

Council approves 2022-2026 Strategic Plan Update

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, City Council approved the updated 2022-2026 Strategic Plan.

The directions identified in the Strategic Plan are the strategic focus for Council and City of Abbotsford staff for the four-year term of City Council 2022-2026. The Strategic Plan is the City's roadmap for the delivery of services, projects and programs. As part of the update for the first year of service delivery, the City Manager advised Council that a number of the priorities identified in the four-year plan have already advanced or been completed.

Completed items include introducing the McKee Neighbourhood Plan and securing funding for the Montrose Transit exchange, which will be completed by the end of the summer, as well as conducting a review of Council Committees. The City also developed Community Amenity Contributions and a Density-Bonus policy as part of the Affordable Housing Strategy and applied for and received \$3 million in federal funding from the Reaching Home Designated Community homelessness program.

Some priorities that saw advancement include the Culture Connect Strategy, Urban Forestry Strategy, Homelessness Action Plan, Affordable Housing Strategy and Intergovernmental Advocacy Strategy. The City also continues to advocate for transit connections to the Skytrain extension to Langley, funding for the Flood Mitigation Strategy and Agritech investment support and opportunities.



Official Community Plan Update moves to Stage 2

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, City Council endorsed the Stage 1 update work completed on the Official Community Plan (OCP) as well as the engagement strategy, and directed staff to begin work on Stage 2.

The OCP is the City's key municipal planning tool and outlines the long-term vision of our community. It is a statement of objectives and policies that guide decisions on municipal planning and land use management, which impact a community's sustainability and resilience. Abbotsford's OCP was last updated in 2016, and the update process is being undertaken as the Abbotsforward2050 project.

Updating the OCP is a priority under Council's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, and will help to meet Council's direction to "ensure development decisions are based on our long-term strategies and are not swayed from our community vision by short-term goals." The province's new housing legislation also prompts OCP changes, and staff's report addressed how the OCP will be in line with those changes as well.

Stage 1 was the Background Research portion. Staff will now proceed to Stage 2, the Explore New Directions phase. The update is expected to take 18 to 24 months to complete, with Dec. 31, 2025 as the legislated deadline.



Council approves UBCM resolution asking for more detox centres in Fraser Health

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, City Council approved a resolution calling on the Province to provide additional rapid access to detox beds in the Fraser Health Region.

In their report, staff noted that despite its size and population, the Fraser Health region only has one publicly-funded facility that offers rapid access to detox. That facility has a total of 24 beds for both youth and adults, the wait times for which act as a barrier for those seeking treatment.

Since the Province has committed to “eliminating gaps in the mental health care and substance use treatment system” and “building an integrated system of care that includes access to a full spectrum of treatment and recovery options,” the resolution asks that the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) lobby the Province to provide more funding to open detox centres in the Fraser Health region.

The resolution will be submitted to the Lower Mainland Local Government Management Association for debate at their annual convention in May. If endorsed, the resolution will be considered at the UBCM’s 2024 convention.



Council receives housing update

On Tuesday, Jan. 30, City staff presented an update to Council related to federal and provincial initiatives aimed at addressing ongoing regional housing challenges.

The report addressed how the City could utilize a grant as part of the federal government’s Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), as well as how the City will be proceeding under some of the new regulations introduced with the provincial Housing Supply Act (HAS) and Housing Statutes Amendment Act (HSAA). The presentation included key changes resulting from these initiatives as well as a timeline for their expected implementation.

The City applied for federal HAF grant funding in June with the aim of adding 737 new units and shorter permit review timelines. The City expects to hear shortly about how much we will receive.

The provincial HAS targets state that Abbotsford must work towards permitting at least 7,240 housing units over the next five years.

The HSAA requires the City to update the Zoning Bylaw to permit property owners to develop up to four units on their lots based on location and size. As per BC Government legislation, public hearings are no longer required when changes are consistent with the Official Community Plan, which will now be reviewed every five years. It also introduced a new tool to collect funds for community amenities like libraries and daycares from new developments that will result in increased population.