

Abbotsford Tech District

Official Community Plan Amendment | May 2023



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1.0 Introduction

The City of Abbotsford is presented with significant challenges related to future growth. Abbotsford continues to be a desirable place to live, and the increasing prevalence of working remotely is accelerating the transfer of young professionals and families to livable cities like Abbotsford. The 2016 Official Community Plan proposes to accommodate over 20,000 new residents within new neighbourhoods outside the urban core, while also striving to preserve valued natural amenities and avoid urban sprawl. The housing affordability crisis is also top of mind, as housing costs continue to rise and housing demand outpaces supply. With new residential growth comes the need for improved community amenities and demand for local jobs to ensure complete communities.

Auguston Town Development Inc. (ATDI) proposes a vision to address these challenges. The Abbotsford Tech District (ATD) vision embraces the concept of “build up, not out” as an opportunity to accommodate growth sustainably within a high-density, mixed-use development. Focusing density in the Tech District will reduce Abbotsford’s future land demand, allowing long-term development to be accommodated within the urban boundary.

This application offers an opportunity to support the City’s growth management objectives through the creation of a dynamic and engaging innovation hub that welcomes the community.

At the same time, reducing the development footprint provides new opportunities to preserve natural areas, pathways and trails, habitat hubs and migration corridors which are vital to the ecological life and natural beauty of Abbotsford. The Abbotsford Tech District design incorporates the preservation of a significant portion of the site area for green, natural space, expanding and protecting natural areas and cementing this area as an outdoor adventure hub for both local users and regional tourism.

On behalf of the property owners, Auguston Town Development Inc. (ATDI), O2 Planning & Design proposes to amend the Abbotsford Official Community Plan (OCP) to enable the future development of a leading-edge mixed-use “live, learn, work, play” complete community. This will position Abbotsford to capture opportunities in the growing innovation sector while fostering sustainable development, affordability, and vibrancy as well as strengthening the local agricultural sector.

In order to enable the proposed development over the next 30-40 years, an Official Community Plan Amendment (OCP) is required to implement the vision for the site. The subject lands are located in north-east Abbotsford within the on the western slope of Sumas Mountain, within the New Neighbourhoods area as identified by the OCP.



2.0 Site Context

The site, herein referred to as the Abbotsford Tech District, comprises approximately 140 acres of land. Most of the site is located south of McKee Road, with approximately 20 acres located on the north side of McKee Road. The site is uniquely positioned approximately 15 minutes by car from Abbotsford City Centre and 6 minutes from Highway 1, with major routes along McKee Road and Sumas Mountain Road, Whatcom Road, Dawson/Straiton Road and Lower Sumas Road. The proposed development will be accessed from McKee Road and Sumas Mountain Road.

The Abbotsford Transportation Master Plan identifies future infrastructure upgrades between McKee Road and George Ferguson Way, future cycling infrastructure on McKee Road and Whatcom Road increasing connectivity to the McKee Neighbourhood and strengthening active mobility in the area. In 2021, the province began the Fraser Valley Highway 1 Corridor Improvement program, committed to investing improvements along Highway 1 as far east as Whatcom Road by 2026. Intensification near Highway 1 will benefit from future investment to enhance travel time and reliability as Abbotsford continues to grow.

The surrounding area is characterized by the growing residential community of Auguston, suburban residential development to west and southwest, and industrial operations to the east including Transmountain Sumas and mining/aggregate extraction.

The site is also surrounded by exceptional open space and has access to formal and informal trails such as McKee Peak Trail, Bassani Trail, Lower Sumas Mountain Park, Frog Lake, Auguston Stairs and McKee Creek Park. These amenities support local and international communities of avid walkers, mountain bikers, dog walkers and residents who actively enjoy the outdoors and the beauty of McKee Peak.

Portions of the subject lands are identified as 'City Park' and 'Potential Future Park' within the Abbotsford Official Community Plan (OCP).



ABBOTSFORD TECH DISTRICT

Figure 1: Aerial Context Map

3.0 Site History and Land Use

3.1 Existing Land Use and Site History

The site is part of a wider Master Plan established in 2007 which built upon a master development agreement signed in 1994. The overall site plan encompassed twenty-one (21) phases of gradual development, nine (9) phases of which have been constructed to date comprising the community of Auguston. Throughout the Master Plan process, the entirety of the site was designated with various land uses, enabling future development on the entire parcel.

The subject lands proposed are currently designated:

- “Neighbourhood Centre”** - a mixture of residential with commercial uses at grade, traditionally limited to 4 storeys at a density of 0.70-1.5 FAR with a commercial retail unit maximum of 4,000m2.
- “Urban 2- Ground Oriented”** - Multi-family housing to support mixed use centres and/or to serve as transition areas near single-detached neighbourhoods. This designation permits ground-oriented row-houses or townhouses to a maximum of 3 storeys. Large sites of 1 Hectare (Ha) or greater may incorporate multi storey buildings up to 4 storeys. The permitted density ranges 0.5 to 1.5 FSR.
- “Urban 4-Detached”** - low density single detached housing in neighbourhoods. Large sites of 1 Ha or greater may incorporate ground-oriented buildings up to 3 storeys. Density is restricted to a maximum of 25 units per hectare.
- “Open Space”** - recreational uses and outbuildings to provide active and passive uses.
- In addition, the area is identified with a **“New Neighbourhood Overlay”** and planned to absorb a projected 25% of growth planned in Abbotsford.

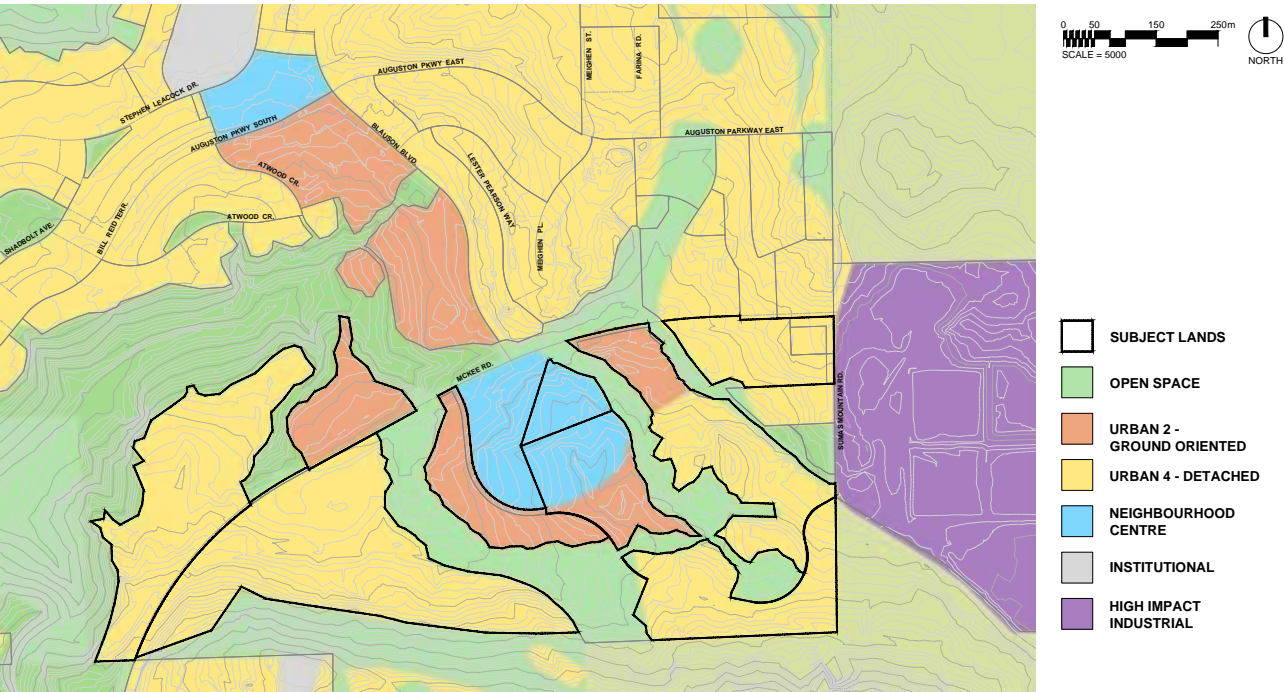


Figure 2: Official Community Plan Land Use Map

3.2 McKee Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

The subject site is located within the boundary of the McKee Neighbourhood Plan (NP), a City-initiated plan which is currently being reviewed by Council. The City of Abbotsford has undertaken a comprehensive review planned over four stages to create the draft plan.

On March 6, 2023, the draft Neighbourhood Plan was presented to Council at Public Hearing, and members of the public provided input on the application. Due to a clerical error in the proceedings at first and second reading, Council was required to repeal these initial readings on March 27, 2023 and review whether the plan requires any revisions based on feedback provided before being reintroduced for first and second readings.

The McKee Neighbourhood Plan is intended to plan for a significant proportion of new growth in Abbotsford. The draft plan establishes a vision for a new residential community anchored by a neighbourhood centre connected by various active and passive trails, parks and open spaces. The McKee Neighbourhood Plan envisions the Abbotsford Tech District lands as an “adventure hub” centred around McKee Village.

Within the draft Neighbourhood Plan, McKee Village is described as a vibrant, commercial hub anchored by a future transit terminus to facilitate recreation and tourism on McKee Peak. The village designation supports multi-family development up to 6 storeys. The Neighbourhood Plan proposes intensification along major arterial roads planned for infrastructure investment to support increased volumes of traffic and multi-modal options.

The remainder of the plan area proposes open space development to support trail development, encouraging active travel and recreation.

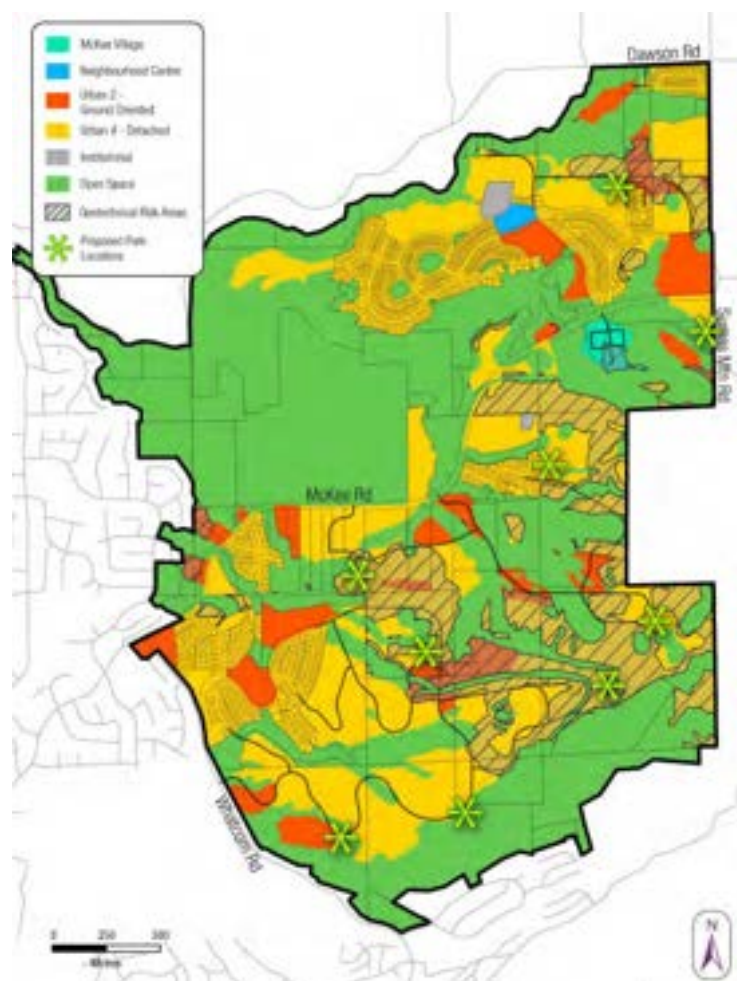


Figure 3: McKee Neighbourhood Plan

4.0 OCP Amendment Rationale

4.1 A New Vision for the Tech District

Although Auguston Town Development Inc. (ATDI) supports portions of the vision within the proposed McKee Neighbourhood Plan, including the concept of Abbotsford as a hub for outdoor adventure, ATDI have previously expressed opposition to the plan based on a lack of consultation and perceived misalignment with the vision for the ATD lands.

Should the McKee Neighbourhood Plan be approved by Council, it would apply land use provisions and policies to the ATD lands which are not aligned with ATDI's vision for the Tech District. Previous efforts to integrate the vision for Abbotsford Tech District into the McKee Neighbourhood Plan have been unsuccessful. In truth, the vision for ATD goes beyond the scope of what is achievable within the McKee Neighbourhood Plan in its current form.

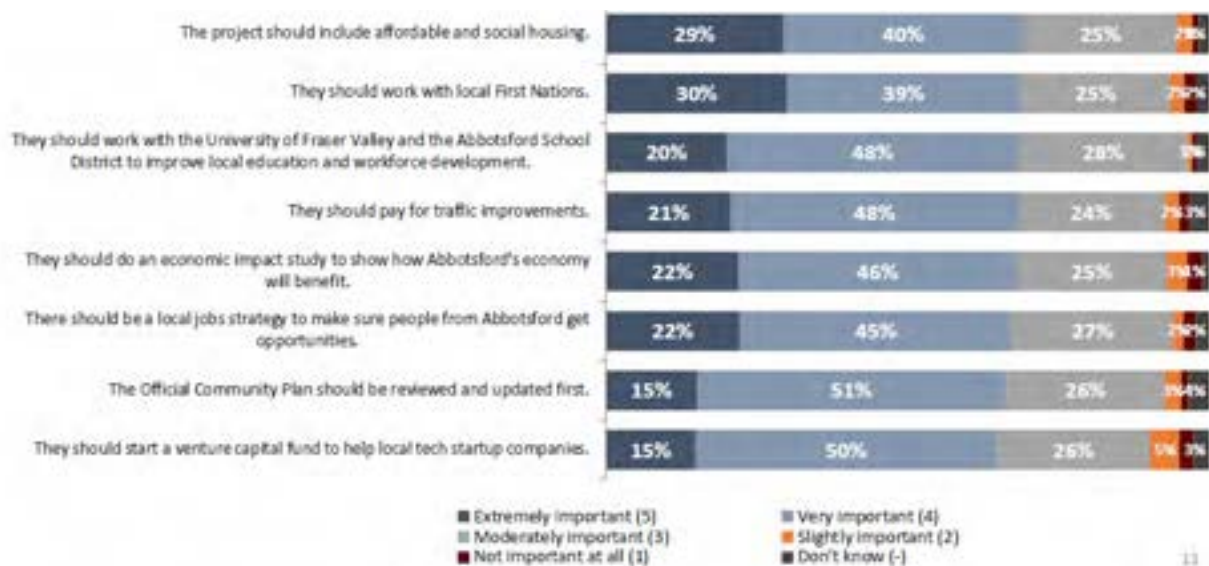
The ATD lands present a unique opportunity for Abbotsford to grow and define itself through more than just urban sprawl. Since the original development agreement in 1994, the vision for Abbotsford's future has evolved dramatically to prioritize densification and we believe the plan for this site should reflect this evolution. In order to allow this vision to be explored and enacted, an OCP amendment is required to transform the existing suburban land uses (and those currently being considered in the McKee Neighbourhood Plan) and allows for sustainable, innovative and high-density mixed-use development.

Therefore, this OCP Amendment seeks to remove the affected lands from the McKee Neighbourhood Plan and establish a new vision through a developer-led application process. ATDI intends to work with stakeholders and the City to refine the vision for the Tech District to the benefit of all Abbotsford. ATDI intends to work with stakeholders and the City to refine the vision for the Tech District to the benefit of all Abbotsford.

4.2 Public Perception of ATD

Alongside extensive public and stakeholder engagement and communications, ATDI has commissioned several rounds of professional third party opinion research over the last 3 years in order to shape our Abbotsford Tech District concept and better understand grassroots community support, priorities, concerns, and project approval parameters. This opinion research (included as Appendix A to this document) revealed the following:

- Public opinion support for the vision for ATD is consistently over 50%, with opposition below 10% and approximately 35% undecided
- When respondents were provided with more information about the project, they were significantly more likely to support the vision for ATD
- A majority of respondents agreed with key vision statements for ATD
- Respondents agreed that economic and community benefits are key (see below)



4.3 Economic Drivers

Creating a new mixed-use innovation hub presents several economic benefits for British Columbia, the City of Abbotsford, the University of the Fraser Valley as core academic partner, and the McKee Neighbourhood area of Abbotsford. The proposed Tech District is located on the largest non-agricultural land available in Abbotsford, creating an opportunity to locate population and employment growth in the McKee Neighbourhood area, while enabling research, commercialization, and diffusion of innovations into the agricultural sector through uses of land and space that cannot be achieved on Agricultural Land Reserve.

The current shift towards knowledge-based activities creates a demand for employment hubs like the Tech District to attract large employers and world class researchers to generate the critical mass required to support economic activities at a scale that will elevate the Fraser Valley Region. The creation of mixed-use hubs and high-density residential development has been shown to boost property values in the surrounding area, demonstrating the area is a desirable place to live.

Private investment into a community sends a message to existing and future residents that the high-density mixed-use area is an attractive place to live, work and play. Proximity to retail shops and residential property value has been shown to positively benefit a community, supporting the needs of diverse people at various stages of life. The proposed Abbotsford Tech District will increase the reputation of Abbotsford as an attractive place to live, work and play while boosting the livability of Abbotsford. It will also strengthen Abbotsford's position as a provider of food security to BC and beyond.

The Abbotsford Tech District creates an economic cluster: a concentration of similar education and research organizations, companies, and industries which collectively benefit from skilled labor where a greater depth of knowledge and skill is required. Connecting with complementary economic clusters, such as the SFU-linked BC Centre for Agritech Innovation in the City of Surrey and existing or envisioned innovation hubs in Vancouver, the Okanagan, and on Vancouver Island can contribute to transferring knowledge and processes from other industries. Existing connectivity via the Trans-Canada Highway creates an opportunity to create a

Fraser Valley economic corridor to drive innovation and productivity. ATDI has previously commissioned supporting reports to demonstrate these economic impacts; an Economic Implications Study demonstrating more jobs and opportunities as well as increased property values, and a Fiscal Impact Study demonstrating that under all scenarios contemplated, the Tech District can be developed at no additional cost to taxpayers.

The Tech District focuses on agritech, aerospace and other clean-tech, creating a significant and complementary economic cluster to stimulate the BC economy. Access to economic clusters can provide an economic benefit for municipalities by generating revenue through property taxes and development fees, offsetting the up-front capital costs of funding infrastructure improvements and maintenance. Communities like Kitchener-Waterloo, Ottawa, Kanata, Brampton, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Austin and Houston in Texas have all experienced the benefits of economic clusters, experiencing population and employment growth, increased contributions to GDP and fostering a reputation as thriving, engaging cities.

The proposed Abbotsford Tech District represents a strategic asset to improve the competitiveness of existing and new firms within the City and Region on the international stage. The proposed development can provide benefit to local stakeholders, residents and businesses: increasing employment opportunities, increasing customer base and generally more economic activity in the area. The mixed-use component of the site will provide the holistic community required to attract future talent, create a complete community and nurture key economic sectors to help prosperity.

Working with University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) as the core academic partner of ATD will strengthen the university in terms of education, research, and economic impact by having select spaces, programs, and partnerships located in and around the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security, adjacent to and integrated with industry and community, at significantly reduced capital and operating cost to the University of Fraser Valley.

5.0 Development Vision

The site's vision is focused on the creation of the Abbotsford Tech District ('ATD'), a new regional innovation hub inclusive of mixed-use development designed around principles of sustainability, affordability, and innovation to contribute to the creation of a complete, healthy community. To implement the vision for the site, six guiding principles were established to ensure the ATD reflects the goals and objectives established in the Abbotsford Official Community Plan:

CREATE A NEW REGIONAL INNOVATION CENTRE

Intended to create a new innovation centre in the heart of the Fraser Valley, generating significant population and economic growth for the region.

The Abbotsford Tech District will help the City grow into a smart city and support innovation and productivity in the local agricultural and food sectors. Furthermore, the proposal sets out the vision for the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security, a centre for teaching, research and commercial innovation.

EMPHASIZE SUSTAINABILITY

The Tech District is committed to best practices in sustainability. Features such as green roofs and balconies, passive design, state-of-the-art water conservation, and the use of local materials will ensure that this commitment is reflected throughout the development. The development and diffusion of commercial and agricultural innovations will also contribute to sustainable futures for the region.

BRING ADDITIONAL VIBRANCY TO ABBOTSFORD

The growth and dynamism generated by the Tech District will contribute to a more vibrant downtown core. The Tech District will attract new residents who enjoy urban living and many will choose to live, shop, and dine, and seek entertainment downtown. This, along with increased investment and tourism visits resulting from Abbotsford Tech District, will benefit downtown businesses and contribute to a vibrant public realm.

DEVELOP A COMPLETE, MIXED-USE COMMUNITY

Abbotsford Tech District will be a complete and mixed-use complete community that complements Abbotsford's other Mixed Use Centres while presenting a draw for people interested in innovation and entrepreneurship.

CAPITALIZE ON EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING TRENDS

With a focus on attracting millennials and young families, the Tech District intends to capitalize on employment and housing trends. Millennials are drawn towards innovation sector jobs and compact, urban living. More recently, the ability to work from anywhere draws new residents away from urban centres and into amenity-rich communities like Abbotsford.

The Tech District will meet this growing demand, contributing to affordability and the ability of young people to stay, access high quality education, and build their lives and careers in Abbotsford.

FOCUS ON QUALITY OF LIFE

A central focus of the Abbotsford Tech District is enabling residents to work hard and play hard. Natural areas, trails, parks, recreation, and cultural amenities, in addition to the community's idyllic setting, will provide residents with a fantastic quality of life, seamlessly integrating with the City's vision of the McKee Neighbourhood as a hub for outdoor adventure.

6.0 Proposed Land Use

This application seeks to amend the Abbotsford Official Community Plan (OCP) to designate the subject lands to a new land use category, “Mixed Use Innovation Centre” to support the mixed-use tech district. This designation will enable a mix of multi-family and commercial uses that offers city wide appeal while serving surrounding neighbourhoods. The proposed land use adds employment and educational uses and will allow for increased development density of 3.2 Floor Space Ratio (FSR) on the ATD lands.

We believe this approach is compatible with the broad vision of the OCP and the draft McKee Neighbourhood Plan, but more fully embraces the required commitment to focused intensification (“build up not out”) required to support sustainable development and economic growth for Abbotsford’s future. The redesignation will respond to the needs of Abbotsford by including a variety of available uses to support a complete community that is walkable, affordable, and built around a resident lifecycle that will support a feeling of community.

Designation	Purpose and Description	Building Type and Height	Uses	Density
Mixed Use Innovation Centre	<p>Enable the development of a mixed-use complete community complementing the growing City Centre.</p> <p>Serve as a major hub for employment, education and innovation.</p>	Multi-storey buildings including low, mid, and high rises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed Use Multi-unit Residential Office Retail Institutional 	1.0 to 3.2 FSR

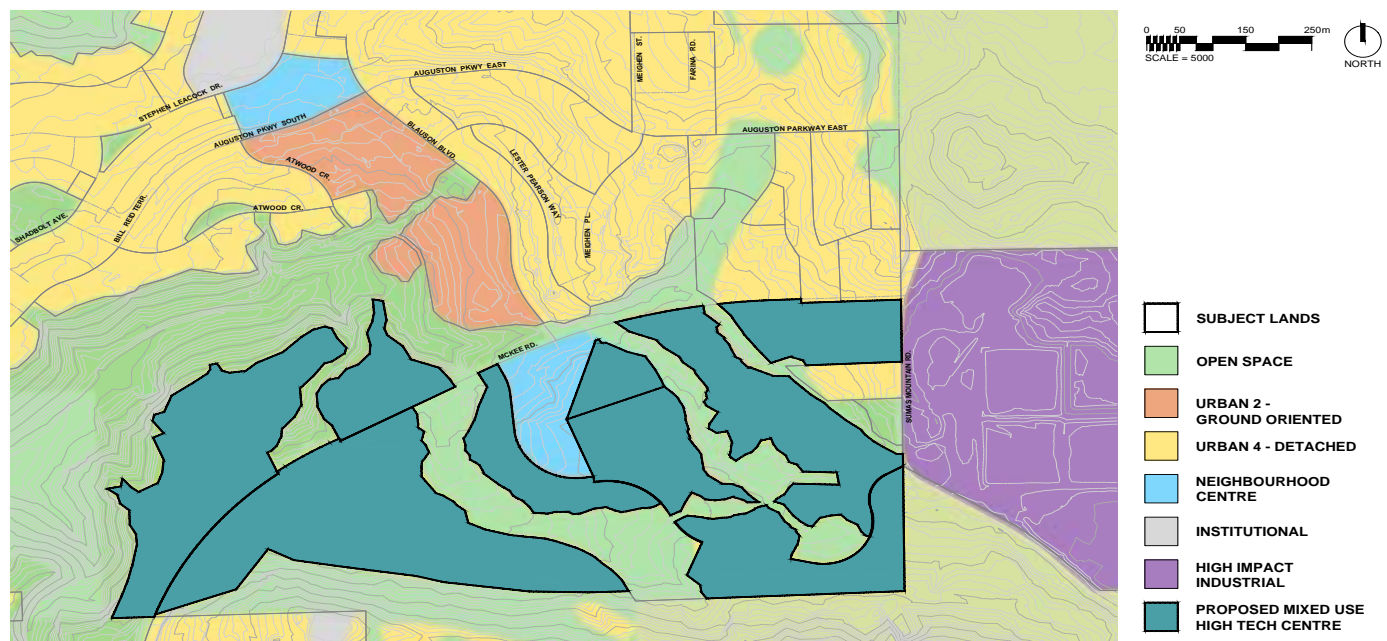


Figure 4: Proposed Land Use Amendment

7.0 Policy Alignment

7.1 Official Community Plan (OCP) - “Abbotsforward” & 7 Big Ideas (2016)

The City of Abbotsford Official Community Plan (OCP), commonly referred to as “Abbotsforward” was created in 2016 to respond to future growth targets which plan for 200,000 residents by 2040. The City’s Strategic Plan for the current term of Council called for a review of the OCP. The City created Seven ‘Big Ideas’ based around a vision which emphasizes mixed use and complete communities regardless of the neighbourhood size or district.



The 7 Big Ideas are intended to provide the most essential and transformative components of the Plan, setting the stage for the City of Abbotsford to achieve its vision. The City of Abbotsford OCP presents a vision for Abbotsford as a city comprised of distinct and complete neighbourhoods, anchored by a vibrant City Centre which fuels the economic and cultural heart of the area.

The vision emphasizes modal choice for accessing the city, including safe and accessible cycling, pedestrian opportunities, and reliable public transit. With a focus on compact, complete, and distinct communities, the intent is so “residents can work, and enjoy amenities and services such as cafes, shops, schools, and parks nearby, often within walking distance of home” (Part 3, p.2).

The preservation and enhancement of agriculture will remain a vital role in the economy, as a foundational industry of the Abbotsford community. A focus on sustainability will support the preservation of natural spaces and systems, including the protection of water quality, air quality and natural wildlife.

7.2 Alignment with the Aspirations of the Official Community Plan (OCP)



Create a City Centre

The OCP has focused efforts on directing the highest amount of growth to the City Centre. The subject lands are identified as a 'Neighbourhood Centre' with a 'New Neighbourhood' overlay, a designation planned to absorb over 15,000 new residents. In order to accommodate this growth additional land is required, particularly if growth occurs in low-density suburban style development. The Abbotsford Tech District (ATD) site represents approximately 140 acres located within the urban boundary with the potential to support the addition of new residents and jobs over the next 30-40 years.

Traditionally the highest residential density is encouraged in the City Centre, as the key location capable of supporting high rise residential built form (Policy 3.2). Public engagement conducted to prepare the OCP identified the lack of integrated land uses near residential areas aside from the Downtown Core (Part 1, p. 4). In response to this, and to accommodate increased growth planned for the City of Abbotsford, the proposed tech district will accommodate residential intensification and a mixture of land uses (Policy 2.9). The increased permitted density will result in a more compact urban form that is sustainable and suitable for accommodating significant growth. The proposed mixed-use built form will reduce distances to destinations, locating daily amenities within walking distance of the community (Policy 3.6).

Successful tech districts, or "innovation centres", tend to be established through a focused campus-style format, providing institutional, research-based locations in proximity to technology and creative industries. It is rarely practical for them to be located in downtown cores. The proposed development will provide a location to attract innovative, creative industries to locate in Abbotsford. The creation of an innovation hub will foster a culture of growth and innovation that attracts people and tourism. The hub will ultimately support the City Centre, creating a sustainable east/west link between the two activity hubs, increasing long term revenue for the City, and supporting demand for improved transportation infrastructure, tourism and economic development.



Land Use and Complete Communities

The OCP focuses on key principles which support the creation of vibrant, healthy communities. The proposed Abbotsford Tech District aims to develop a complete Mixed-Use Community in recognition of the vital role mixed use areas play to maintain distinct and complete neighbourhoods (Policy 2.7). The proposed residential and mixed use development incorporated into the innovation hub will contribute to the development of a complete and self-sufficient community.

The proposed OCP Amendment will re-designate the site to 'mixed-use innovation centre', implementing the City's vision of mixed-use centres. Amenities, employment and recreation space within close proximity will "focus on work life balance" and holistically integrate the site contributing to "increased quality of life". Amenities for residents will be accessible via transit, walking or cycling, prioritizing people over cars (Policy 3.1). Pedestrian pathways will be designed to be continuous to increase safety, accessibility, and enjoyment (Policy 3.7). The increased population and employment to this area will contribute to increasing demand for additional public transit to the community, providing an improved connection to the Downtown Core (Policy 3.15). Where possible, parking will be underground ensuring the site can provide an abundance of public spaces, parks, trails and natural elements (NP Policy MV16).



Make Walking, Biking, and Transit Delightful

The Abbotsford Tech District is uniquely positioned near well-utilized natural space which can be enhanced through mindful growth and benefit from developer-provided investment to enhance the active infrastructure network. The development vision proposes a variety of parkland and open space to support diverse recreational programming and service the surrounding neighbourhoods. Diversifying park spaces and uses will support an interconnected network of open space, creating linkages throughout the community to different passive and active forms of space (Policy 5.1).

At a Neighbourhood Level, the preservation of a significant proportion of the subject site as green natural space will provide additional land to support trail development, improving connections and encouraging active travel to existing formal and informal trails and future infrastructure upgrades along McKee Road. Maintaining, preserving, and enhancing existing trails will support a range of mobility and activity levels (Policy 3.57, 3.58 & 3.65), encouraging multi-use recreation for all ages and abilities. Trail amenities such as bike washing stations, picnic benches, trail maintenance and way-finding represent positive investments in active infrastructure which will attract residents to the area and support local use and regional tourism (3.60, 3.61, 3.62, 3.63).



Improve Natural and Built Systems

Access to open space and recreational opportunities has become even more vital and important than ever to prospective residents and visitors, particularly those who come to Abbotsford seeking a family-friendly lifestyle. Providing open space which is purposeful and accessible to all will contribute to the creation of complete, healthy communities and “emphasize sustainability”.

The Abbotsford Tech District design incorporates the preservation of land for green, natural space, expanding and protecting natural areas, supporting air quality and reducing carbon emissions enhancing the tree canopy (Policy 5.2 & 5.11). The remaining portion of the site will embody a mixed-use built form, integrating urban parks through plazas and boulevard tree strips to beautify the community (Policy 4.2 & 4.3). Proposed park and recreational space within the Abbotsford Tech District will be designed to protect and maintain vital ecosystems, enhance the tree canopy and create new green space connections and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Envisioned as a community with an emphasis on quality of life, the Tech District strives to support a diverse population and attract a variety of individuals of varying abilities, ages, cultures and stages of life. Therefore, the proposed open space will be implemented with the vision to support a variety of cultural activities, providing space to program events and services which are inclusive and accessible for all (Policy 4.9). Open spaces within the community can be utilized for seasonal markets and spillover space for cafes and restaurants to foster a sense of place and community participation (Policy 4.18). In addition, services and amenities which provide opportunities for engagement will bring together older adults and help them remain engaged in the community and be active (Policy 4.17). Public Art will be incorporated through art installations in public plazas and on buildings and greenways to encourage cultural expression. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) will be implemented to ensure a uniform approach to the design of public spaces to increase safety (Policy 4.6).



Make Places for People

The Tech District will strive to be inclusive of all people and their diverse needs by creating places which support a vibrant community. The proposed site design will encourage a variety of amenities, programming, and services to promote residents of all ages and abilities to engage in their community, public life and employment (Policy 4.15). Opportunities for cultural and educational events and facilities will actively build a culture of tolerance and nurture a knowledgeable workforce.

Residential land uses will provide variety in built form and tenure to attract individuals at different income levels and stages of life (Policy 2.1 and 2.2). At least 20% of housing is proposed as “affordable”, consistent with the City of Abbotsford’s desire to increase affordable housing in the City. The Abbotsford Tech District will include family friendly amenities such as shared daycares, amenities, ample park space and public amenities, supporting family friendly development. Mixing residential typologies will contribute to integrating the community with different demographic groups, allowing older adults to ‘age in place’ and encourage families to consider smaller and more sustainable housing options.

The introduction of the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security will enable student style housing, allowing young people to live on campus while participating in educational internships or support new employees through on-site accommodation. Intensification through the tech district will provide housing for individuals of all life stages, creating a distinct and dynamic neighbourhood with an ongoing sense of community.

With approximately 15 minutes by car to the City Centre, adjacent east- Abbotsford communities will benefit from gaining access to a variety of recreational, commercial, and educational amenities not currently available in this part of the City. Therefore, the proposed Abbotsford Tech District is supportive and conforms to the existing Parks, Recreation and Cultural policies outlined in the OCP. Furthermore, with compact urban development, residents are more likely to spend time out in their community, participating in civic events and interacting with neighbours. Residents share information with one another, creating connections and relationships that can ultimately contribute to address community issues in partnership with local non-profit organizations.



Enhance Agricultural Integrity

Abbotsford is a community with deep agricultural roots and a cornerstone agriculture and food sector. The Abbotsford Tech District vision is to support Abbotsford to a vibrant future, recognizing agriculture as a key industry vital to the City’s character and economic vitality. The OCP supports the advancement of the agricultural industry, encouraging innovation and supporting value-added businesses in appropriate locations (Policy 6.3). Through the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security, the Abbotsford Tech District will be the catalyst to support and encourage an innovative and sustainable agricultural future. The proposed multi-million dollar investment will create 60,000+ square feet of dedicated innovation space that reflects global best practices. This space will be designed to incorporate co-working space, a university-industry liaison office, teaching and learning spaces, labs, messy collaborative spaces, kitchens and professional services to accelerate the BC Agritech sector.

Opportunities for new on-site farming methods such as hydroponics and aeroponics will advance agricultural research and best practices and contribute to developing the local food industry (Policy 6.4 & 6.6). Opportunities to share the benefits of local agricultural production will be implemented in the Tech District, including through farmers markets, to stimulate the ongoing knowledge of agricultural production in Abbotsford and emphasize sustainable living.



Make the Plan Work

Recently, the Agricultural Land Commission declined to designate 497 acres of Agricultural Land Reserve for industrial use, therefore ensuring that future employment land will need to be located within the existing urban boundary. The Abbotsford Tech District is located within the existing urban boundary, and further identified as a ‘new neighbourhood’ within the 2016 OCP, planned to absorb approximately 25% of new growth in Abbotsford (Part II 1-3).

There is an incredible opportunity to capture job growth within the industrial innovation sector, BC’s fastest-growing and most profitable industry. If successful, this could place Abbotsford in line with other major British Columbia municipalities such as Vancouver, Victoria, and Kelowna, raising average incomes and the overall standard of living. The following sections outline the merits of the proposed development as they relate to the guiding principles and ‘Seven Big Ideas’ of the Abbotsford OCP. The City’s vision is further implemented through several key aspirations providing additional context to how future development should align and contribute to enhancing the City of Abbotsford.

This proposal also aligns with Policy 4.29 International Marketing, which speaks to positioning Abbotsford as a destination for global business, showcasing Abbotsford as the most ideally positioned community for investment within the Lower Mainland. Creating a hub of technology-related employers and institutions on the same site provides a catalyst for spreading knowledge, creating opportunities for collaboration, and establishing a critical mass of activity. The proposed innovation hub will incorporate the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security to support the expansion and upskilling of the agricultural industry and create a collaborative environment to share ideas, equipment, and resources (Policy 4.24). Technological industry advancement will contribute to developing Abbotsford as an innovation hub, branding the new community as a place of creativity and leading-edge technology (Policy 4.25). Industries such as agriculture, research, academia, aerospace, AI, robotics, advanced manufacturing, venture capital, and others will be encouraged to locate in the Tech District.

The site is appropriately situated to attract significant growth and innovation in close proximity to Abbotsford’s Downtown Area, establishing a second activity centre in a location capable to absorb growth. Investment in this area will “bring additional vibrancy to Downtown Abbotsford”, boosting tourism through future development and benefiting of nearby businesses. Furthermore, due to the proximity of the Abbotsford International Airport, the Abbotsford Tech District can be marketed as a desired global hub investment and opportunity, located in a livable community in the Lower Mainland (Policy 4.29). Locating quality professional employment within a self-contained community “capitalizes on employment and housing trends”, locating employment near one’s home, reducing commute times (Policy 4.21).

Therefore, the proposed innovation centre will create a new regional innovation hub in a location capable of absorbing growth and achieving the OCP guiding principles, aspirations and Seven Big Ideas.

7.3 Key Aspirations

The City's vision is further implemented through several key aspirations providing additional context to how future development should align and contribute to enhancing the City of Abbotsford. The key aspirations are:

WALKABLE, BUSTLING NEIGHBOURHOODS

Aspiration: Increasing the proximity to shops, destinations, employment and gathering spaces etc. in proximity to one's home to support an interconnected community.

Our Response: The Tech District will be designed to access daily needs by walking, including between work, home, and commercial and recreational options. Currently, East Abbotsford is isolated from the rest of the community. Development in this area at the proposed scale will intensify the east side of the City and enhance the walkability gaps and access to active travel.

NATURAL AREAS AND TRAILS

Aspiration: Available natural areas which are protected, improve air and water quality and improve each year.

Our Response: Large portions of the site will be preserved and protected as green space, available for recreation, trails and natural areas. In addition, this site is uniquely situated to become an anchor for the greenbelt that is starting to take shape to the north of Downtown Abbotsford. The site has an opportunity to balance the built and natural environment and provide additional natural amenities to support active and passive recreation, mental health and nature enthusiasts. Auguston is committed to helping preserve, maintain, and enhance trails in a natural setting, and will work closely with stakeholders and the City to achieve this.



HOUSING OPTIONS

Aspiration: Abbotsford as a location with affordable ownership, rental and shelter housing options which support a variety of individuals at varying stages of life.

Our Response: ATD has the potential to provide student-style housing to attract young people studying or working onsite, at the University of the Fraser Valley campus, or in aerospace education and training. Student-style housing can also support recent graduates looking to enter the work force or in their first jobs. The Abbotsford Tech District will diversify the Abbotsford housing stock including providing some of the first high density affordable multi-residential options located outside of the City Centre. In addition, it is anticipated that at least 20% of housing provided will be considered 'affordable', to mitigate the rising cost of housing within the Fraser Valley. Residents of the Abbotsford Tech District can 'age in place' with access to a full range of housing options as they age and as their lifestyle and family needs change.

COMPACT CITY

Aspiration: Responding to growth through vertical development versus horizontal development. Abbotsford respects the character of its neighbourhoods as they grow and change.

Our Response: The site is envisioned for compact, sustainable living, supported with higher-density built form and increased connectivity beyond a traditional neighbourhood. Focusing density in areas supported by infrastructure contributes to the preservation of natural areas, habitat hubs and migration corridors which are vital to the ecological life and natural beauty of Abbotsford. By building 'up not out', Abbotsford can reduce its land demand for new growth while also obtaining valuable community contributions from development which can support environmental preservation and the improvement of community recreation amenities. The proposed residential and employment base anticipated in the Tech District will support the community as it grows sustainability. Future growth will be located within the urban boundary to preserve the adjacent Agricultural Land Reserve.

LIFE IN THE CITY

Aspiration: As Abbotsford grows, the City has more options for entertainment, culture, recreation to support and enhance the night life, public life and spaces for gathering.

Our Response: The proposed development will incorporate parks, recreation, and cultural amenities into the broader Auguston neighbourhood. The Abbotsford Tech District will offer an amenity hub outside the downtown core, giving this neighbourhood a unique and vibrant identity.

CITY CENTRE

Aspiration: The development of a true City Centre as the heart of public, economic, and cultural life yet a successful and complete urban neighbourhood

Our Response: The estimated growth and development created as a result of the Tech District will strengthen the economic stature of the City Centre and elevate the City as an economic stronghold. Future development and improved transportation connections will create a sustainable connection between the two activity centres and other nearby mixed-use centres such as Historic Downtown or McCallum Village.

MILL LAKE

Aspiration: Maintaining and preserving this destination as part of the City's identity.

Our Response: The significance of Mill Lake will continue as an important landmark in Abbotsford. The growth, investment, and tourism generated through the Abbotsford Tech District will enhance the tourism sector and add vibrancy to the City.

JOBS

Aspiration: Abbotsford as a City which expands their employment base and seeks opportunities to enhance their economy, building on existing strengths to support shorter commute times and provide employment within an urban area.

Our Response: The creation of an innovation hub will result in a variety of employment opportunities, including thousands of new local jobs with no or low commute times. The increase in institutional and technology-based employment will diversify the employment base and spread employment and economic benefit throughout the City, including by building on Abbotsford's existing strength in the agriculture and food sector. Access to diverse employment opportunities will support individuals at various stages of one's professional life without re-location requirements or housing affordability constraints.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

Aspiration: Access to safe, reliable forms of transportation which support movement throughout the City, options for walking, cycling and transit should be available.

Our Response: The Tech District is focused on increasing access and usage of transportation demand management to minimize single occupancy vehicles as much as possible. Alternative active transportation options such as walking, cycling and e-bikes will be anticipated, increasing transportation choice and supporting movement throughout the new community. Implementation of car-sharing and increasing transportation infrastructure to respond to demand will encourage transit usage and contribute to the walkable urban community envisioned for the site. Preserving, maintaining, and enhancing trails will serve as an appealing inducement toward active travel.



AGRICULTURE

Aspiration: Celebrating the agricultural history and future of the City as a key component to the economy and preservation of the past.

Our Response: The proposed development is located within the urban boundary, adjacent to the existing Agricultural Land Reserve to the north and east. The proposed Tech District will support the preservation of the Agricultural Land Reserve and create opportunities through agricultural research and innovation via the B.L. Au Centre for Innovation and Food Security to support entrepreneurs and experienced farmers, strengthening Abbotsford's agricultural legacy now and into the future. The creation of an indoor research and commercialization facility will enable agri-education and research which can then implement emerging agri-technologies on existing agricultural land, support local farmers, and expand the agriculture sector.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS

Aspiration: Collectively conserving resources and looking for ways to reduce greenhouse gases and optimize open space, infrastructure, housing and transportation to increase efficiencies.

Our Response: The Abbotsford Tech District will contribute to increasing efficiency as access to community amenities will be closer and readily available via multiple modes of travel (pedestrian, public transit and cycling). The proximity to various commercial, residential and employment uses will contribute to reducing automobile related emissions. As the eastern development along the edge of the Urban Boundary, the Abbotsford Tech District will contribute appropriate density to Abbotsford in a sustainable manner. The Tech District's role in developing and disseminating innovations in sustainable agriculture will also contribute to reducing greenhouse gases in Abbotsford.



7.4 Transportation Master Plan (TMP)

The subject lands are currently accessed predominantly by vehicle, with available Bus route No. 15 located in proximity to the site. Available cycling and pedestrian infrastructure are limited in the area. By contrast, the proposed development includes the creation of walkable, complete communities planned to support active travel and reduce the requirement to commute to work or school. The Transportation Master Plan identifies several goals aimed at increasing travel options for all, with a strong emphasis on improving access to transit to support the City's economy (Goal # 2).

The proposed development seeks to maintain large areas of existing natural features on the site. Therefore, there is opportunity to increase walking and cycling opportunities to "create places for people" and improve pedestrian connections to interesting public places (Section 4.1.2.a). The implementation of residential built form and mixed-use development will support an integrated approach to implementing future transit development, including extending the existing cycling lane currently located on McKee Road (Section 4.2.2.a). Furthermore, the location of several sustainable and leading-edge industries will promote efficient and sustainability focused modes of travel within the community.

While a complete community with local jobs is intended to reduce commuting, it is anticipated future intensification in this area will require additional public transit infrastructure to support the demand. Some of the public transit options as well as widening of road networks will be made available by Auguston Town Development Inc. As a result, the proposed development strives to promote public transit usage and enhance the existing network (Policy 4.3.1.a).

There are opportunities to capitalize on previous dedications of land and funding from Auguston to the City, including over 15 acres of park space, 91 acres of non-developable open space and \$1.17M to support parks and trail development. The proposed development is consistent with the City's strategic transportation goals, encouraging active modes of travel and increasing the public transit network to reduce single occupancy trips.

8.0 Conclusion

There is an opportunity to develop a self-contained mixed-use complete community east of Abbotsford City Centre. The site, located within the ATDI lands, is envisioned as an innovation hub providing leading-edge technology and innovation to support the growth and development of the information technology and agritech sector in British Columbia, accompanied by affordable and student housing. To implement the vision, an amendment to the Official Community Plan (OCP) is required to designate the subject lands to a new land use designation “Mixed-Use Innovation Centre” to support the creation of the mixed-use community. A mixture of residential, commercial, office, institutional and employment lands are planned for the site at a maximum density of 3.2 FSR.

As Abbotsford grows, future development will be required within the existing urban boundary to respond to population and employment demands in a proactive, sustainable and inclusive manner. Expanding the technology sector and creating an additional activity hub in Abbotsford proactively responds to one of the fastest and most economically beneficial industries within British Columbia. The proposed Abbotsford Tech District will provide aerospace, AI, advanced manufacturing and agricultural-related industries that can boost economic development and international investment, and enhance Abbotsford City Centre and foster a culture of growth and innovation.

Mixed-use communities play a vital role to create complete neighbourhoods designed with a variety of residential housing typologies, shared amenities and ample park space to support a family friendly environment. The mixed-use hub will draw people into the municipality, with new retail/ commercial options adding variety and making the area more attractive and pleasant to live in. This leads to increased property values, as research has indicated people value accessible retail and community amenities close to housing.

Preserving open space is a key component to improving natural and built systems and providing connectivity throughout the community. Protecting the existing tree canopy and providing increased walking and multi-use trails will enhance connectivity throughout the community and promote sustainable recreation. A key benefit of additional density within the subject lands is

the ability to accommodate future growth within a smaller land area. This reduces the land demand for development and allows for conservation of more land within the surrounding area.

Socially, the proposed development encourages cultural diversity as an important component to instill inclusive community development. Community services and cultural amenities will be provided throughout the community and encouraged to attract a diverse demographic and support the creation of a cultural mosaic within the tech hub.

Creating a complete, compact community will be supported by active and public transportation, designed to reduce commute times and further enhance connections to the City Centre and adjacent communities. The vision for the site embodies the existing OCP principles and strives to create an engaging, vibrant community which attracts talent, fosters knowledge and enriches the lives of others.

As the proposed development advances forward O2 Planning & Design, alongside ATDI, aim to work collaboratively with the City of Abbotsford Administration, Community Association(s), neighbouring residents and various stakeholders to communicate the vision and collect feedback. Public engagement represents a key component to the success of this project and will be utilized to effectively deliver a comprehensive and complete innovation centre in Abbotsford.

