

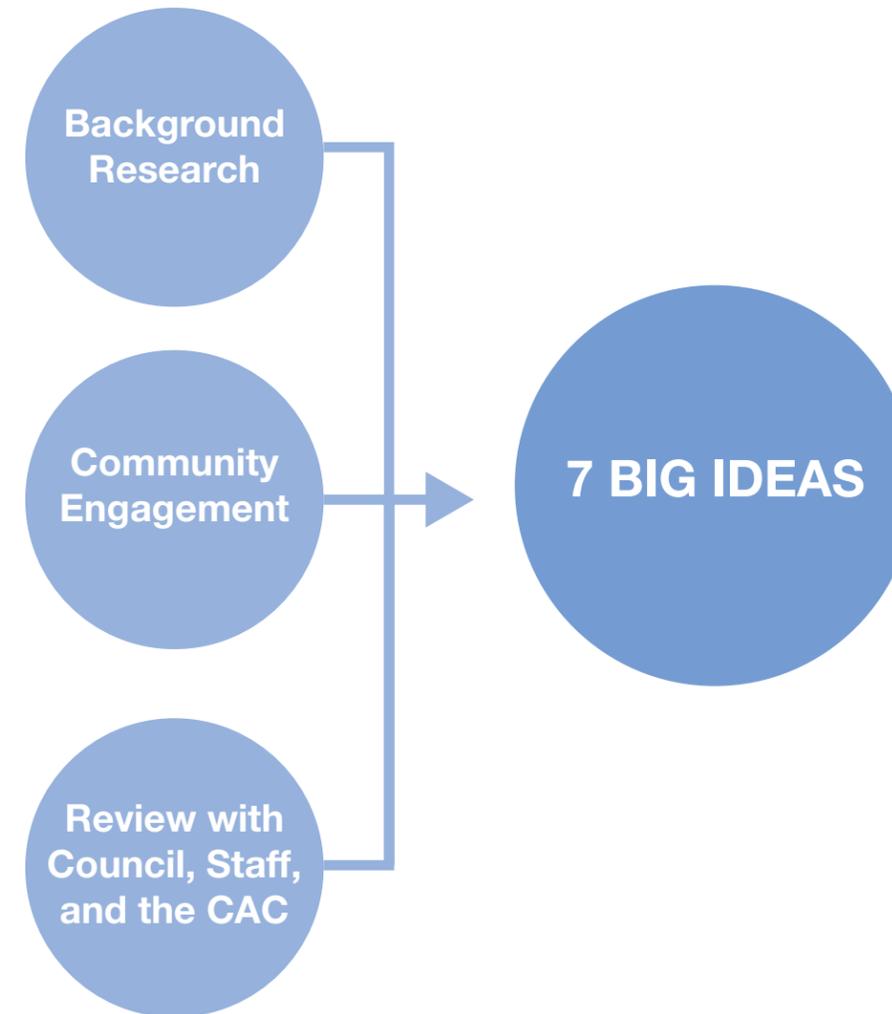
3.2 A Vision for Abbotsford at 200,000 People

Developing a New Vision

Developing new policy directions for an OCP update begins with the end in mind: a vision for what the city will be like at 200,000 people. The vision embodies the values, priorities, and aspirations of the community, and it helps chart the course for development and implementation of new policies.

For Abbotsforward, the vision focuses on a population of 200,000 people, not as a “finished city” (because Abbotsford will continue to grow beyond the life of this plan), but as an improvement in the life of the city. Abbotsford is expected to reach 200,000 under a medium growth scenario in about 20 years; however, the focus is on the outcome, not how much time it takes to get there.

Now at the end of Stage 2, early elements of the vision have been developed, based on observations from background research, extensive community engagement, and review and iteration with Council, staff and the Citizen Advisory Commission (CAC). These early elements are called the “Big Ideas”, and they form the building blocks of the OCP vision and goals.



7 Big Ideas

The emerging Big Ideas are listed on the right and described in the following pages, including both a vision for the future and potential OCP policy ideas.

While the OCP covers a broad range of topics, these Big Ideas provide a few essential ingredients, around which the new OCP will be developed. The Big Ideas are not intended to cover all possible ideas related to the complete OCP; however, they do begin to offer a powerful foundation for the next phase of planning and community engagement. They may evolve through further review and discussion with Council, City staff, CAC, and the broader community.



Create a City Centre



Establish Distinct Neighbourhoods



Make Walking, Cycling, and Transit Delightful



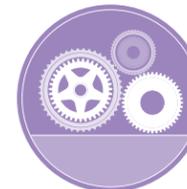
Design Places for People



Foster Natural Beauty



Enhance Agricultural Integrity



Make It Work



Create a City Centre

When asked where the heart of the city is located, all residents will point to the same recognizable place that is the centre of civic, public, economic, and cultural life. This City Centre will have a clear identity and sense of arrival, and will evolve into Abbotsford's most vibrant area, scaled to pedestrians and rich with diverse destinations and activities. It will also continue to be the employment hub in Abbotsford, with strong links to the civic centre and Mill Lake.

The City Centre will become a neighbourhood unto itself, home to residents who can walk to work. It will remain lively and magnetic after office hours, a destination for visitors and residents across the city on evenings and weekends. A new and different South Fraser Way – as the primary corridor in the heart of the City Centre neighbourhood – will stitch together other neighbourhoods to the north, south, east, and west.





What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Homes and Residential Densities:** Encourage the development of new homes in the City Centre, focusing Abbotsford's greatest residential densities and providing housing options from townhomes to mid-rise and high-rise buildings with heights, densities, and overall sizes stepping down to adjacent neighbourhoods.
- **Mixed-Use Buildings and Continuous Active Building Fronts:** Ensure that new buildings along key streets in the City Centre are mixed-use, with retail and other forms of commercial uses at street level, and housing and/or offices above. On retail streets, require commercial and compatible uses (e.g. cultural, institutional, and community uses) at street level, giving priority to active uses provided by retail and restaurants. If retail uses are not possible, in certain street level locations, ensure that buildings are easily convertible to retail in the future. On non-retail streets and where residential buildings are appropriate, homes should face the street at ground-level, with interesting and neighbourly expressions to the street. Blank walls will be avoided, and on-street parking should be encouraged.
- **Employment and Office Development:** Focus new office development within the City Centre, potentially limiting major new office development outside of the City Centre.
- **Walking Environment and Connections:** While South Fraser Way will continue being an important street for goods and vehicle movement where it passes through the City Centre, it will transform into an urban boulevard and complete street. It will focus on walking by creating greater connectivity through shorter blocks and mid-block connections, improved physical infrastructure, and pedestrian-oriented design of buildings and public spaces (refer to Big Ideas: *Make Walking, Cycling and Transit Delightful*, and *Design Places for People*).
- **Existing Landmarks:** Strengthen the quality of public spaces surrounding existing landmarks that contribute to the civic and cultural sense of place, including buildings such as the historic Sikh Temple and City Hall.
- **Mill Lake:** Strengthen physical and visual connections between Mill Lake and South Fraser Way – and throughout the broader area – through sensitive redevelopment that creates a positive interface between the City Centre and the park, and through the establishment of new walking and cycling infrastructure.



image credit: Flickr user - Paul Krueger



Establish Distinct Neighbourhoods



Abbotsford will be a city where neighbourhoods and smaller districts will be as complete and mixed use as possible, while also having their own diverse and distinct character and sense of place. Residents can work, and enjoy amenities and services such as cafés, shops, schools and parks, within walking distance of home.

These neighbourhoods will set the stage for vibrant public life, in which people feel compelled to leave their homes on foot and cross paths with neighbours, enhancing health, safety, and sense of community. Diverse housing types will create housing choice and will allow residents to live in their chosen neighbourhoods throughout their lives.



Image credit: Flickr user - Neil Zeller Photography



What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Housing Diversity:** Support diverse housing types for a variety of household types, incomes, tenures, and preferences, ranging from single family homes and townhomes, to low and mid-rise residential buildings.
- **Housing Affordability:** Support the establishment of mixed affordable housing options including smaller homes and secondary suites – including laneway homes – that can serve as mortgage helpers.
- **Diverse Uses and Destinations:** Establish new uses – particularly neighbourhood-serving retail and community amenities – in as many existing neighbourhoods as possible.
- **Residential Densities and Transitions:** Encourage higher residential densities to provide market support for economically viable shops, restaurants and other retail uses, as well as more frequent transit service. Focus the highest densities near retail areas – which can be clustered around intersections or along streets – and provide a transition in building scale to surrounding lower density residential areas.
- **Unique Design Guidelines:** Identify current and future sub-areas, and build on their existing character, developing area-specific design guidelines that provide direction on the appearance of buildings and public spaces.



Make Walking, Cycling, and Transit Delightful

Residents will choose to get around by foot, bike, and transit because they will be convenient and enjoyable options in Abbotsford. Along with wheelchair use, walking will be safe, accessible, interesting, and enriching, and it will be the first choice for residents for short trips.

For longer trips, residents will choose to get around by bicycle and/or transit, with both of these options being

seamlessly integrated into the lifestyles of residents of all ages and abilities.

Goods movement and personal vehicles will still be a daily reality in city life during the life of this plan. However, by making walking, biking and transit enjoyable options, Abbotsford will work better for everyone.

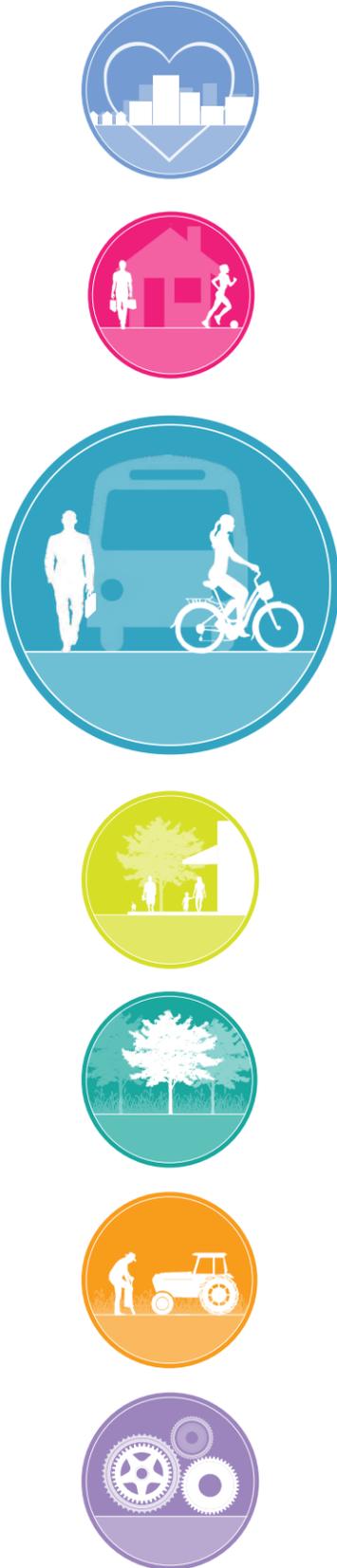
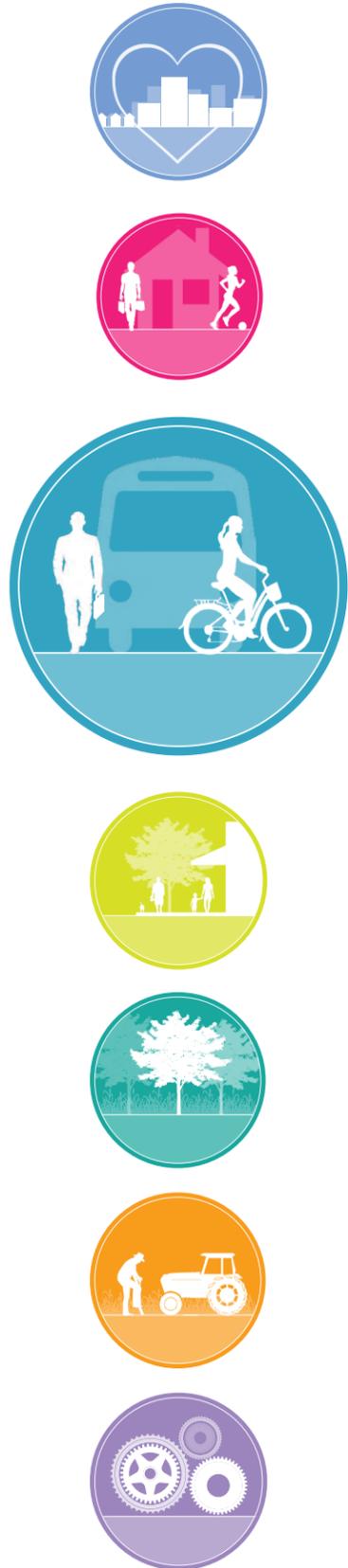


image credit: Flickr user - Carol Green



What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Shorter Distances to Destinations:** Establish a diverse mix of uses within walking distance of homes and jobs, and create connections – particularly in areas with large blocks – by ensuring multiple route options, shorter and more regular blocks, and where larger blocks are unavoidable, mid-block links for pedestrians and cyclists.
- **Walking Environment:** Enhance the walking environment by:
 - » Improving the physical infrastructure of sidewalks so that they are more accessible, continuous, and safe, with minimal interruptions (designed as an extension of the pedestrian environment rather than the street), and frequent public seating;
 - » Providing signage and other visual cues that support people’s ability to find destinations and routes;
 - » Providing consistent boulevard tree plantings, ideally between traffic lanes and sidewalks;
 - » Using street parking to create a comfortable buffer from vehicles, while locating other parking behind buildings, underground, or in multi-level parking structures that are surrounded by other uses;
 - » Supporting “eyes on the street” and creating visually transparent buildings at street level, while placing street-oriented buildings that touch the sidewalk, with recognizable and regularly-spaced entrances; and,
 - » Creating building articulation (or “variation”) on street-facing building faces through a variety of architectural elements and detail that offer visual interest and contribute to the pedestrian-friendly scale of the street.
- **Cycling Environment:** Create an urban network of direct cycling routes, including separated cycling facilities on busy corridors, ideally with physical barriers.
- **Transit Supportive Densities:** Focus transit-friendly residential densities and mixed use developments along transit routes. Support the establishment of comfortable, weather-protected transit stops.



image credit: Flickr user - Paul Krueger



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Design Places for People

Abbotsford will have attractive and interesting public spaces. While pedestrian-friendly buildings will provide the frame for public life, streets and other open spaces such as parks and plazas will provide the stage. Many sidewalks will be filled with people going about their daily lives, walking, lounging, socializing, playing, eating, kissing, shopping,

creating, dancing, exploring, and people-watching. While personal vehicle use will remain a mobility option that is safe and accessible, city streets will be places for people to linger in and love. In urban places, streets will be designed to be best experienced while traveling at the scale and speed of people on foot.





What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **More Destinations, Shorter Distances, and Enhanced Environments for Walking, Cycling, and Transit Use:** Refer to Big Idea: *Make Walking, Cycling and Transit Delightful* for discussion on making streets and other places for people on foot.
- **Sticky Streets and Places to Gather:** Create a mix of uses for places to linger and gather, ranging from libraries to sidewalk cafés.
- **Links to Diverse Open Spaces:** Integrate diverse open spaces – ranging in size and character – along streets, including plazas, pocket parks, and other active and passive parks. These spaces would enable and encourage a broad range of activities, suitable for many different users throughout the day and night.
- **Creative and Cultural Expression:** Support creative and cultural expression in public spaces through public art, heritage elements, informal and formal performance spaces, educational features such as signage, and more.





Foster Natural Beauty

Abbotsford will become both more “city” and more “country”, where the city becomes more urban and the integrity of the country becomes stronger. In the country, Abbotsford’s cherished natural areas will remain intact. Habitat will provide space for wildlife to thrive, recreational areas will provide residents access to nature close to

home, and ecosystems will provide Abbotsford with clean air and water.

Nature will also find its way into the city, with a growing tree canopy and other green and naturalized open spaces.



image credit: Flickr user - climbhigh1001



What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Natural Areas in the Country:** Avoid urban development on steep slopes, intact ecological areas, and in flood plains.
- **Natural Areas in the City:** Plant new trees in boulevards and other green places, embrace integrated storm water management practices, and create new habitat for other species throughout the city.
- **New Development:** Focus new development in existing built-up areas within the Urban Development Boundary, particularly areas where the cost of civic infrastructure and transit service are the lowest.
- **Densities and Land Use Mix:** Focus infill development on increasing residential densities and introducing stronger land use mix in appropriate areas of the city.



Enhance Agricultural Integrity

Abbotsford's agricultural areas – which comprise a long-standing pillar of the local economy and form a vital part of Abbotsford's character – will be protected as places for agricultural production and processing, and of thriving livelihoods.

This rich agricultural identity will also be felt more strongly within urban areas, where community gardens and other forms of agriculture take root, and where local markets and food culture flourish.



image credit: Flickr user - Pats Pics36





What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Agricultural Areas in the Country:** Maintain agricultural areas, support agricultural uses in the Agricultural Land Reserve, and encourage public support for agriculture.
- **Food in the City:** Support the establishment of urban agriculture, ranging from community gardens to edible landscaping and bee-keeping. Strengthen urban-rural agricultural connections by supporting new farm markets and other opportunities that celebrate local food.
- **New Development, Densities and Land Use Mix:** Refer to Big Idea: *Foster Natural Beauty* for discussion on how urban form and land use can support agricultural integrity.



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Make it Work



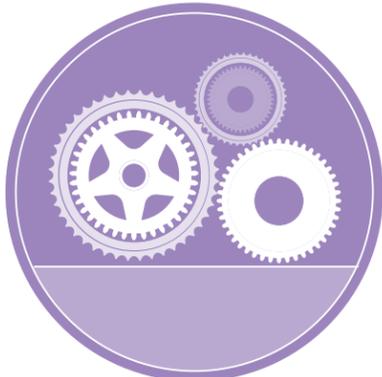
This Plan will reflect a turning point for Abbotsford and will not sit on a shelf collecting dust. Much energy and passion will go into making the Plan real in the face of challenges and tough choices. Implementation, follow-through, consistent commitment, culture change, and capacity-building will all be necessary.

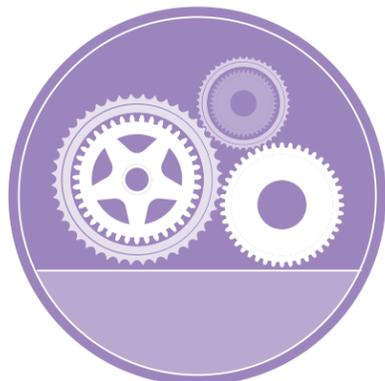
on city-making and a shared definition of success to build the Abbotsford we want. Council, the community, and staff will have better understanding, relationships and communication. When this Plan is challenged, the City will support and follow it.



At the same time, choices about providing services and infrastructure will include “doing the math” about their costs, and will become a part of every-day corporate thinking. Departments will work together with a holistic perspective

Supporting and following the OCP also requires bridging the disconnect between policy and implementation. In some of its first steps after OCP adoption, the City of Abbotsford will update and strengthen the decision-making and regulatory tools to support the effectiveness of the Plan.





What could this mean for OCP policy directions?

- **Implementation Strategy:** Develop a plan that will guide immediate and ongoing OCP implementation.
- **Zoning Bylaw:** Update the Zoning Bylaw and other regulatory documents such as the Development Bylaw to provide prescriptive direction and bring them into alignment with the OCP.
- **Other Plans and Policies:** Update other existing plans and policies to bring them into alignment with the OCP.
- **Catalyst Projects:** Identify capital and pilot projects, and other initiatives to catalyze and support ongoing implementation.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Review Development Cost Charges and identify other financial tools to support infrastructure and other public space investments.
- **Performance Management:** Monitor and evaluate OCP implementation in an ongoing way.



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