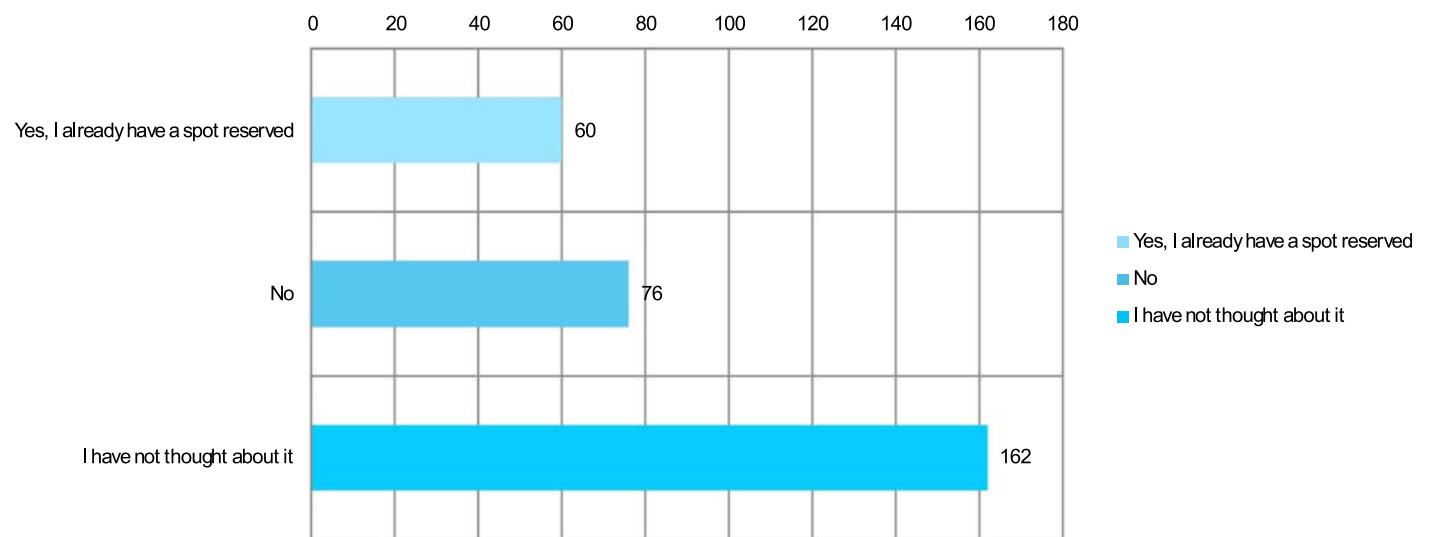
4. How often do you visit the cemeteries?



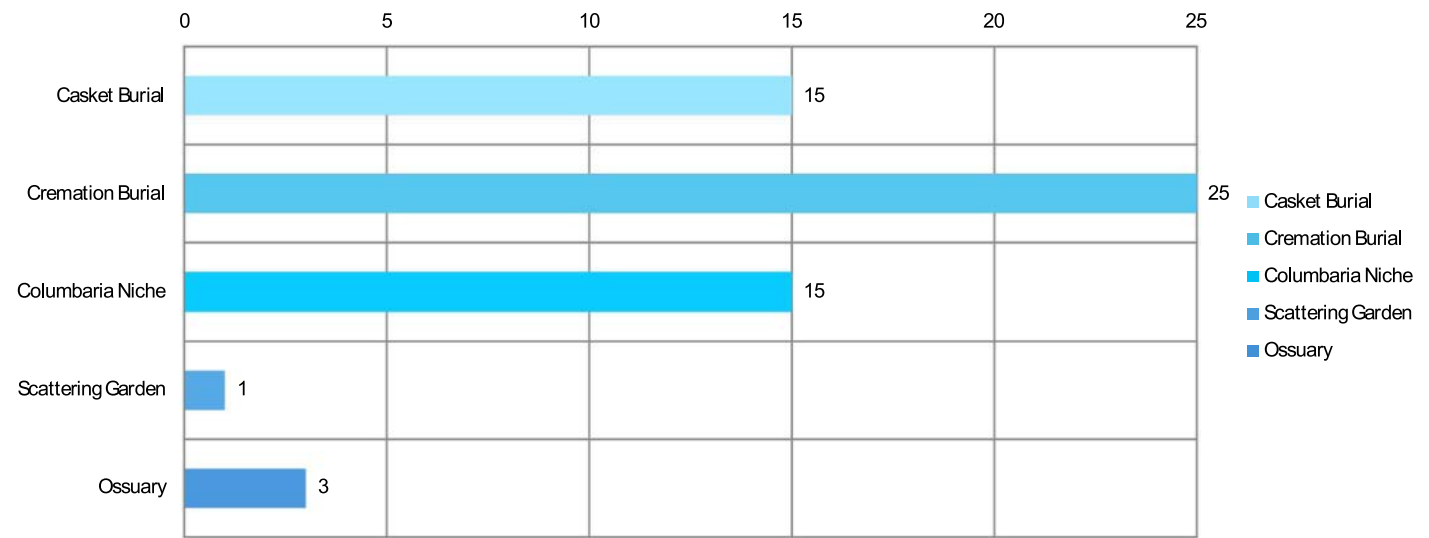
5. What is the nature of your cemetery visit?



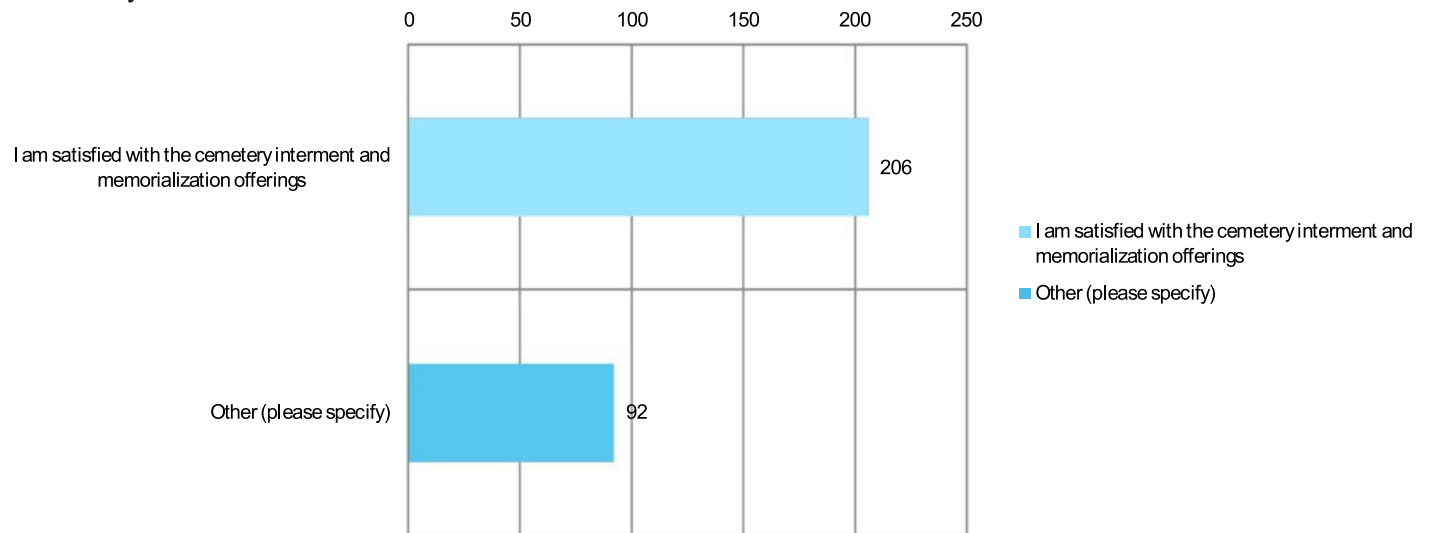
6. Do you plan to use one of the Abbotsford cemeteries for your end-of-life plans?



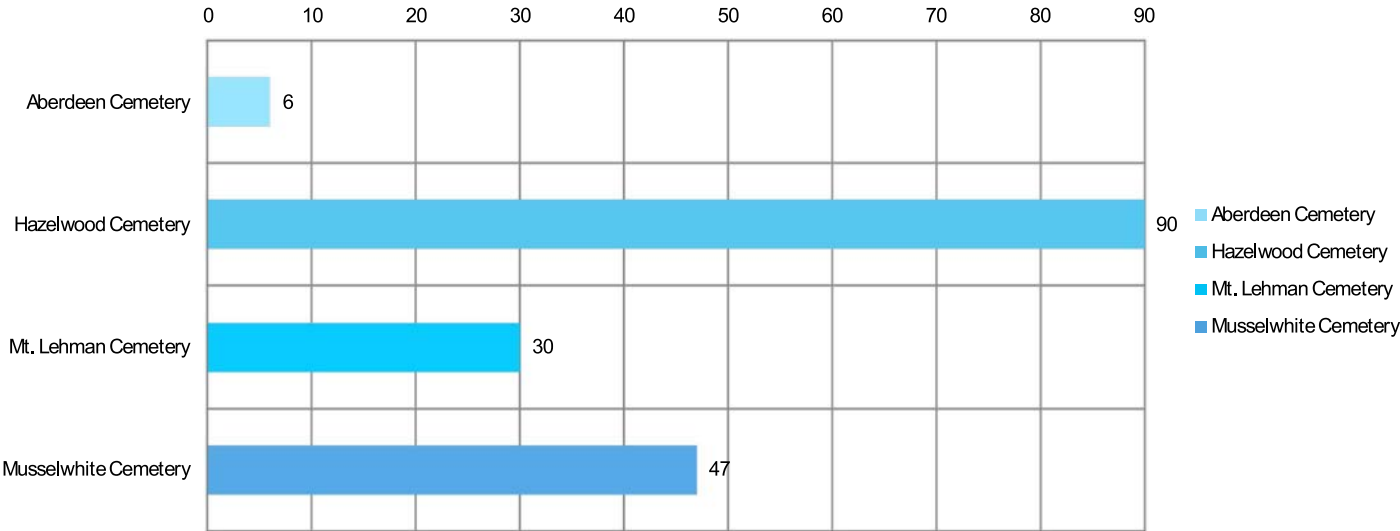
7. If so, which interment option do you plan to choose?



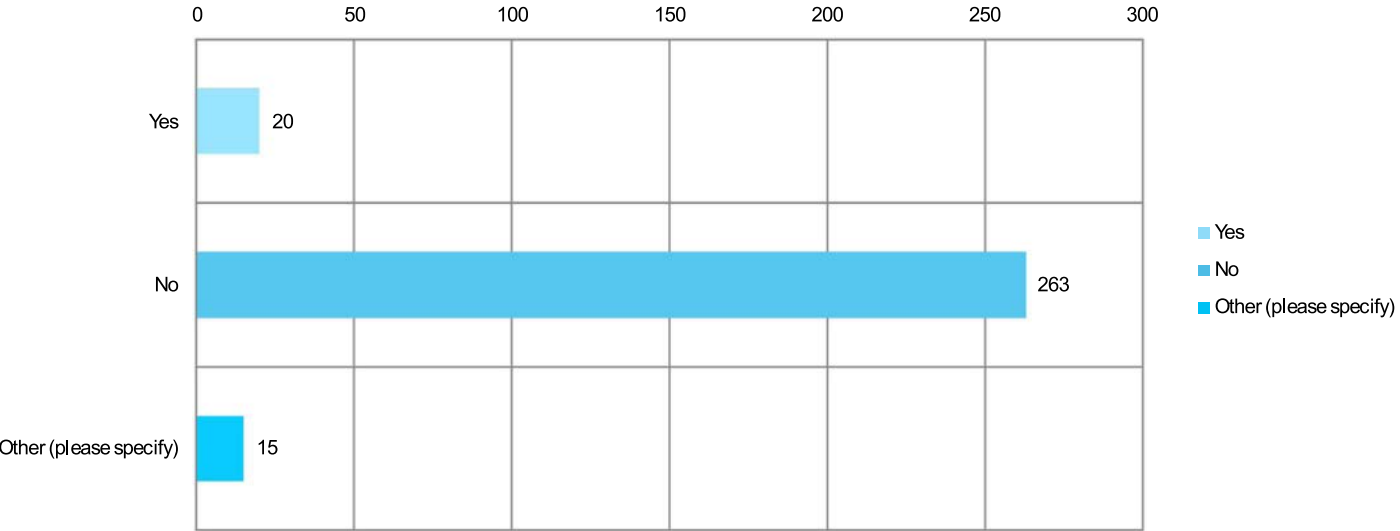
8. Are options missing from the current interment and memorialization offerings you would like to see at the City's cemeteries?



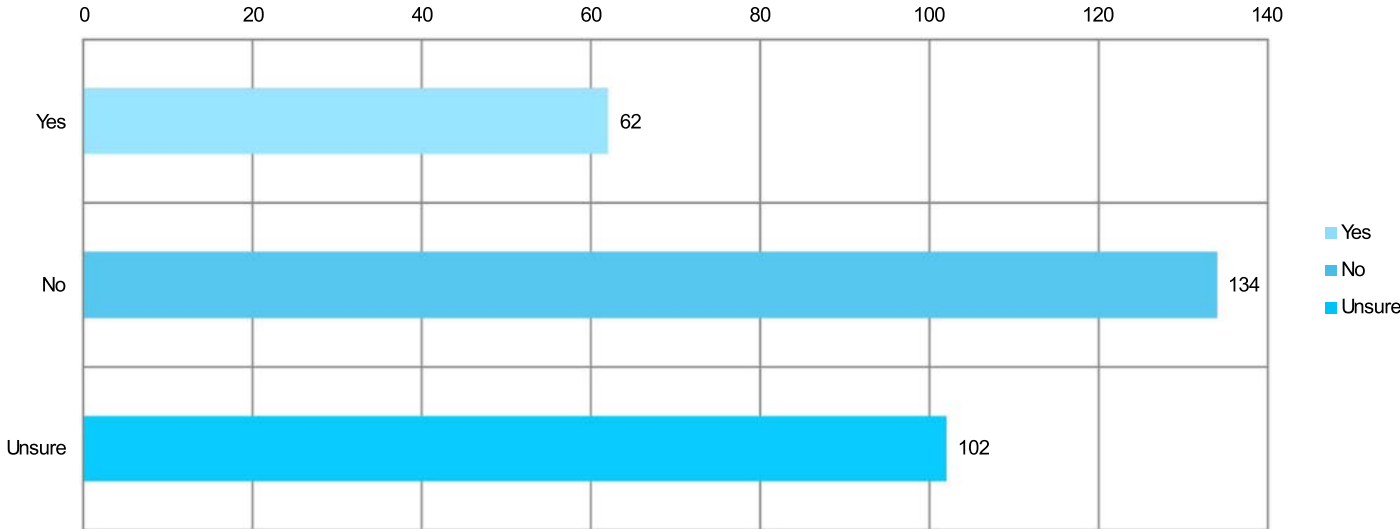
9. If you have or plan to purchase a lot/niche in one of the Abbotsford Cemeteries, please specify which one?



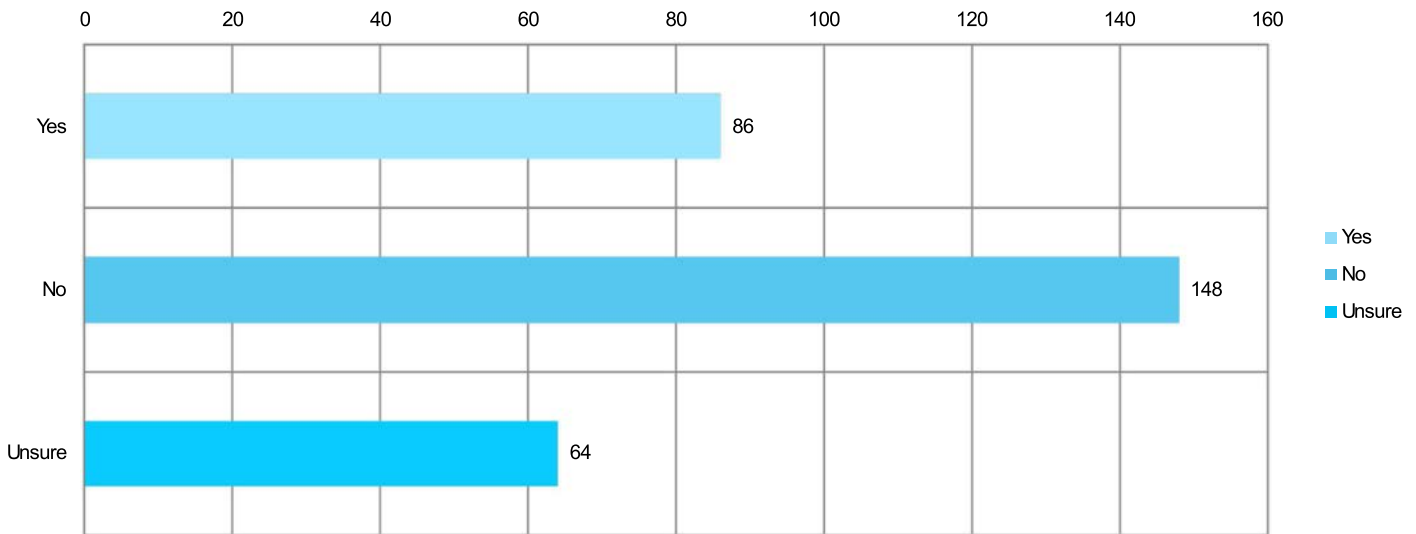
10. Do you have specific cultural or religious preferences for burial methods that the City of Abbotsford cemeteries does not currently accommodate?



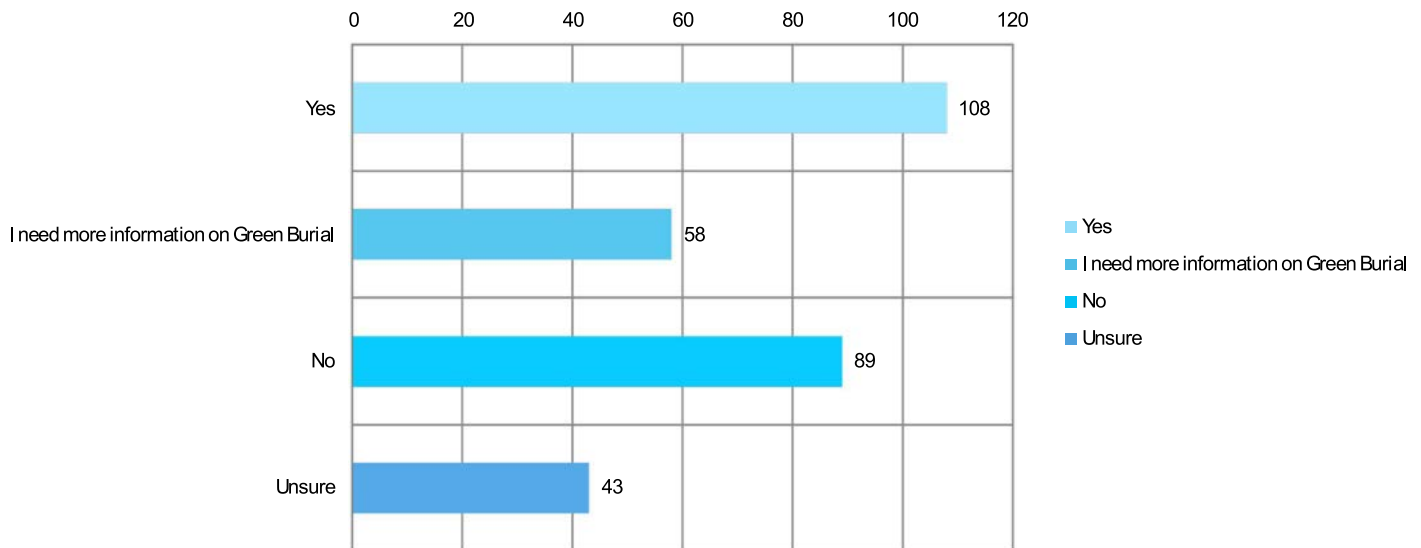
11. Do you think it is important for cemeteries in your city to have designated sections for children?



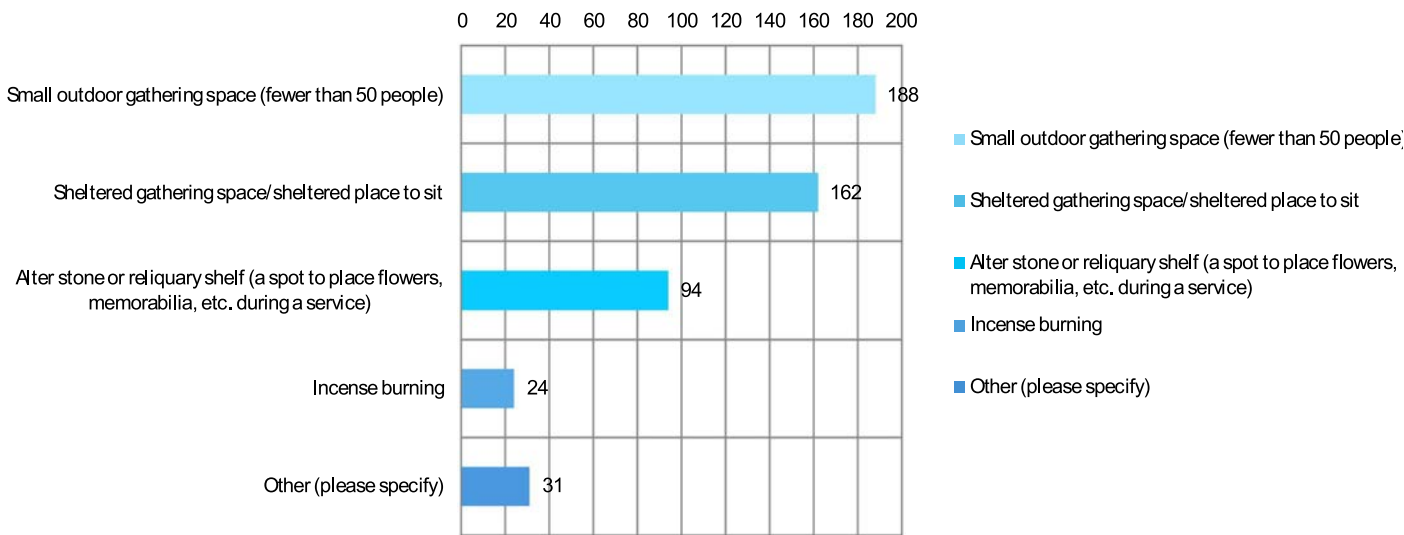
12. Would you support the use of double-depth graves for unrelated individuals as a way to conserve land in cemeteries?



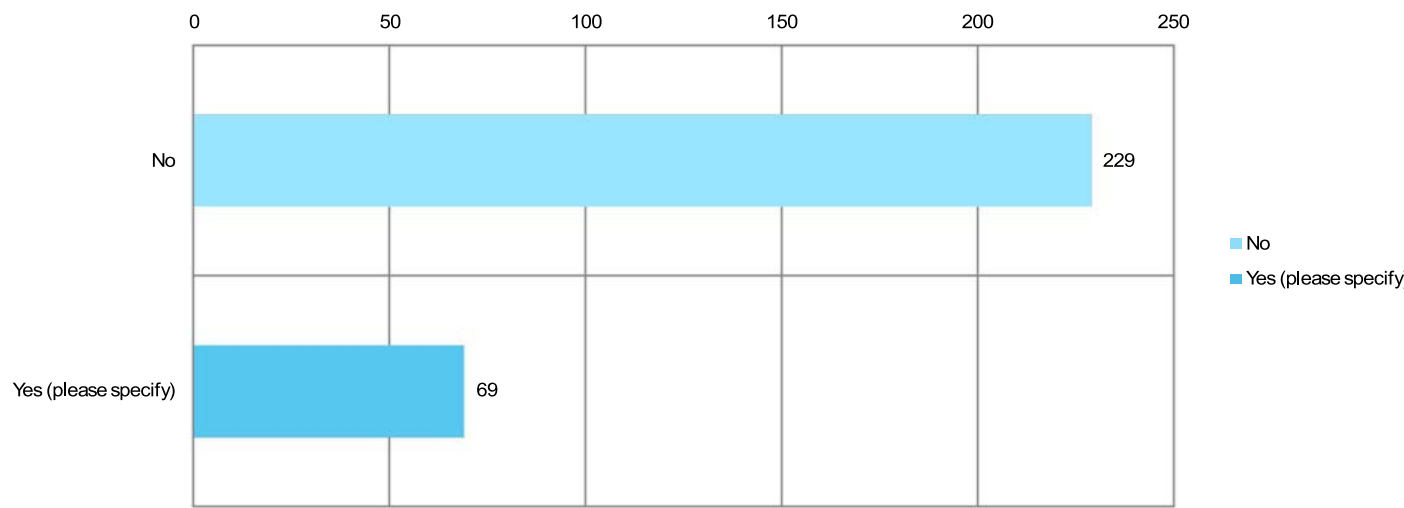
13. Green burial is a natural alternative to traditional burial methods, designed to minimize environmental impact. It avoids embalming, uses biodegradable caskets or shrouds, and supports the body's return to the earth through natural processes. Burials typically occur in woodland or meadow-like settings without traditional headstones, preserving a natural landscape. Would you consider green burial as an end-of-life option? Note: Green burial is not a low-cost option. It's a deliberate, mindful choice for those seeking a simple, low-impact approach to end-of-life arrangements. Would you consider green burial as an end-of-life option?



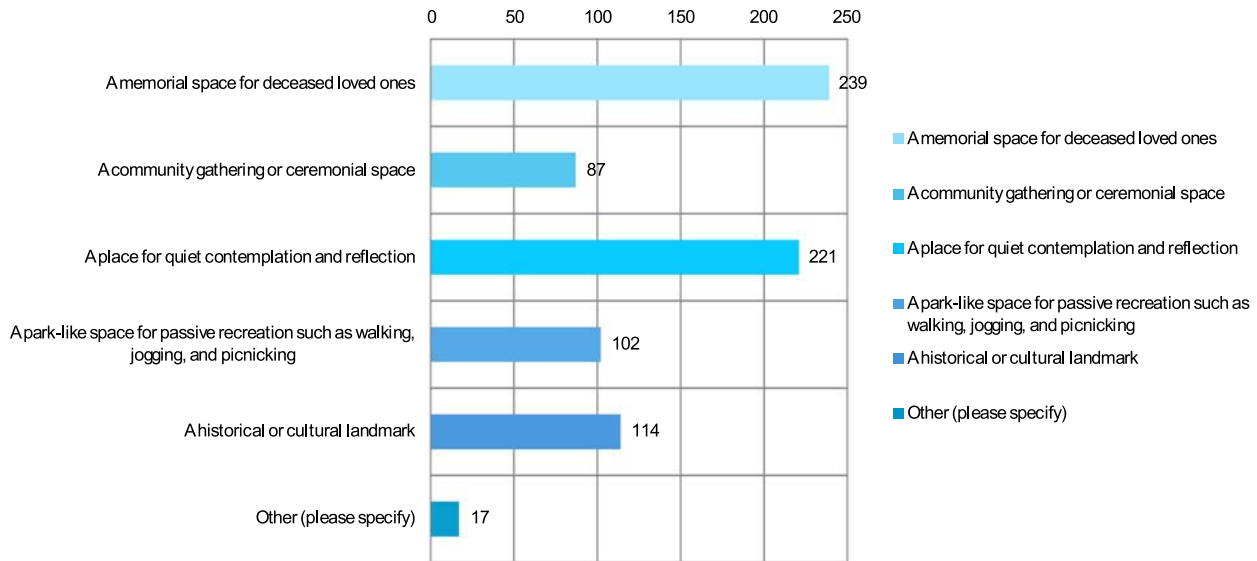
14. Which amenities/features would best help you achieve your ideal end-of-life arrangements? Please select all that apply.



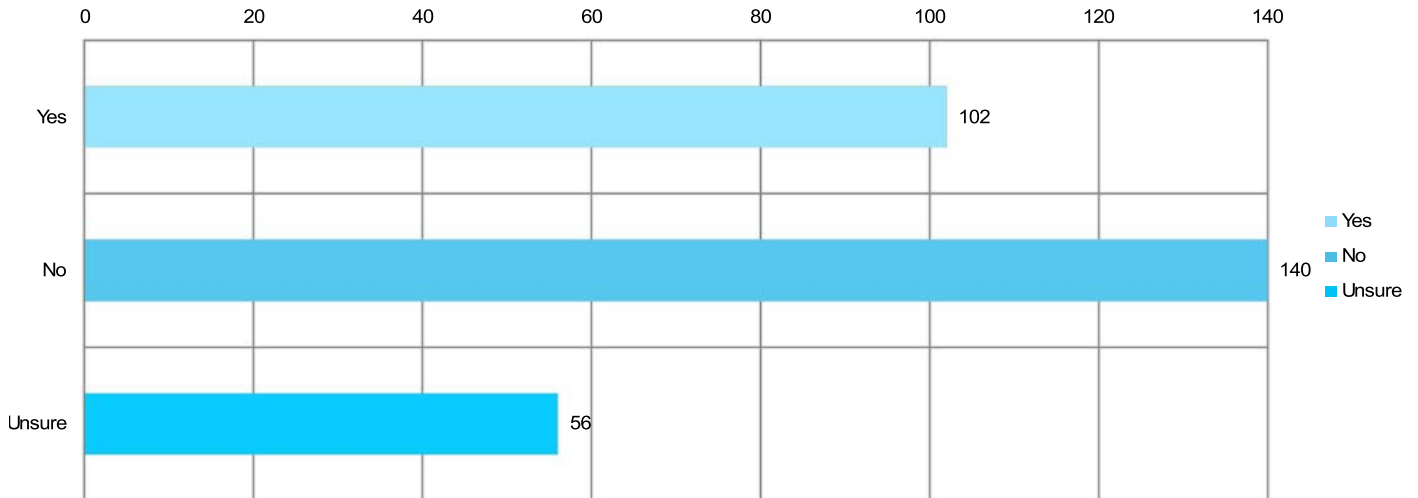
15. Would community events at the cemetery, such as candle lighting, music, All Soul's Day, or Mother's Day celebrations, appeal to you and your family?



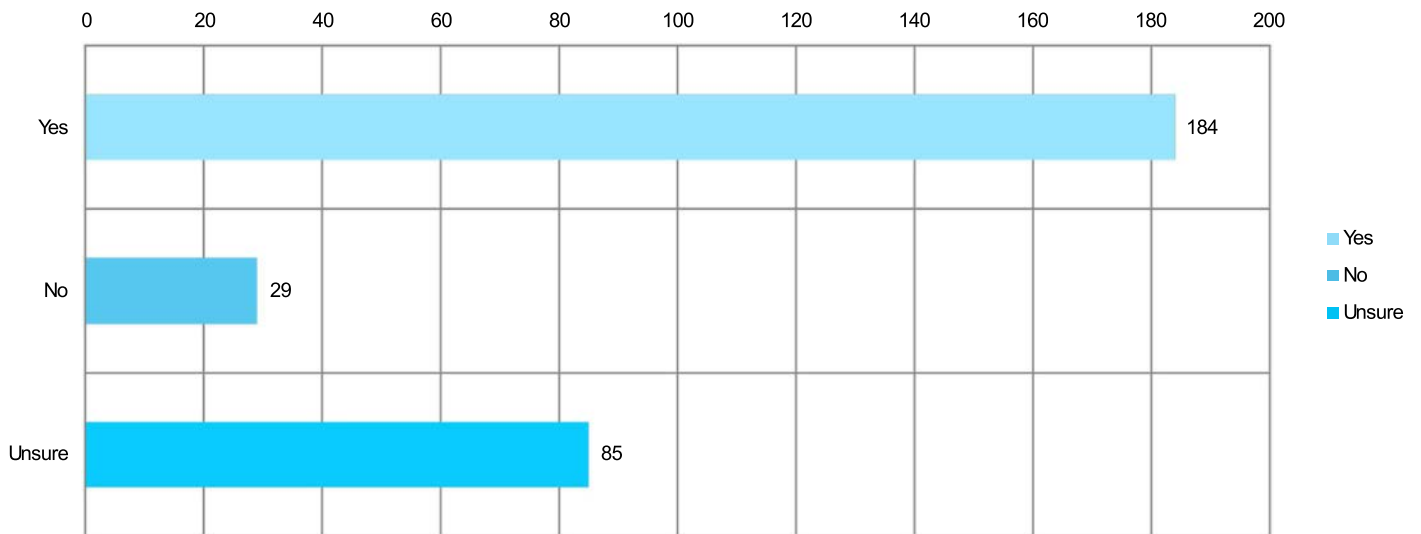
16. How should community members be encouraged to use the cemetery? Please select all that apply.



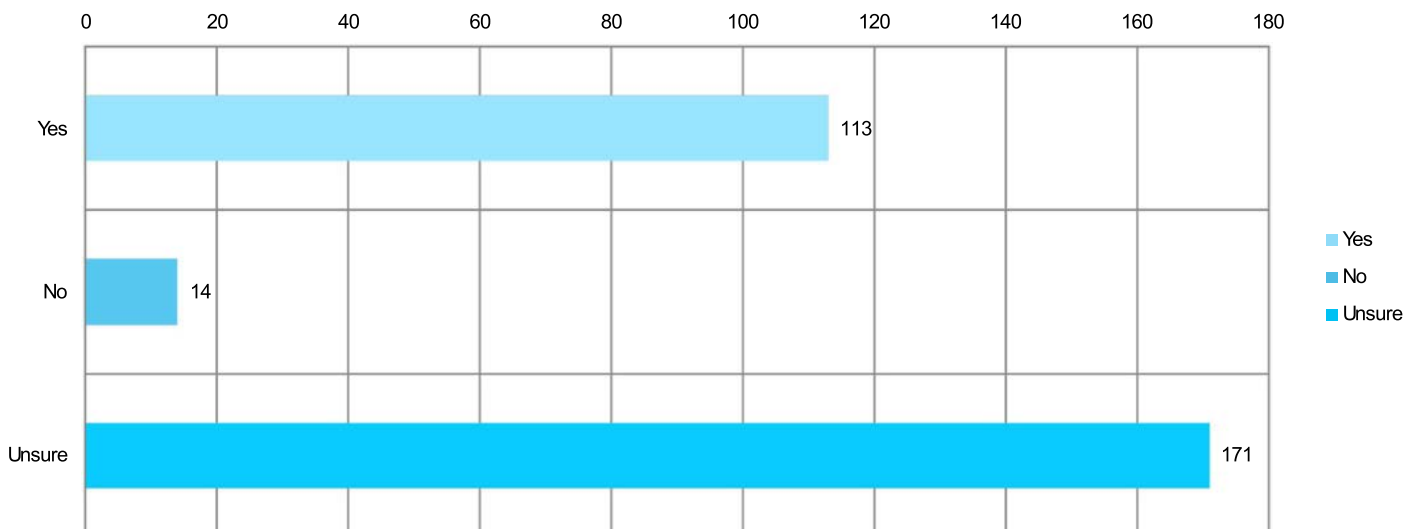
17. Would you support the City of Abbotsford considering options for allowing pet cremated remains to be interred in city cemeteries?



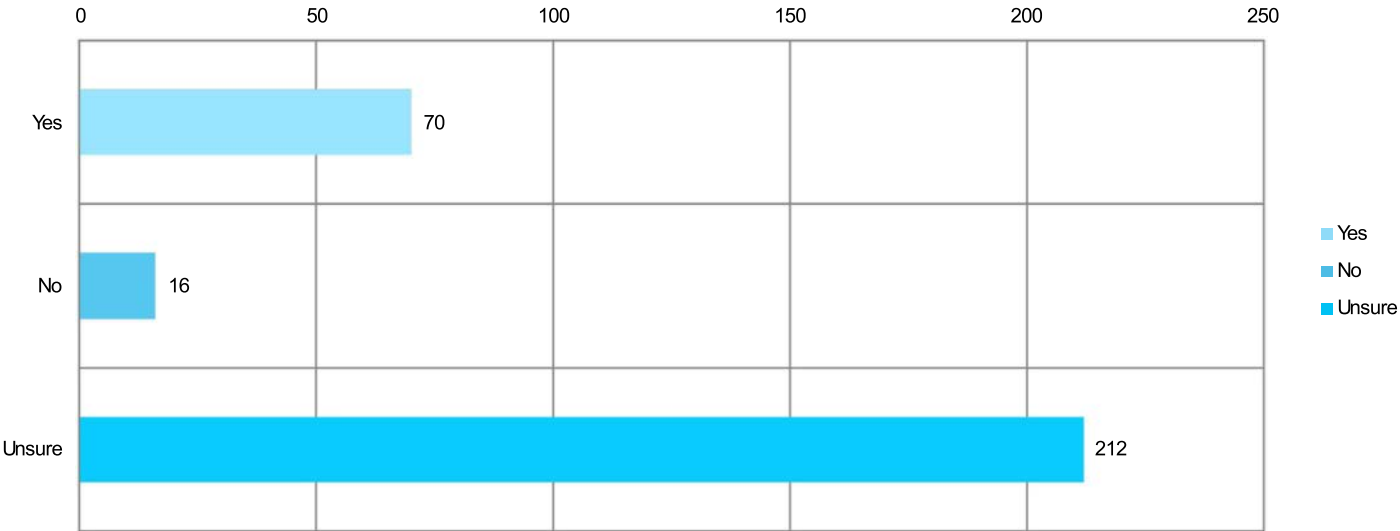
18. Does the standard of cemetery care and maintenance meet your expectations?



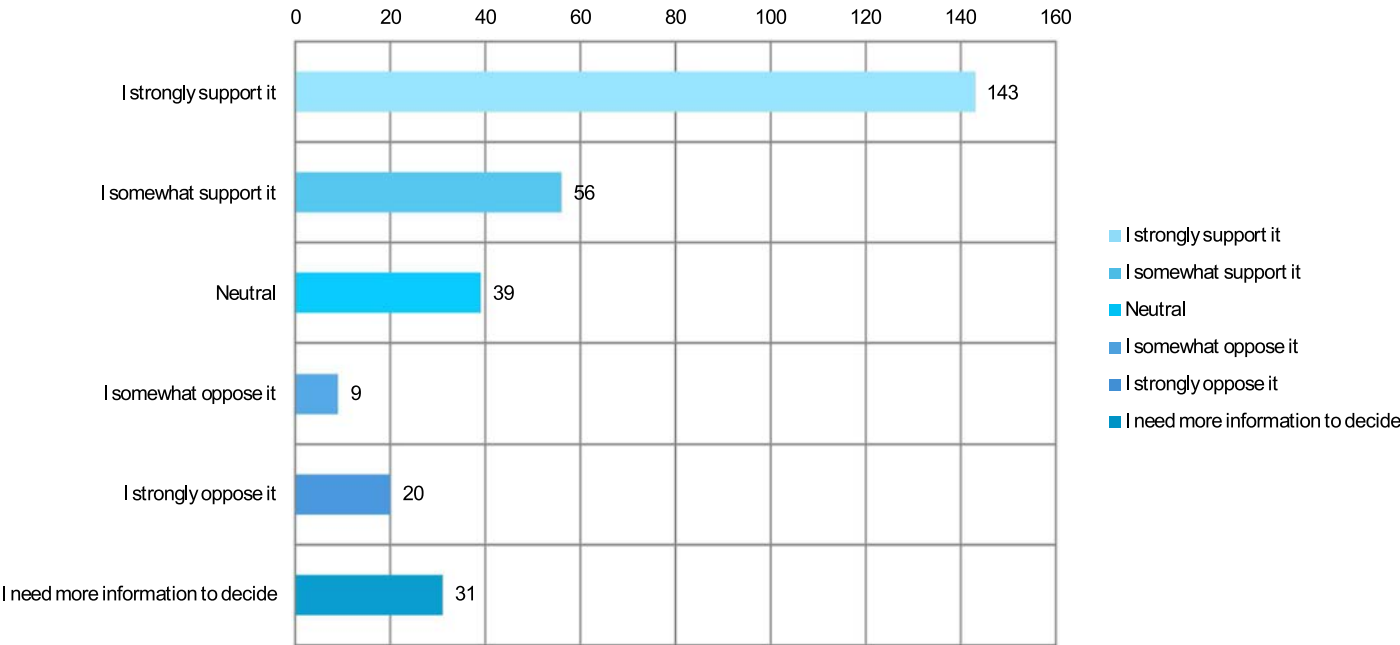
19. Does the level of customer service by cemetery staff meet your expectations?



20. Do the City office spaces where you meet with staff to purchase a burial lot and discuss cemetery-related matters meet your expectations?



21. The City’s cemeteries are running out of space, and the cost of acquiring new land is high. To extend the life of our cemeteries, we are considering options like prioritizing cremated remains lots or columbaria niches instead of traditional casket lots. This approach would conserve land and help manage costs. How do you feel about this approach?



Appendix B: In-Person Open House Boards - Stage 1

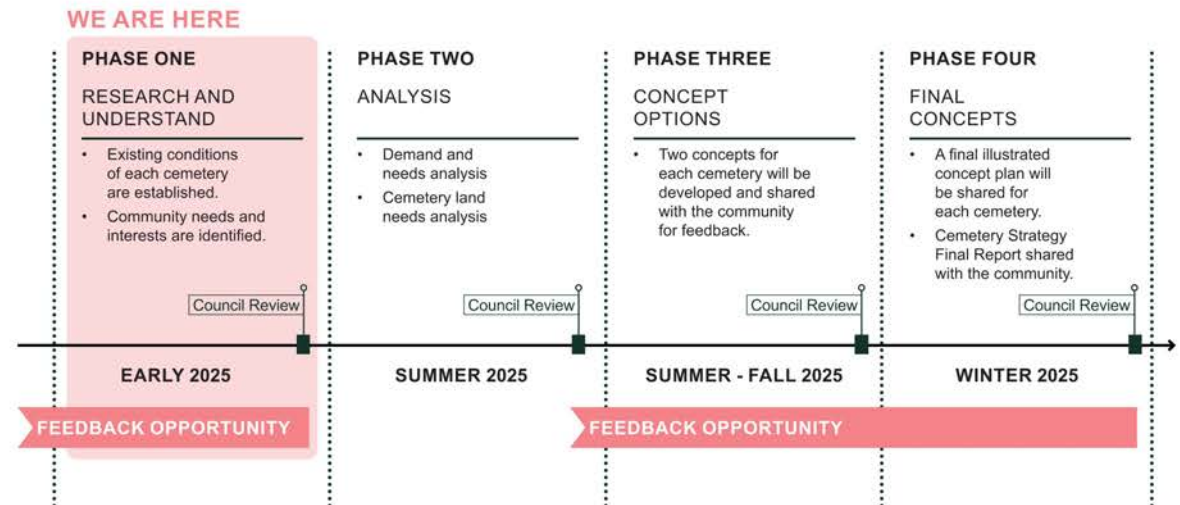
ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

The City of Abbotsford cemetery system is nearing capacity. The City aims to provide a socially and environmentally sustainable cemetery system that meets the evolving needs of Abbotsford families.

Today we are sharing information on the existing cemetery offerings, and looking for initial insight into community needs and interest for cemetery services in Abbotsford.

Thank you for coming today. We value your input.

Project Timeline



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ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY SYSTEM

Local Trends

Below is key data on the City of Abbotsford's population, annual death rates, and disposition statistics, based on five-year averages. These insights highlight the ongoing need for cemeteries and help us understand local trends in end-of-life care.



City 2024 population: 172,029



Average Deaths per year: 1,357

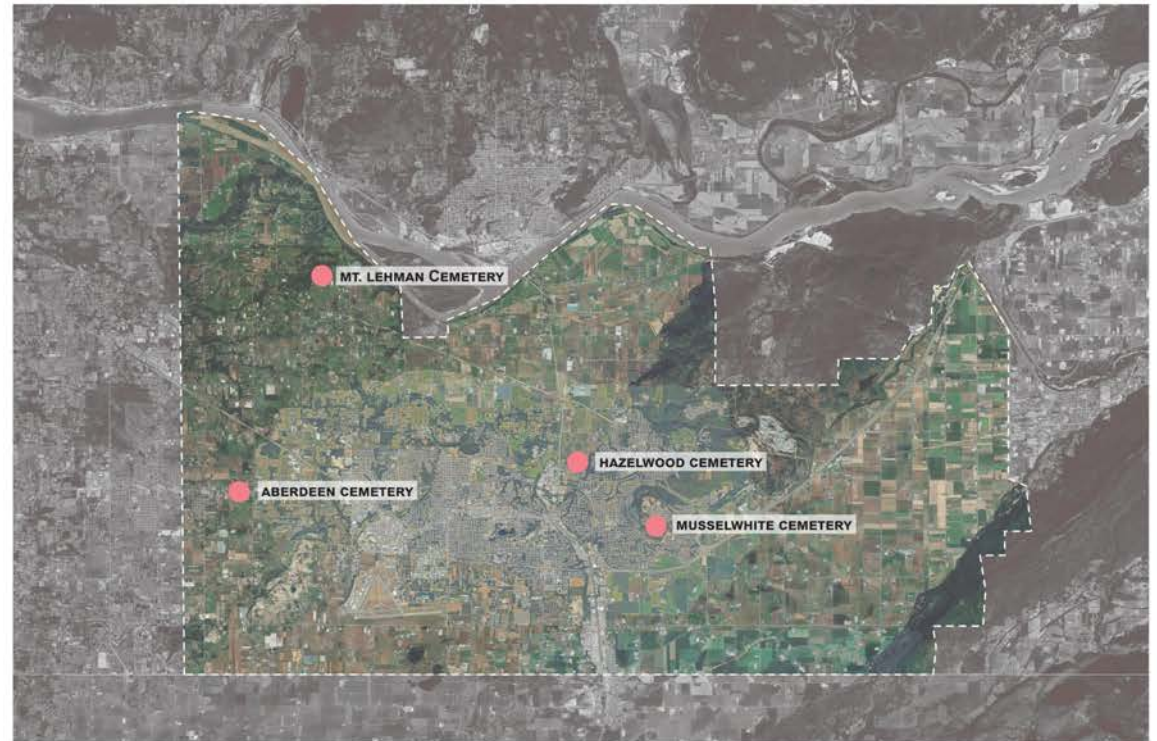


Average Casket Dispositions per year: 199



Average Cremation Dispositions per year: 1,153

Cemetery Locations



ABERDEEN CEMETERY

28417 Fraser Highway

Located about 1.6km east of Aldergrove, this cemetery was established in the 1880s. A number of pioneer families are represented along with war graves. The site includes elaborate and beautiful grave markers.

Interment and Memorialization Options and Remaining Sales Inventory



Casket Lots: sold out



Cremation Lots: 37 years of sales

Site Photos



ENTRANCE GATE



CREMATION LOTS



INTERMENT AREA

Existing Conditions



LEGEND

- SITE BOUNDARY
- > PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE
- > VEHICLE ENTRANCE
- INFORMATION KIOSK

SITE AREA: 2.2 ACRES

0 20 40 60 80 100m
scale: 1:1000

ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

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HAZELWOOD CEMETERY

3356 Park Lane

Hazelwood Cemetery, Abbotsford's largest municipal cemetery, was established in the 1920s and is home to various historic sites, including a mausoleum, war memorials, and the graves of 12 Royal Air Force members.

Interment and Memorialization Options and Remaining Sales Inventory



Casket Lots: 1 year of sales



Cremation Lots: 3 years of sales



Columbaria Niches: 17 years of sales



Scattering Garden: 8 years of sales



Ossuary: 65 years of sales



Expansion Land Available: 20 - 25 years of casket sales

Site Photos



CREMATION GARDEN



MIXED INTERMENT



EXPANSION AREA

Existing Conditions



MT. LEHMAN CEMETERY

29745 Taylor Road

Mount Lehman is the smallest civic cemetery in Abbotsford. It was established in the 1880s. It is bordered by dense forest on the north and west, with several groups of cypress trees throughout the grounds.

Interment and Memorialization Options and Remaining Sales Inventory



Casket Lots: 3 years of sales



Cremation Lots: 6 years of sales



Columbaria Niches: 2 years of sales
(Additional Columbaria Expected Spring 2025)



Scattering Garden: 18 years of sales

Site Photos



INTERMENT AREAS



SCATTERING GARDEN



CREMATION GARDEN

Existing Conditions



MUSSELWHITE CEMETERY

35301 Old Yale Road

Musselwhite cemetery marks early pioneer history in the area. There are many beautiful headstones that contribute to the historic significance and visual charm. Views from the grounds look out onto the surrounding countryside.

Interment and Memorialization Options and Remaining Sales Inventory



Casket Lots: 8 years of sales



Cremation Lots: 6 years of sales

Site Photos



INTERMENT AREA



HISTORIC SECTION



CREMATION LOTS

Existing Conditions



Which interment options, memorialization options, features and events appeal to you?

Please indicate which options interest you. We welcome you to add comments and suggest your own ideas.



GREEN BURIAL



FAMILY COLUMBARIA



MEMORIAL WALL



PET CREMATED REMAINS OPTIONS



OUTDOOR GATHERING SPACE



ART INSTALLATIONS

Light Festival



PASSIVE RECREATION

Yoga in the Cemetery



RECREATION EVENTS

5K Running Race



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Day of the Dead



POLLINATOR MEADOWS

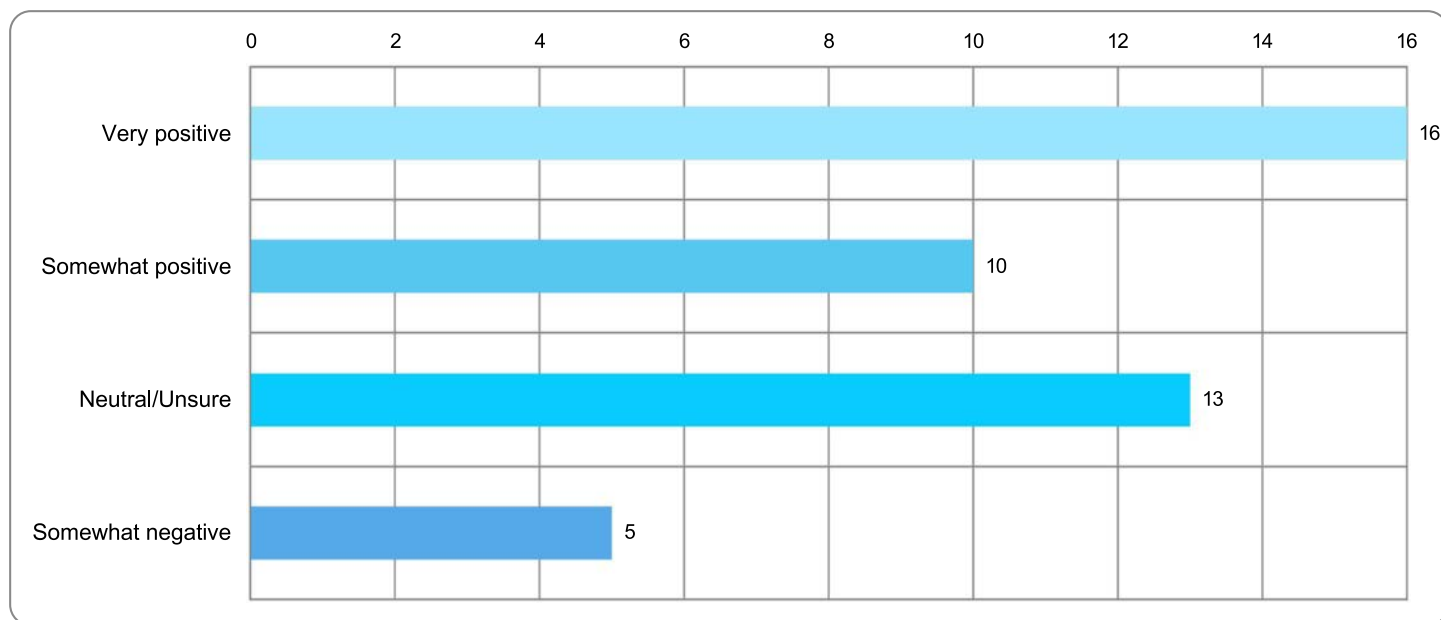
ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

LEES
ASSOCIATES



Appendix C: Stage 3 Engagement Survey Responses

What is your overall impression of the proposed improvements at Aberdeen Cemetery?



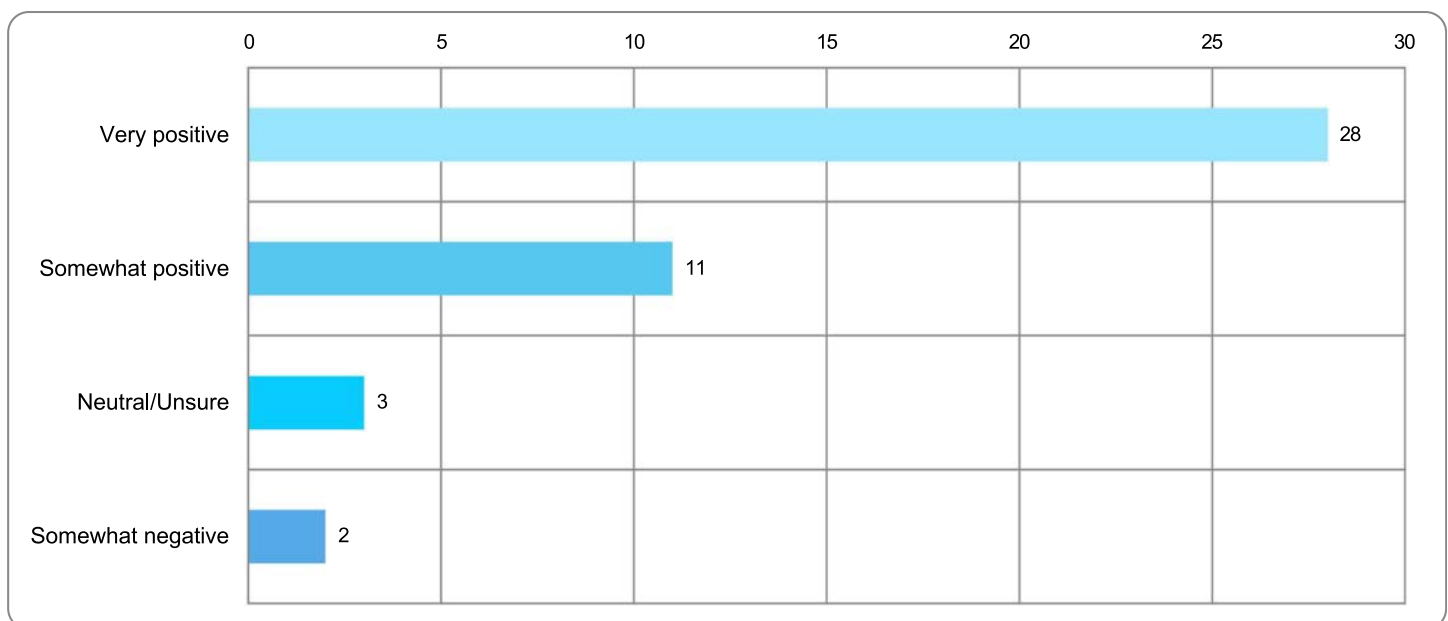
What do you like most about the Aberdeen Concept?

- Additional seating and preservation of the beech tree
- Everything
- Love the seating and walkway
- nothing in particular
- Expanding options for mobility and comfort for visitors
- Making the space park-like for walkers and dog walking is nice. Benches are nice
- This doesn't apply to my local area. I live across the street from Hazelwood Cemetery and have been a long time resident across from this cemetery for over 20 years.
- That they are leaving the tree and not cutting it down
- Did not have time to view.
- Both the driveway and the seating.
- Positive visitor experience
- Seems like you have come up with the best plan you can, given the limited space.
- Thank you for the progress of this project. This is my first time hearing about it. (May 2026)
- Increased seating and keeping the beech tree
- Nothing (x2)
- The draft updates
- The path way and preservation of the tree
- Additional seating would be well suited for a cemetery.
- Seating
- The new proposal for more interment options spaces along the roadway.
- Using available space
- Access from fire hall
- The use of the infill space once capacity reached.
- The improved seating seems like a great idea.
- Keeping the significant trees, columbaria and seating
- walkways are always good.
- I'm not sure I like it
- I like that they are creating more spaces
- I like that it's open and doesn't feel cluttered
- Keeping the tree
- added seating.
- Unsure
- Seating areas, more full grave options, preservation of the beech tree
- keeping of the significant tree, infill on the roadway is innovative
- Using all the available space in the cemetery
- Something is being done
- Use of space
- Never attended this cemetery, living in Abbotsford since 1978.
- Infilling the road when needed
- Preserving tree (x2)

Is there anything you would like to see at Aberdeen Cemetery that is not included in the concept?

- I think cemeteries should be phased out and replaced with parks and nature preserves. No need for dead bodies to occupy precious land for the living.
- This doesn't apply to my local area. I live across the street from Hazelwood Cemetery and have been a long-time resident across from this cemetery for over 20 years.
- Did not have time to view.
- No.
- Nothing that I can think of.
- More plants and gardens such as Japanese cherry blossom trees, magnolias, and other flowering trees.
- Expansion.
- Leasing rather than selling interment rights for some plots to make it easier to manage scarcity in the future.
- Green burial and columbarium.
- The casket lots should not be purchased in advance, only on an as-needed basis.
- This would not meet the needs of people with mobility issues who have difficulty navigating long distances without a vehicle.
- More flowers.
- More casket plots are needed.
- I don't understand how accessible it will be if the road is infilled and would like some idea of how that would look.
- Could you add niches around the perimeter for cremated remains?
- Maybe add an interment structure with cremation vaults.
- More shade.
- Gathering space, cremation garden, scattering garden, or walking path.
- No.
- The only concern I have is about infilling the service road, as that is the space we use for the No Stone Left Alone ceremony. If the road is gone, there won't be anywhere for the student-led ceremony to be held. Future parking is also a concern.
- No.
- Flowers.
- Pollinator garden.
- Parking improvements for the public.
- Parking area.
- I think a path that people and machinery can use to get around.

What is your overall impression of the proposed improvements at Hazelwood Cemetery?



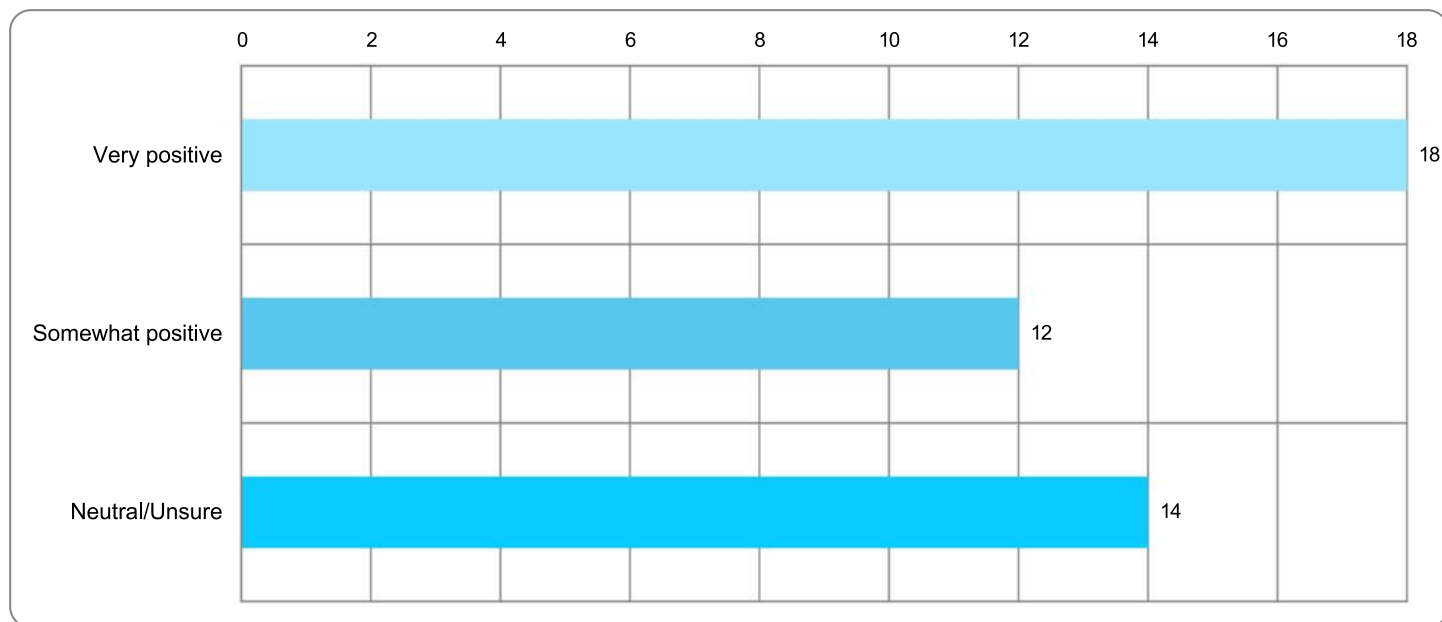
What do you like most about the Hazelwood Cemetery Concept?

- The inclusion of green burial, inclusion of parking and meeting spaces.
- Habitat enhancements, gathering areas and the intention of extending the longevity.
- All. Love the pollinator meadow and boulders. It's a great natural space, so adding to the "wilderness" feeling would be enjoyable.
- green burial option.
- Pollinator meadows.
- Love all the development that encourages flowers, bees, park, nature, community.
- I like how they are creating a push to use space and utilize space in a better manner. I love the two gathering spaces, wonderful concept.
- The gathering space.
- The Gathering Spaces.
- I like the scattering and memorial walk area.
- The pollinator meadows.
- I like the variety of burial options and the addition of pollinator gardens to maximize the possible uses of the space. I think it will become an attractive and peaceful place.
- Thank you for the progress of this project. This is my first time hearing about it. (May 2026)
- Finding ways to expand.
- Pollinator field, scattering area, plan for green burial.
- Inclusion of green burial space (would like to see more of these options, at affordable rates)
- The expansion.
- Not bad concept, like the idea of greenery and pathways as places to sit.
- I like the idea of pollinator meadows.
- Pollinator area.
- Pollinator meadow at some lovely, small flowering trees should be added japanese Cherry Blossoms magnolias.
- And BC dogwood.
- The scattering walk and green burial.
- Using available space.
- The in fill.
- GREEN BURIAL!!!! Need way more of this option in town!!
- I like the idea of a Scattering and a Memorial Walk as well as a Pollinator Meadow.
- It all looks very nice.
- the scattering and memorial boulder walk which aren't there yet.
- looks peaceful.
- Adding space for more people is good.
- Very scenic.
- Expanding it.
- Varied spaces for internment and gathering.
- Unsure thought do not want cremation.
- More inventory and options.
- the concept uses what the City already has in terms of land- the pollinator meadow, mixed interment spaces.
- Prolonging the cemetery's longevity and the expansion area.
- There will be more casket plots available.
- Use of space.
- It looks more inviting to walk over even ground, better parking.
- Meadow.
- Pollinator meadows.

Is there anything you would like to see at Hazelwood Cemetery that is not included in the concept?

- Again, we need to get rid of the casket placement areas which then get surrounded by high-maintenance lawn. It's a tradition which needs to end. With society becoming transient, graves aren't visited or important for long. Yet the interred occupy land for decades. End all graveyards and remove current casket areas older than 30 years.
- I live across the street from Hazelwood Cemetery and have been a long-time resident for over 20 years. The cemetery should continue to emphasize its multi-use function through additional paths, walkways, gathering spaces, bike routes, and potentially a playground. The cemetery should be viewed as both a park and a cemetery, with strong connections to surrounding amenities such as Willband Creek. Existing roadways and paved pathways should be retained, and vegetated buffers should remain substantial.
- South Asian families are increasingly looking for beautiful local spaces to scatter ashes rather than taking them overseas. Consider a dedicated scattering garden, potentially adjacent to a pond or gathering space, designed as an attractive memorial environment.
- No.
- No, there is not.
- More plants that provide seasonal interest throughout the year, including flowering trees.
- Expansion.
- Is it possible to bury more than one casket in the same grave space, or would groundwater conditions prevent this?
- Concerns about accessibility for people using walkers, wheelchairs, or those with limited mobility.
- More flowers.
- More casket plots.
- My only concern is accessibility for visitors with limited mobility if the roadway is removed.
- I do not think community events are appropriate. The space should support grief, reflection, and graveside services rather than broader community events.
- Additional benches are needed around the existing columbaria. The south side currently lacks adequate seating for visitors wishing to spend time reflecting near loved ones.
- The option to have ashes buried beneath or beside a tree would be appreciated. It would also be nice to allow interment with a pet's ashes.
- More detail is needed regarding seating and pathway plans if the roadway is removed. Native plant species should be prioritized.
- Could cremation niches be incorporated into the pollinator garden?
- More benches for quiet reflection.
- More seating for people walking the loop or visiting graves.
- No.
- No.
- No, it looks good.
- Consider relocating the operations building, as it is proposed beneath power lines. Also evaluate whether the proposed green burial area is in the best location adjacent to the roadway.
- Incorporate the Discovery Trail through the Boulder Walk area.

What is your overall impression of the proposed improvements at Mt. Lehman Cemetery?



What do you like most about the Mt. Lehman Cemetery Concept?

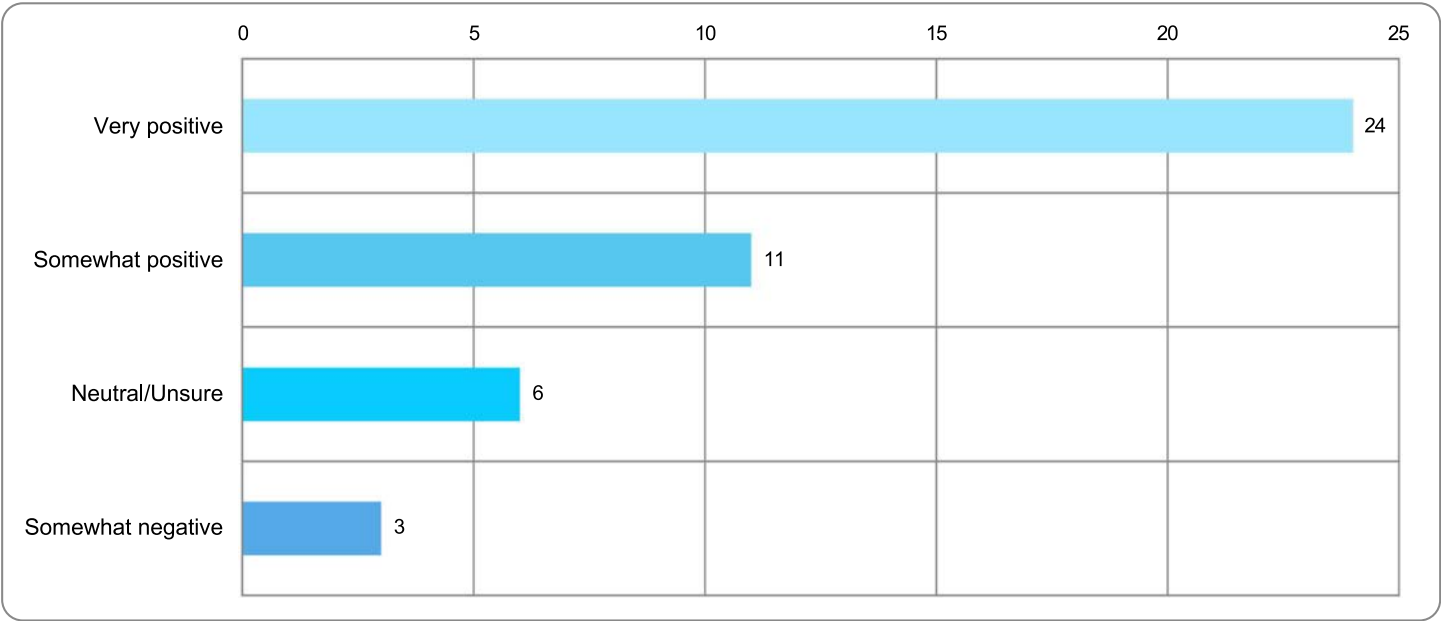
- Aesthetic improvements.
- All.
- Love the scattering garden idea. I wish more places would provide these, especially parks.
- nothing in particular.
- Scattering gardens.
- Everything except for the casket interment areas with high maintenance lawn
- Didn't have time to view.
- The layout.
- Did not have time to view.
- Scattering Garden.
- Overall positive visitor experience.
- Again, seems like a good plan for a fairly small space.
- Thank you for the progress of this project. This is my first time hearing about it. (May 2026)
- Memorial boulder.
- Planting field for seasonal interest.
- Nothing.
- Memorial boulders.
- Sounds fine with the flowers and green space making it a more enjoyable visit.
- I like there will be new planting beds in the plan.
- There really isn't much to this new concept, other than filling in a driveway which will limit accessibility options
- Memorial boulder.
- Scattering walk.
- Using available space.
- In fill for more spots.
- I like the Memorial Boulder and the Scattering Garden.
- Positive changes.
- Upgrades to overall aesthetics.
- Definitely the flowers.
- Creating more space.
- Takes account of the erosion.
- The garden options.
- Varied internment spaces.
- Unsure.
- Some good options.
- The cremation garden and infill.
- The key upgrades.
- More casket plots were added.
- Use of space
- Rather be buried where family are buried. Either Musselwhite or Hazelwood.
- More plantings.
- Slope monitoring - it's a lovely site but needs careful monitoring so good to see that taken into account.

Is there anything you would like to see at Mt. Lehman Cemetery that is not included in the concept?

- No.
 - Sounds like there are limited plots remaining city-wide, so additional land may need to be acquired and developed for cemetery use.
 - Just a park or nature preserve. Commemorate the dead with a tree rather than a headstone. Create a community garden.
 - Didn't have time to view.
 - Did not have time to view.
 - Gathering space.
 - Green burial options, scattering gardens, and columbarium.
 - No.
 - No, I cannot think of anything.
 - More seasonal flowering plants and trees, including Japanese cherry blossoms, magnolias,
- and BC dogwoods. Allow at least two caskets per burial site with additional cremation interments so families can remain together.

 - No.
 - In the next year or two, the Alder Grove Heritage Society hopes to add this cemetery to the No Stone Left Alone program. Gathering space for the student-led ceremony will be important.
 - Add more flowers.
 - Looks all good.
 - It needs a pioneer memorial plaque.
 - Unsure.
 - Addition of more strategic seating areas. Larger scattering garden.
 - More casket plots are needed.

What is your overall impression of the proposed improvements at Musselwhite Cemetery?



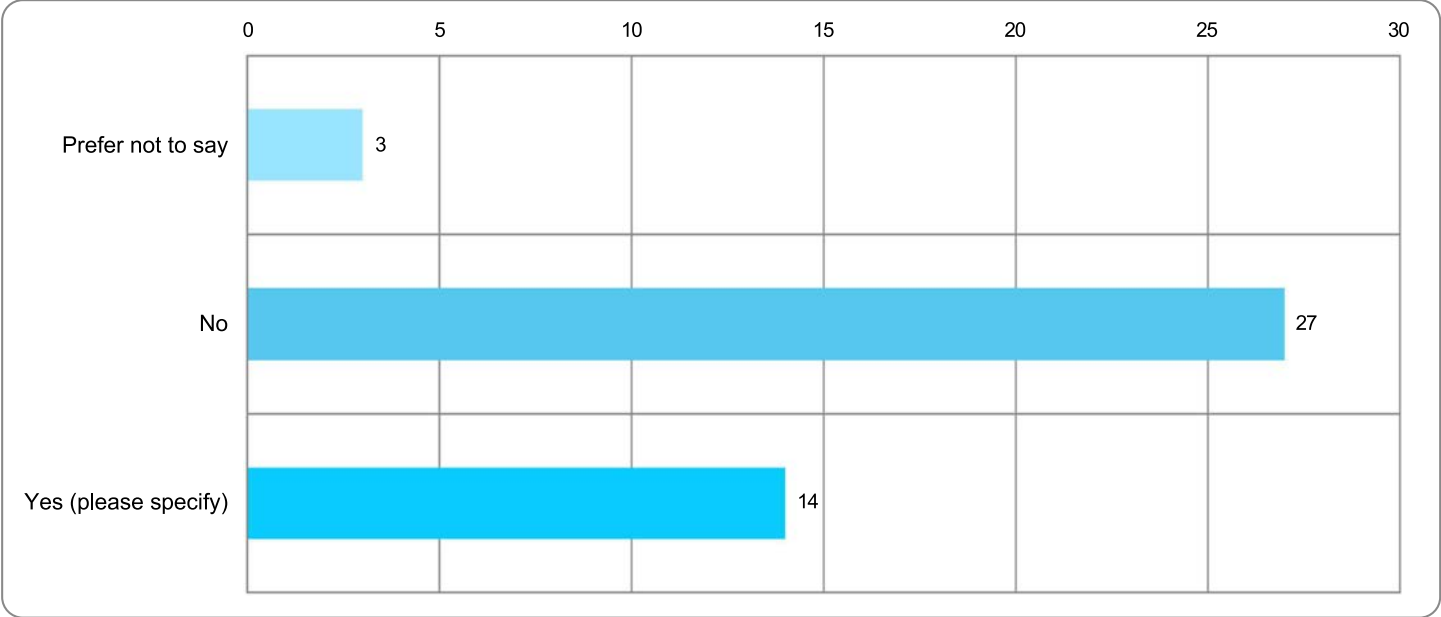
What do you like most about the Musselwhite Cemetery Concept?

- Enhanced pedestrian entrances and walking loops. Also maps at cemetery entrances.
- All.
- I love the gardens, but wish they could be a bit larger or more spread out to add to the separation from surrounding areas.
- cremation garden.
- The walk ways, pollinator meadows, more bush barriers to create a sacred space/experience.
- This graveyard has quite a history, is on a slope, and has the city built all around it. Surrounded by roads it looks pretty as you drive by.
- Didn't have time to view.
- Parking lot.
- It needs a revamp so happy to hear it's coming, I like ALL the proposals. I am 5th generation born and raised here, coming from Sumas Prairie .Many of my relatives are buried here and I have a plot as well to carry on the tradition so to speak. I'm all for the new changes.
- Did not have time to view.
- Cremation Garden.
- Overall positive visitor experience.
- I like the addition of plantings to increase privacy of the cemetery and also that the plan adds things that will make it a more pleasant visitor experience, more welcoming. Again, the variety of burial options that will be provided is great.
- Thank you for the progress of this project. This is my first time hearing about it. (May 2026)
- Pathways.
- Pollinators meadow.
- Nothing.
- Works well with topography.
- Again the greenery , flowers and road improvements.
- I like the idea of pathways through this cemetery. It is sorely lacking this and would benefit from this with the steep terrain of this cemetery. With this cemetery, any improvement to deter drinking and hanging out by individuals is needed. I also like the map idea.
- Bio diversity ideas.
- Pollinator garden but add some flowering trees.
- Gathering space proposal.
- Enhancing visitor experience.
- I do like the pollinator gardens. It's a nice touch with all the unusable space in these cemeteries. Nice to provide more space for the bees.
- Pedestrian entrance.
- I like the Pollinator Garden, and the Cremation Garden and Gathering Space.
- Very nice improvements.
- Improvements to the parking lot and trails.
- Flowers.
- Creating more space.
- I like how it's set up is thinking about the future.
- Improving the aesthetic.
- Upgrading the steep slope and including the pollinator garden in that space.
- Neutral.
- Upgrade to fencing and perimeter and making the cemetery more open and accessible.
- Addition of cremation and gathering space.
- The pathways and walking loop.
- There is still future growth of casket plots available
- Use of space.
- The possibility of making it somewhat user friendly, to walk there and not just attend burials.
- Walking loops.
- Pollinator meadow.

Is there anything you would like to see at Musselwhite Cemetery that is not included in the concept?

- No (x5)
- The fence is fine, don't waste tax dollars on unnecessary upgrades, especially when a barrier can be added with nature. Stop construction zone work on roadways from Marshall downward. Increased bike lane construction is not well used and adds cost and disruption. Avoid further changes to already difficult parking and visibility conditions. Concerns about ongoing construction impacts and perceived spending priorities.
- Remove all graves older than 30 years and stop manicured lawn practices that do not support ecological health. Convert the space into an off-leash dog park.
- Didn't have time to view.
- I'd love to see a dogwood tree or two. A niche wall similar to Hazelwood. Improved slope stability as some headstones are sliding downhill. Question about how many memorial benches will be allowed.
- Did not have time to view.
- Paved parking, new signs/markers, improved walking paths, and enhanced entrances.
- Musselwhite Cemetery needs a full overhaul as it appears run down, although seasonal flower displays are appreciated.
- Same as above (green burial options, columbarium).
- More seating.
- At least two caskets per burial site with added cremation so families can be together.
- Less hill.
- More hedging and benches.
- Concern about accessibility for wheelchair users once infill occurs and how they will access loved ones' resting places.
- Clean up graves and improve maintenance with more skilled landscaping.
- Pave parking lot and add gates to reduce after-hours activity.
- Larger scattering garden.
- Another cemetery is needed so there is future burial capacity once existing cemeteries are full
- Include proper walking paths and improve uneven ground and steps. Graves are overgrown and difficult to read. Suggestion to follow international practices for grave maintenance and renewal
- Question about feasibility of double-depth burials to increase space. Parking stalls should be clearly marked. Pedestrian entrances from busy roads are questioned due to lack of parking use. Safety concerns during funerals due to slopes, rain, and slippery conditions affecting pallbearers. Request for improved pathways and long-term planning for land availability and pre-planning of plots.
- Planner to fellow planner, I hope you're having a wonderful day and everyone is being nice in the comments!

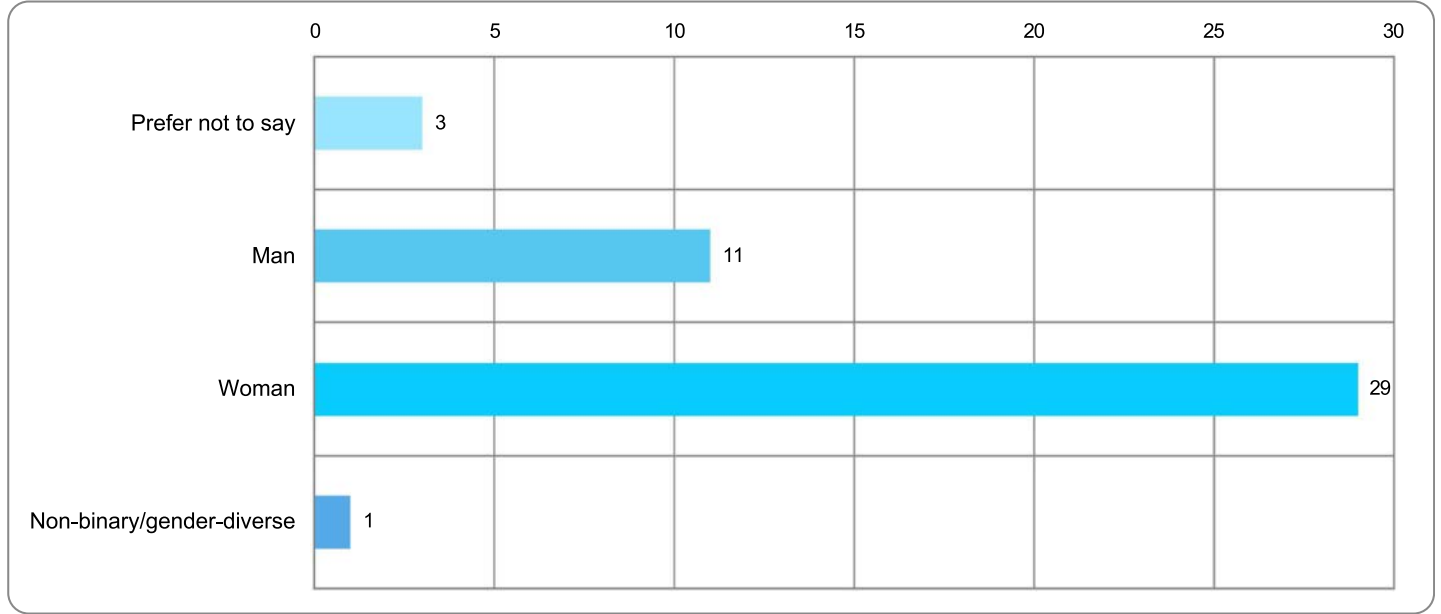
Do you identify with a particular religious, spiritual, or cultural tradition that influences end-of-life or burial practices?
(Other (please specify))



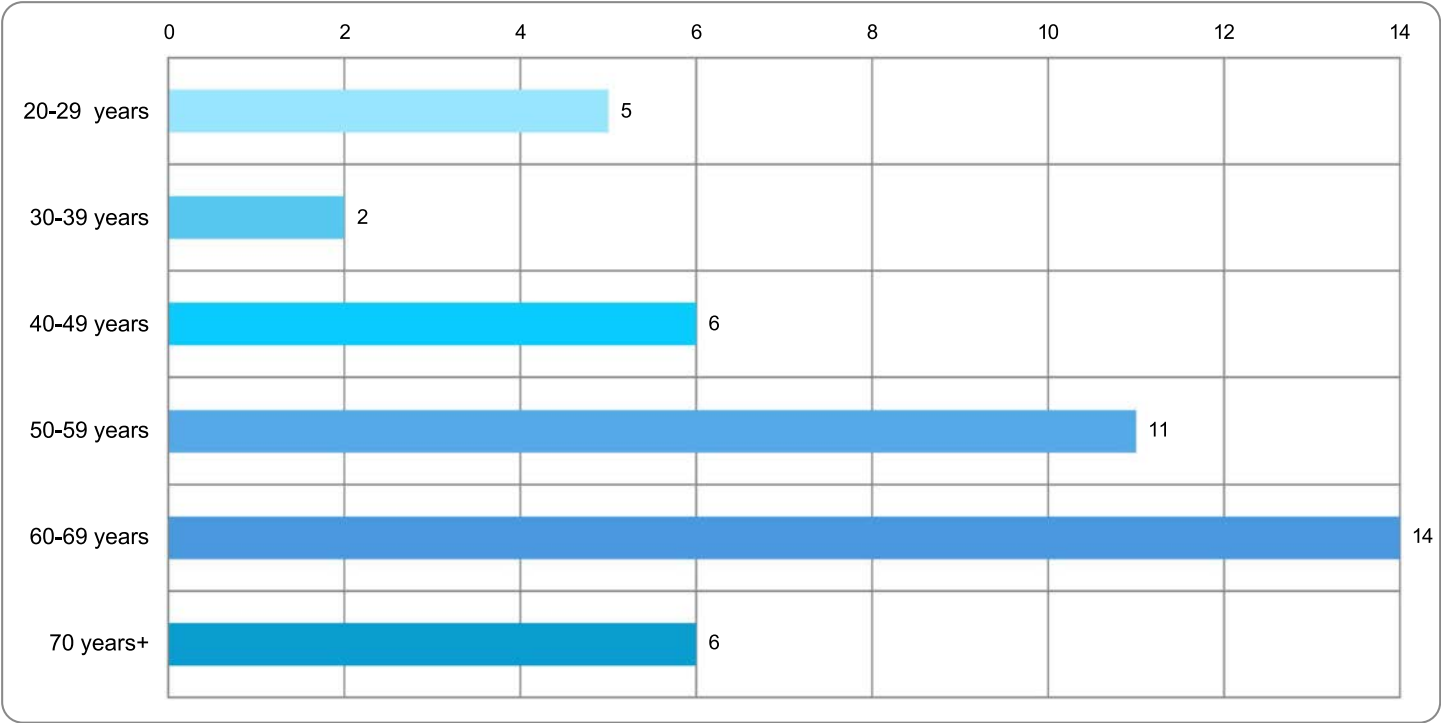
Please Specify Responses

- Christian
 - Sikh culture, Christian beliefs
 - Anabaptist Mennonite
 - Catholic
 - Christian. But I am indifferent to Cremation or burial.
 - (Some background in the funeral service)
 - Christian Reformed
 - Christian
- Christian
 - Swedish and Mennonite background
 - Christian - influences what we do
 - Christian
 - Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day
 - saints
 - Evangelical christian
 - We would only consider a burial in a casket.

How do you identify?



Which of the following age groups do you fall into? Please select one response only.



Appendix D: In-Person Open House Boards - Stage 3

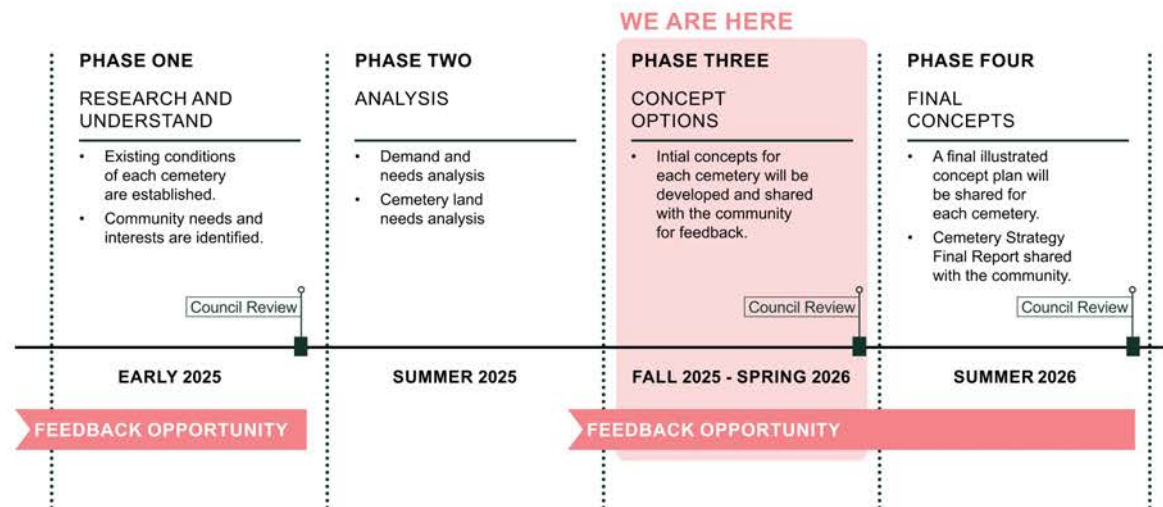
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ABBOTSFORD

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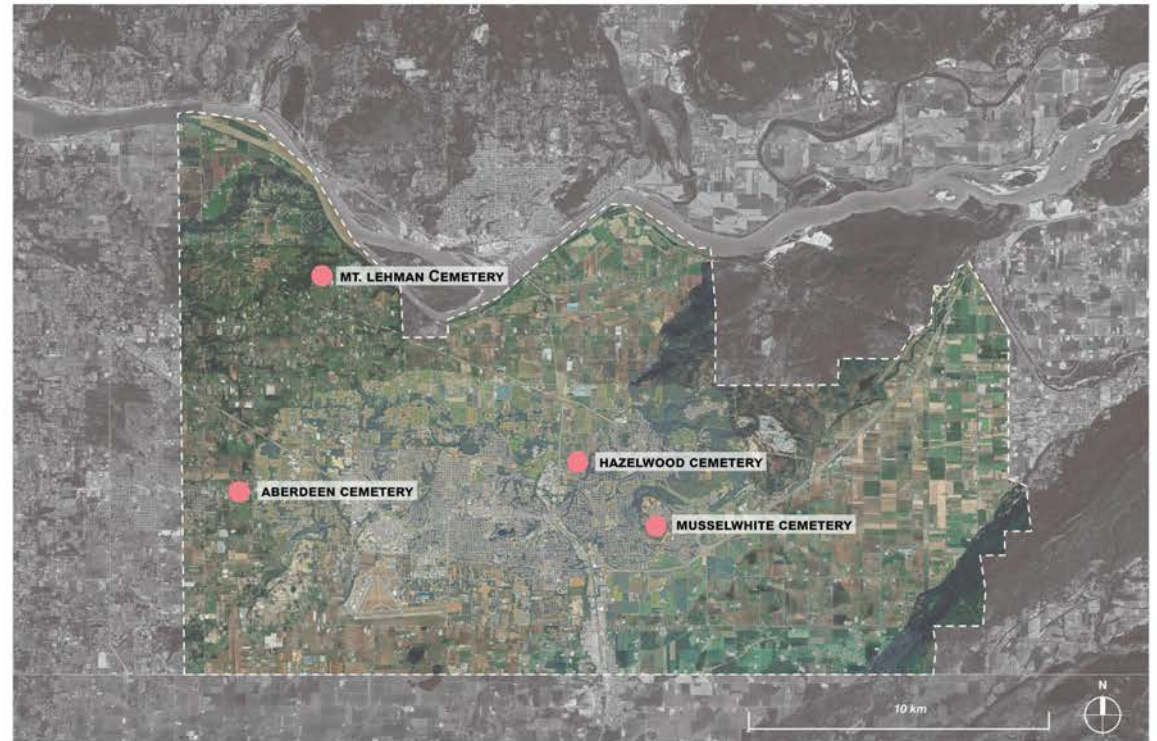


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Average Cremation Dispositions per year: 1,153

Cemetery Locations



ABERDEEN CEMETERY

28417 Fraser Highway

Concept Key Elements

General Enhancements

- Recognize the existing beech tree as a Significant Tree.
- Add seating throughout the space to enhance the user experience.
- Account for anticipated Fraser Highway widening in future planning.

Entrance

Establish a formalized pedestrian connection from the parking area with:

- Defined pathway to the front entrance.
- Added planting to the vegetated buffer.
- Consider a suitable setback to accommodate future Fraser Highway expansion.

Interment and Memorialization

- Once the cemetery is full, infill the existing driveway with a mix of interment options to maximize remaining capacity.

Cemetery Capacity

Inventory Type	Existing Inventory Years of Sale Remaining	Potential Additional Inventory Years of Sale		Total Years of Sale
		Infill	Expansion	
Casket Lots	Sold Out	< 1 year	N/A	< 1 year
Cremation Lots	35-37 years	N/A	N/A	35-37 years
Columbaria Niches	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Scattering	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: Aberdeen Cemetery does not currently offer columbaria niches or scattering.

Concept Plan



Legend

Existing

- CEMETERY BOUNDARY
- CITY-OWNED LOT
- CEMETERY DRIVEWAY, LIMITED ACCESS
- INFORMATION KIOSK

Proposed

- PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE
- PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY
- MIXED INTERMENT CEMETERY DRIVEWAY INFILL
- TREES AND SHRUBS

Precedent Images



Cemetery Driveway Infilled with Interment Options, Source: LEES+Associates



Seating, North Delta Cemetery, BC, Source: LEES+Associates

ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

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HAZELWOOD CEMETERY

3356 Park Lane

Concept Key Elements

General Enhancements

Burials and permanent structures are not permitted in the BC Hydro offset. Improvements should focus on enhancing the space through ecological, functional, and operational upgrades to create a park-like setting. These may include:

- Plant a pollinator meadow to support local biodiversity.
- Establish a gathering space with temporary or permanent structures for community or ceremonial uses.
- Utilize portions of the area for additional parking to support cemetery events and daily use.
- Allocated space for operations and materials storage.

Interment and Memorialization

- Expand into the northeast corner of the cemetery to increase capacity, including mixed interment options, green burial, and an expanded cremation garden, with a vegetated buffer to screen Hazelwood Avenue.
- Add additional memorialization options by creating a scattering and memorial boulder walk in the southwest corner.
- Once sections of the cemetery are full, underutilized cemetery driveways should be infilled with interment options.

Concept Plan



Legend

Existing

- CEMETERY BOUNDARY
- BC HYDRO OFFSET
- STEEP TOPOGRAPHY
- PEDESTRIAN ENTRANCE
- PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY
- CEMETERY DRIVEWAY
- CREMATION GARDEN
- SCATTERING GARDEN
- INFORMATION KIOSK

Proposed

- PEDESTRIAN PATHWAY
- GATHERING SPACE
- CREMATION GARDEN
- GREEN BURIAL
- MEMORIAL BOULDER WALK
- MIXED INTERMENT EXPANSION
- MIXED INTERMENT CEMETERY DRIVEWAY INFILL
- POLLINATOR MEADOW
- PARKING
- OPERATIONS STORAGE
- TREES AND SHRUBS

Cemetery Capacity

Inventory Type	Existing Inventory Years of Sale Remaining	Potential Additional Inventory Years of Sale		Total Years of Sale
		Infill	Expansion	
Casket Lots	< 1 year	18-20 years	26-28 years	44-48 years
Cremation Lots	1-3 years	18-20 years	25-27 years	44-50 years
Columbaria Niches	15-17 years	N/A	30-32 years	45-49 years
Scattering	6-8 years	N/A	70-72 years	76-80 years

Note: Mixed interment areas for infill and expansion = 8% dedicated for cremation.

Precedent Images



Scattering and Memorial Boulder Walk, Whistler, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Gathering Space, Royal Oak Burial Park, Saanich, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Pollinator Meadow, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC. Source: Wayne Worden



Pollinator Meadow, North Vancouver, BC. Source: City of North Vancouver



Green Burial, Royal Oak Burial Park, Saanich, BC. Source: Wayne Worden

ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

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MT. LEHMAN CEMETERY

29745 Taylor Road

Concept Key Elements

General Enhancements

- Trees and shrubs should be assessed and replaced when necessary to maintain a healthy screen.
- Provide ongoing monitoring and regular assessments to slopes to ensure the long-term stability, identify any signs of erosion or movement, and to inform potential mitigation measures.
- Enhance the existing columbaria and scattering garden to improve aesthetics and ceremonial qualities by adding additional planting. Introduce planting that will give seasonal interest. Soil amendments may be needed to support vegetation growth.
- Install a memorial boulder with an epitaph to offer a meaningful focal point within the scattering garden, enhancing its ceremonial and commemorative qualities.

Interment and Memorialization

- Confirm the lot layout and inventory allocation for the future interment expansion area remain aligned with future community needs.
- Once the cemetery is full, infill the existing driveway with a mix of interment options to maximize remaining capacity.

Cemetery Capacity

Inventory Type	Existing Inventory Years of Sale Remaining	Potential Additional Inventory Years of Sale		Total Years of Sale
		Infill	Expansion	
Casket Lots	1-3 years	1-2 years	N/A	2-5 years
Cremation Lots	4-6 years	1-2 years	1-2 years	6-10 years
Columbaria Niches	12-14 years	N/A	N/A	12-14 years
Scattering	4-6 years	N/A	N/A	4-6 years

Note: Mixed interment areas for infill and expansion = 5% dedicated for cremation.

Concept Plan



Precedent Images



Memorial Boulder, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC. Source: Wayne Worden



Planting Beds with Memorialization, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Scattering Garden, Shuswap, Salmon Arm, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Seasonal Interest Planting, Cornus sericea 'Arctic Fire'

ABBOTSFORD CEMETERY STRATEGY

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MUSSELWHITE CEMETERY

35301 Old Yale Road

Concept Key Elements

General Enhancements

- Improve the overall aesthetic and boundary definition of the cemetery by replacing the existing chain link fence or upgrading it.
- Strengthen the sense of arrival at pedestrian entrances to emphasize the transition from public to sacred space.
- Improve wayfinding by installing cemetery maps at the two primary pedestrian entrances.
- Utilize steep and unsuitable burial areas to enhance ecological value by planting a pollinator meadow and supporting local biodiversity. To ensure the gardens remain visually intentional and well-maintained, incorporate a clean, crisp edge. This defined boundary will help distinguish the meadow from adjacent turf or burial areas, to convey a sense of care and order within the cemetery landscape.

Interment and Memorialization

- Extend the life of the cemetery by developing a cremation garden.

Cemetery Capacity

Inventory Type	Existing Inventory Years of Sale Remaining	Potential Additional Inventory Years of Sale		Total Years of Sale
		Infill	Expansion	
Casket Lots	6-8 years	N/A	N/A	6-8 years
Cremation Lots	4-6 years	N/A	N/A	4-6 years
Columbaria Niches	N/A	N/A	6-8 years	6-8 years
Scattering	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: Musselwhite Cemetery currently does not offer columbaria niches. The average number of sales per year from Mt. Lehman and Hazelwood Cemeteries were used to calculate the columbaria niche sales.

Concept Plan



Precedent Images



Legacy Gardens Cremation Garden, Kelowna, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Pollinator Garden and Information Sign, Mountain View Cemetery, Vancouver, BC. Source: Wayne Worden



Cemetery Entrance, Abbotsford, BC. Source: LEES+Associates



Stairs and Sloped Pathways, Air India Memorial, Vancouver, BC. Source: LEES+Associates

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Appendix E: Exploring Options

Family Estate Lots



Rose Hills Memorial Park and Mortuary, Whittier, CA
Source: Rose Hills Memorial Park

Family Estate Plots provide families with the opportunity to purchase a grouping of lots, allowing families to keep loved ones together in a shared space, creating a meaningful and lasting legacy.

There are no standardized regulations governing the size or features of family estate plots within the bereavement industry. Instead, the permitted dimensions and configurations are typically determined by the cemetery operator and outlined in the municipal Cemetery Bylaw. This means that the size, number, and type of interments, as well as the features allowed within a family estate plot, can vary significantly between cemeteries.

These estates are sized to allow for a combination of interment spaces and landscape features. Interment and memorialization options may include:

- Larger markers to display multiple family names
- Multiple casket burial lots

- Multiple cremation burial lots
- Family Columbaria
- Memorial bench

Landscape features may include:

- Specimen trees or ornamental shrubs for aesthetic benefits
- Hedges or low fences to define the estate and provide privacy

Family estate plots are a premium burial option commonly found in urban and suburban cemeteries but are less common in smaller or rural communities due to lower demand and operational challenges. These plots require additional maintenance, such as landscaping and upkeep, and should be priced to reflect their premium status.

Green Burial



Green Burial at Royal Oak Burial Park, Victoria, BC.
Source: Royal Oak Burial Park

Green burial is an emerging trend at cemeteries worldwide. The philosophy of embracing natural processes in death resonates with many communities' environmental values, and green burial closely resembles some communities' traditional burial practices.

Green burial is also known as “natural burial,” “country burial,” or “woodland burial,” and is defined as an in-ground burial with:

- No embalming;
- A fully biodegradable casket or shroud;
- No use of grave liners or concrete vaults;
- A form of habitat restoration of the burial area, such as planting with native species; and
- A communal marker, no marker, or a simple marker made of local and natural materials.

While green burial is often described as a new practice, it is a living tradition that stretches back further than contemporary in-ground burial techniques, such as embalming. The Jewish, Muslim, and Baha'i communities have traditionally interred the deceased according to green burial principles. Most recently, the Catholic Church has begun to actively embrace green burial, determining that the tenets of green burial align well with its core beliefs and practices.

The Canadian-based Green Burial Society of Canada (GBSC) is a non-profit organization that offers a certification program to qualifying service providers. Its website includes examples and a list of Canadian cemeteries currently offering green burial. Refer to the GBSC website for information on registration.

Green burial is not a discount option, but a different service catering to a distinct population, with distinct values. These lots should be just as valued, and valuable, as traditional burial grounds and for that reason should be priced commensurate with other full-depth burial options.

Long-term maintenance costs for green burial can be less than traditional casket burials that are associated with mown lawns and irrigation. The habitat restoration practice within green burial areas requires less maintenance after plant establishment and provides more ecological services – such as helping bolster biodiversity to the area.

Committing to providing green burial offers a marketing opportunity for the City and could increase connections between the community and the cemetery. Media and social network sites are especially attuned to stories about green burial, both for its novelty and for its associations with sustainable practices.

For more information, please visit: <https://greenburialcanada.ca/>

Cremation Garden



Okotoks Cemetery Cremation Garden, Okotoks, AB
Source: LEES+Associates

A cremation garden is a thoughtfully designed space that offers various cremation interment and memorialization options. Cremation gardens vary in size, shape and offerings. Common interment and memorialization options include:

- Communal columbaria
- Memorial wall
- Scattering garden
- Ossuary

Sense of place is created using landscape features and planting, including:

- Ornamental trees and shrubs
- Benches
- Feature walls
- Sculpture
- Materials that reflect the landscape

To ensure a cohesive cemetery design, columbaria units should not be installed as standalone structures. Instead, they should always be part of a cremation garden, creating a meaningful and attractive environment that enhances the user experience, and ultimately increasing demand.

Community Columbaria



Kelowna Legacy Gardens, Kelowna, BC
Source: Wayne Worden

As cremation rates rise across North America, columbaria have become an increasingly popular option, offering families a meaningful and personalized way to memorialize loved ones. These above-ground structures provide recessed niches for cremation urns and are an excellent addition to cemeteries seeking to adapt to changing preferences.

Columbaria help preserve interment space by encouraging families to select niches as an alternative to in-ground cremation lots. Additionally, columbaria can be installed in areas of the cemetery that are otherwise unsuitable for traditional interments, optimizing the use of available land.

Columbaria offer a strong return on investment, with construction costs offset by consistent niche sales. Operations and maintenance costs for columbaria are significantly lower than those for in-ground interments, as they require less staff time for opening and closing. Additionally, columbaria are less affected by seasonal challenges like frozen ground, making them a practical and efficient year-round option.

Columbaria come in a wide variety of styles, materials, and sizes, offering flexibility to meet the needs of any cemetery. Suppliers provide a range of standard products with customizable options available at an additional cost. Furthermore, columbaria can be designed with features tailored to complement specific cemetery layouts and landscapes, ensuring they blend seamlessly into their surroundings while meeting the unique needs of the community.

Family Columbaria



Family Columbaria
Source: Sunset Memorial and Stone

Family columbaria are smaller columbaria units designed exclusively for a single family. While the cemetery operator retains ownership of the family columbarium itself, the family purchases the right of interment for their exclusive use, ensuring a private and personalized memorial space.

Some cemeteries collaborate with families to select suitable locations for their family columbaria, creating custom placements that meet individual needs. Other cemeteries proactively develop dedicated family columbaria areas, where a range of pre-installed units is available for families to choose from. These units vary in size, price, and design, with memorialization exclusively dedicated to members of the family. Custom

features, such as a reliquary shelf or design elements reflecting personal, cultural, or religious practices, can be incorporated while adhering to cemetery standards.

Assessing community interest in family columbaria presents a valuable opportunity for cemeteries. By introducing this premium interment option, cemeteries can better meet the needs of families seeking exclusivity and personalization while enhancing financial returns and broadening their service offerings.

Scattering Garden and Ossuary



Shuswap Memorial Cemetery, Salmon Arm, BC
Source: LEES+Associates

Scattering gardens are beautifully designed natural or ornamental spaces that provide a dedicated area for the scattering of cremated remains. These gardens offer a serene and sacred environment where families can disperse all or a portion of their loved one's remains, creating a meaningful and peaceful memorial experience. Scattering gardens are a flexible and efficient use of cemetery land, making them a popular features.

Plants chosen for scattering gardens must be able to tolerate the alkaline and high saline levels of cremated remains. To further protect the plant life and appearance of the scattering garden, it is common practice to allow families to scatter only a portion of the total cremated remains. The remainder of the remains can then be stored in an Ossuary.

An ossuary is a container designed to hold the commingled cremated remains of multiple individuals. Ossuaries are often integrated into a prominent feature within the scattering garden, serving as a focal point.

To complement the scattering garden and ossuary, cemeteries typically include a memorial wall within or near the garden, providing a space for the names of individuals to be respectfully memorialized.