

**Making A Difference In Abbotsford:
A Proposed Neighbourhood Development Action Plan**

**Prepared for
The City of Abbotsford**

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Executive Summary

"Great communities are just ordinary communities that have committed themselves with enthusiasm to a vision of greatness."

Anonymous

"We build the road as we travel, but we never travel without a map!"

Paul Born, President, Tamarack Institute: an Institute for Community Engagement –
from the "Creating movements for Change and Collaborations Conference, June, 2006

Neighbourhood associations increase neighbourhood ownership, pride, and identity as they organize and partner with the City to address the needs of its members. The purpose of this Neighbourhood Development Framework is to offer a blueprint that the City can draw from to enhance its neighbourhood building efforts, and support effective further collaborative connections, in order to support and develop more neighbourhood associations.

Neighbourhood Association development is a complex endeavour because the work involves multiple levels of planning and there is no "end date." It is an ongoing process. Neighbourhood Association partnerships will always be in need of support, monitoring and improvement. There is no generic formula that can apply to all neighbourhoods.

The agenda of Neighbourhood Association development will only take root if Council, staff and community stakeholders can appreciate the multiple benefits and impacts that will result from it; and collectively agree on community processes to facilitate meaningful partnerships and collaboration. To work effectively it requires time, dedicated staff, accessible material, sustained involvement and political commitment from all of the players involved.

The experience and successes of the 2005 Eagle Mountain Development Adopt-a-Park trial project paved the way for the recommendations at a staff workshop that community and neighbourhood building should be embedded into each of the department action plans and that it be integrated into the "Community Liveability" section of the City Strategic Plan.

The goal of this Neighbourhood Development Action Plan is to create a framework for the future development of Neighbourhood Associations in the 7 planning areas of the city, with the objectives of developing a comprehensive interdepartmental Neighbourhood Development Action Plan, identifying potential internal change management requirements, and making recommendations for implementation of the Plan.

An Interdepartmental Advisory Team (IAT) was established to guide the preparation of the Action Plan and assist with workshop facilitation. They were a wonderful resource to the consultants, and their dedication to community and the City of Abbotsford was palpable. Consultation with staff across all departments took place through meetings and workshops. Consultation with external stakeholders also took place through interviews and a workshop.

Input from all sources identified the interplay between the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats and highlighted the important dynamics that influence

Abbotsford's strategic choices and actions in developing a sound Neighbourhood Association Framework. This inclusive process helped to:

- Build internal and external enthusiasm for and commitment to the development of a Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Add objectivity to the process by helping to identify issues and knowledge
- Develop foundations for future working relationships
- Establish an information exchange among staff, Council, and community stakeholders
- Ensure an adequate depth and breadth of data from which to make informed decisions

To uncover the current Best Practices, the consultants also conducted interviews in the communities of Coquitlam, Seattle, North Vancouver, Regina, Maple Ridge and Vancouver, all recognized as leaders in the area of Neighbourhood Association development.

The Neighbourhood Association development plan builds upon previous planning initiatives and documents in Abbotsford, and also considers the growth and changing demographics of the community.

The Neighbourhood Association framework, details, recommendations and action plan situates itself within the five Core Strategies of the City's Strategic Plan. The recommendations identify short (1 – 2 years), medium (2 – 3) and long term (3+) time horizons and are cross-referenced to the Core Strategy.

It is hoped that approved initiatives can be moved directly into the Strategic Plan and that they will flow from there to the Divisional and Individual work plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal: To create a culture and structure within the City organization as well as the Community to enable and support a sustainable Neighbourhood Association Framework.

Core Strategy: Community Liveability

Enhancing the environment and quality of life of our community
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Recommendation # 1: Increase inter-departmental collaboration and planning, including linkages with the newly formed Social Sustainability Advisory Committee.
(Short-term)

Recommendation #2: Engage the community with the interdepartmental staff team in further planning.
(Short-term)

Recommendation # 3: Jointly facilitate a community engagement process that brings in the voices of community life throughout all sectors. Jointly confirm a vision and plan for future neighbourhood development.
(Short-term)

Recommendation #4: With the community, determine the definitions and boundaries for neighbourhoods, and confirm criteria for how to select neighbourhoods for focus.
(Short-term)

Recommendation #5: From the outset, develop ways to engage those who otherwise may not be heard. *(Short-term)*

Recommendation #6: Develop neighbourhood asset maps to help mobilize and strengthen neighbourhood connections. *(Medium-term)*

Recommendation #7: Develop a volunteer management plan and approach that supports neighbourhood associations and integrates with the Fraser Valley Volunteer Support Network. *(Medium-term)*

Recommendation #8: Ensure that protocols and mechanisms are in place to ensure well- run, democratic, representative Neighbourhood associations. *(Long-Term)*

Core Strategy: Managing Our Future

Anticipating and planning for the community's changing service and facility needs

Recommendation #9: Provide ongoing staff orientation, training and flexible work programs that reflect community development practice. *(Short-Term)*

Core Strategy: Customer Service

Continually improve customer service internally and externally

Recommendation #10: Create Neighbourhood Association governance tools to guide their partnerships with the City. *(Medium-Term)*

Recommendation #11: Develop tools and systems to ensure effective ongoing Neighbourhood Associations and clear partnership protocols. *(Medium-Term)*

Core Strategy: Enhanced Communication

Staff communication with the public, Council and each other continuously improves

Recommendation #12: Create locally driven communication plans and a public awareness campaign that ensures Neighbourhood Association initiatives are accessible to all residents. *(Medium-Term)*

Core Strategy: Desirable Place to Work

Employees choose to work for Abbotsford because they are treated fairly, valued for their contributions, and given opportunity for growth

Recommendation #13: Provide hands on training to equip staff with the necessary community organization skills to foster neighbourhood development and partnerships.
(Short-Term)

Recommendation #14: Develop systems to address the internal organizational changes that are required to ensure organizational culture support and resources.
(Long-Term)

Setting the Stage

Today Abbotsford is alive with many exciting neighbourhood based initiatives throughout numerous neighbourhoods and communities. Some of the communities are geographical in nature, such as Clayburn Village, where residents have organized around their love of their heritage, history and environment; others have sprung up in response to local social and economic needs such as the ADBA, which was formed because of a need to beautify the downtown core, preserve its history, and address quality of life issues for all Abbotsford residents, (such as their community advocacy around clean air).

Historically, Abbotsford is also proud of its many churches, faith groups, rural/agricultural associations, and other diverse groups that have been offering significant support and connection for their members; they greatly contribute to the quality of family and community life for all of Abbotsford. There is also a wide array of vibrant and varied volunteer associations throughout the sport sector, arts, social services, health, recreation, and service club/group organizational life of the community. Each organization, and each coordinating organization (such as the United Way of the Fraser Valley) brings together people of like interests who offer their gifts and talents to create more meaningful and rewarding community experiences for everyone. They represent the backbone to a vital, healthy, and thriving Abbotsford community which is flourishing through the community spirit and good will that is regularly harnessed to address outstanding social, health, environmental, and safety issues for all of its residents.

The City of Abbotsford recognizes and supports such wonderful examples of community building throughout its rapidly growing population, and the vital link that neighbourhoods provide for making the connections with its residents. In fact, every municipal department's work-plan has goals around ways to more fully connect with the neighbourhoods and communities within Abbotsford. Staff would like to build more personal relationships with people within neighbourhoods so that they can work more effectively together in partnership to address thorny issues. They also recognize the potential of a stronger neighbourhood voice that could effectively represent the needs of all of the neighbourhood residents. It is clear that more effective neighbourhood development can offer local understanding and expertise to some of the thornier challenges that face staff and politicians as they work together to provide quality and efficient services for all of Abbotsford neighbourhoods.

Neighbourhood associations increase neighbourhood ownership, pride, and identity as they organize and partner with the City to address the needs of its members.

The purpose of this Neighbourhood Development Framework is to offer a blueprint that the City can draw from to enhance its neighbourhood building efforts, and support effective further collaborative connections, as it moves forward in the development of more neighbourhood associations.

"We amalgamated 3 villages together 10 years ago. We are growing to be the 4th largest City in the Province. It is no longer simple country issues and solutions; now we need to rethink our image, and find ways to find neighbourhood solutions, as our City continues to develop and grow."

Korky Neufeld, Chairman, Abbotsford Christian Leaders Network,
Pastor, and Abbotsford School Board member

Introduction

What makes a neighbourhood a good place to live? Does a neighbourhood have a sense of community and if not, how can this be fostered? Do residents have a way of becoming involved in what is happening in their neighbourhoods and community? With rapid growth occurring in Abbotsford, how can it be accommodated in a way that is consistent with community values and neighbourhood needs and desires?

Similar questions raised in recent years by Abbotsford residents, Councillors, and staff have prompted Abbotsford to look more closely at neighbourhood issues and development. There is a growing shift towards a more neighbourhood-based approach to Abbotsford's development. This represents a move away from the more conventional department based or project-based approach that individual City Departments often take. Such approaches can be too piecemeal or fragmented from the perspective of individual citizens and municipal staffs, so that collaboration and efficient service delivery is hindered.

A Neighbourhood Association based approach is more complex, but potentially more sustainable, because it recognizes the inter-relationship between various dimensions of citizen needs and service expectations. It also recognizes the value of collaborative municipal planning which makes it easier to ensure a fit between the development investments of the City and the vision and planning for each neighbourhood. Such planning makes it easier for political officials and staff to work with local residents to develop more comprehensive and integrated strategies at a neighbourhood level.

To work effectively it requires time, dedicated staff, accessible material, sustained involvement and political commitment from all of the players involved. It also requires pragmatism and patience from all the stakeholders involved, especially in the initial years as neighbourhood representatives learn about the dynamics of the process and how trade-offs between different priorities are achieved.

There are many routes to engaging neighbourhoods. It requires political will, a shared commitment to working collaboratively and openness to learn to work in new ways to ensure greater participation and inclusiveness. This report will provide a framework and foundation to work from in effectively engaging neighbourhoods, community organizations, and the City to foster a greater quality of life through the development of more effective neighbourhood Associations.

Background

Building on the success of a 2004 pilot that involved the preparation of a community development strategy, and a Neighbourhood Volunteer Management Strategy, that enabled the formation of a community and park association for the Eagle Mountain neighbourhood, the firm of Anne K. Morrison Consulting Ltd. was again commissioned in January, 2006 to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Action Plan for the City of Abbotsford.

A report describing the Eagle Mountain pilot project was received by the Mayor and Council at their Feb.1, 2005 meeting and a report which detailed the April, 2005 follow up inter-departmental Visioning and Planning workshop that confirmed inter-departmental support for further development of neighbourhood associations was received in early 2006. Both reports are included in Appendix 1.

It was requested that the Neighbourhood Development Action Plan reflect inter-departmental input, to support the decision to include neighbourhood building within the Community Liveability section of the City's Strategic Plan. Additionally, the request was for a plan that could offer a possible framework for the future development of Neighbourhood Associations in the planning areas of the city.

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a plan for:

- The development of a comprehensive interdepartmental Neighbourhood Development Action Plan
- Identification of potential internal change management requirements
- Recommendations for implementation of the Plan

An Interdepartmental Advisory Team (IAT) was established to guide the preparation of the Action plan. Members of the IAT include:

- John Laframboise - Parks, Recreation and Culture; Team Lead
- Don Beer – Fire Rescue Service
- Lorraine Boles – Parks, Recreation, and Culture
- Janice Cowen – Parks, Recreation and Culture
- Gord Ferguson – Administration
- Wisdom Fong – Engineering
- Rod Gehl – Abbotsford Police
- Balbir Gill – Library
- Don Luymes – Community Planning
- Ann-Marie Mathieu - Library
- Jodi Newnham – Social Planning
- Glen Savard - Finance
- Christina Vugteveen – Parks, Recreation and Culture
- Margaret Turner – Safer Cities

Consultation with staff across all departments, as well as community stakeholder consultations, took place through meetings and workshops. This inclusive process has helped to:

- Build internal and external enthusiasm for and commitment to the development of a Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Add objectivity to the process by helping to identify issues and knowledge

- Develop foundations for future working relationships
- Establish an information exchange among staff, Council, and community stakeholders
- Ensure an adequate depth and breadth of data from which to make informed decisions

Background information regarding the planning context, basic definitions, partnering principles and SWOT analysis results have been included in Appendices 2-4.

The perspectives of internal stakeholders, Appendix 5, were gathered via workshops:

- Directors of City departments, including the Library, Police & Fire Rescue
- Interdepartmental Staff Focus Group of 10 individuals
- Interdepartmental staff workshop with over 40 individuals
- Workshop with Mayor & Council and 10 staff

The perspectives of external (community) stakeholders were solicited through:

- 7 Key Informant interviews. See Appendix 6
- External stakeholder workshop (45+ participants). See Appendix 7

The consultants also conducted interviews with 6 communities recognized as being leaders in the area of Neighbourhood Association development to uncover current Best Practices. The communities interviewed were Coquitlam, Seattle, North Vancouver, Regina, Maple Ridge, and Vancouver. The transcripts from these interviews are included as Appendix 9.

The consultants also reviewed neighbourhood development/neighbourhood association Best Practice research that was produced in 2002 for the City of Vancouver's joint Staff-Neighbourhood Association Task Force, which was formed to streamline the operational agreements for their 22 Neighbourhood Associations. That research involved Seattle, Vancouver, Regina and Calgary.¹

¹ *Comprehensive Review of Community Based Delivery System Final Report*, Wilson & June Consultants and Anne K. Morrison Consulting Ltd., 2002

The Benefits of Neighbourhood Associations

The development of Neighbourhood Associations will only take root if Council, staff and community stakeholders can appreciate the multiple benefits and impacts that will result from the development of Neighbourhood Associations, including:

- **Increases quality of life**
 - Strengthens the sense of community
 - Achieves “buy-in” for a wide spectrum of neighbourhood-building initiatives
 - Increases citizen ownership, pride, and commitment to outcomes
- **Strengthens social cohesion and inclusivity**
 - Develops a neighbourhood vision that motivates and mobilizes residents to work together
 - Addresses growing social problems such as homelessness, safety, crime, isolation etc.
 - Builds new inter-connections and strengthens relationships
- **Builds stronger neighbourhood identity**
 - Develops the unique neighbourhood culture
 - Develops a common sense of neighbourhood place
- **Builds stronger communication**
 - Provides open, consultative, 2 way communication processes
 - Creates an information network that builds common neighbourhood understanding about local issues
 - Increases access to information about municipal government and municipal services
- **Improves local government performance**
 - Better information flow, which tends to improve the likelihood of successful planning, projects and initiatives.
 - Provides a forum for residents to become informed about civic affairs and actively involved in making decisions that ultimately impact their community.
 - Improves community understanding of local government
 - Allows for community advocacy
- **Enhances neighbourhood capacity**
 - Provides an ongoing, broadly based, community forum for the discussion of local issues, the development of neighbourhood-based problem solving, and involvement in municipal decision-making processes
 - Builds healthy self-esteem and a sense of personal empowerment
 - Develops neighbourhood self-esteem and a sense of collective empowerment
- **Creates a clear structure to share resources**
 - Solidifies the sense of a neighbourhood by providing an organizational umbrella to represent the neighbourhood and its residents
 - Provides a structured way for residents from different neighbourhoods to get together to discuss issues of mutual concern

- Provides a way to pool resources and share leadership in order to solve problems
- **Increases level of engagement/volunteerism**
 - Encourages and increases citizen involvement through planning, decision-making, and implementation of initiatives, activities, and services that affect them in their neighbourhood
- **Develops leadership and capacity**
 - Provides active involvement in activities
 - Provides stimulating training
 - Facilitates the building of meaningful relationships
 - Encourages the emergence of key individual gifts that sustain community building
- **Leverages resources**
 - Provides the means to access citizen expertise that the City staff may not have
 - Allows the city to conduct activities that otherwise would be out of financial reach
 - Increases neighbourhood profile and positively positions the City to receive other community donations
- **Promotes a clear mechanism for community collaboration**
 - Creates ways for citizens, neighbourhoods, special interest groups, delegations, etc. to be involved in local government
 - Helps neighbourhoods focus on higher priorities that transcend their immediate interest
 - Enables neighbours to better understand other neighbours' needs and strengthens neighbourhood ties and support
- **Creates pro-active planning**
 - Leads to the establishment of a balanced and sustainable neighbourhood development path
 - Enhances both city-wide and neighbourhood planning
 - Promotes realistic prioritization between competing investment issues
- **Enhances stability and confidence**
 - Increases municipal legitimacy through the joint decision-making mechanism of Neighbourhood Associations
- **Creates accountability**
 - Strengthens the possibility of a more direct accountability link between elected officials, staff and the neighbourhoods
- **Addresses barriers**
 - Improves access and participation in municipal processes
 - Creates a more level playing field between "unequal" residents in the neighbourhood
- **Builds partnerships**
 - Promotes alliances between people of various backgrounds and viewpoints

- Builds more links between municipal government and community organizations
- Shifts adversarial community relations toward collaboration and cooperation
- Stimulates greater community ownership, non-monetary contributions to development processes and direct involvement in maintaining infrastructure investments
- **Promotes administrative efficiency**
 - Ensures improved responsiveness to the needs and demands of citizens, neighbourhoods, special interest groups, delegations, etc
 - Promotes more integrated approach by compelling City departments to work together to solve inter-related problems or jointly plan at the neighbourhood level
- **Supports community driven initiatives**
 - Nurtures an atmosphere of discovery and sharing, from which community driven initiatives emerge
 - Provides strong catalysts that can help resolve disputes or issues

All of these benefits stem from neighbourhood association development. But perhaps the overriding benefit is the lived community experience that can be revitalized for people through the new connections they make with each other, and the joy of sharing their gifts and respect for one another. As School Superintendent Des McKay put it so eloquently:

“The City of Abbotsford is a community but it has lost its sense of community; we never have been so disconnected. This can’t be a project; it has to be part of a culture. The biggest opportunity may be to put a human heart into community with all parts of the community connecting with it. It all comes down to relationships!”

Best Practice Findings

An extensive review of best practices regarding effective ways to mobilize neighbourhoods and develop successful Neighbourhood Associations has been completed. The research involved the six communities of Coquitlam, Maple Ridge, Vancouver, North Vancouver, Regina, and Seattle, resulting in the identification of many lessons and learnings that will be very helpful as Abbotsford mobilizes more neighbourhood connections. Abbotsford also gains the benefit of the previous work of the consultant outlined in a report by Anne K. Morrison Consulting Ltd. and Wilson & June Consultants in the 2003 report, [A Comprehensive Review of Vancouver's Community Based Delivery System](#), which was based on an analysis of neighbourhood associations in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina and Seattle.

The Best Practices are promoted and used as a means of:

- Improving Abbotsford's Neighbourhood Association Framework based on what works in other communities;
- Raising awareness of staff, decision-makers at all levels and of the public of potential solutions to common worries, fears and problems;
- Sharing and transferring knowledge, expertise and experience through learning from others.

A review of material on the best practices for effective and progressive municipal-community partnerships, the backbone to effective neighbourhood associations, includes the following list of "10 success factors"², along with a practical list of tools and/or procedures, see Appendices 9 and 10, to enable the best practice.

Best Practices	Practical Tools for Consideration
<p>1. Vision, Goals and Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Shared vision, values, goals and commitment to serve those whose needs are affected by the partnership ★ Clear vision that we all understand and support ★ Strong commitment to working together to achieve a common purpose ★ Common objectives and goals consistent with fundamental values and objectives of each partner ★ Shared understanding about the rationale for the partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint strategic planning session to articulate common vision, values, goals & outcomes ▪ Joint SWOT analysis with community stakeholders to understand needs of both partners ▪ Clearly described intended outcomes, success indicators and performance measures for both the City and Neighbourhood Associations ▪ Established principles for level of service ▪ Shared decision making process formalized

² *Joint Operating Agreement Task Force – Final Report, City of Vancouver, 2005*

<p>2. Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Local community representation, reflecting community autonomy and local decision- making ★ Cross-section of people who are plugged into community needs ★ Respect and responsiveness for regional, city-wide or special interest perspectives ★ Balanced Board composition and quality staff ★ Good governance practices for each partner ★ Organizational readiness to participate in a partnership ★ Degree of autonomy for each partner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Motivated individuals/volunteers on the Neighbourhood Associations who understand and reflect the local community ▪ Terms of Reference developed that identify the type of skills and representation desired by Neighbourhood Associations members ▪ Document and detail the roles and relationships between the partners ▪ Election procedures for Neighbourhood Associations board identified ▪ City Council or Committee representation on Neighbourhood Associations described ▪ Identify the geographic catchment area of the Neighbourhood Associations
<p>3. Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Understanding of the interests and needs of each partner organization ★ Clarity about the rationale for the partnership ★ Understand why citizens get involved in community activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ feeling that what they have done is useful and important for the community ○ recognition and respect by their neighbourhood for their contribution to improving the community ○ new relationships that they build while working with other community members ○ opportunities to gain new experiences and learn new skills ○ the reward of seeing the long-term results of the projects that they have worked on ○ a project or initiative that is personally important to them ○ they feel that their contribution will help to change things for the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Needs assessment strategy and process designed ▪ Community engagement strategy and process to hear first hand what the citizen expectation and priorities are for service delivery

<p>better in their community, making it a better place to live</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the problem being addressed is immediately /currently important to the neighbourhood 	
<p>4. Commitment and Agreement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Easy to understand document which provides guidance, structure, processes and established norms and ground rules ★ Shared risks and mutual benefits ★ Contributions from each partner ★ Shared authority, responsibility and accountability ★ Clarity around expectations and indicators for success ★ Clarity around roles and responsibilities ★ Mechanisms to address differences and conflicts ★ Fast, streamlined decision-making ★ City Manager champions the concept as well as political support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal written Partnership Agreement adopted ▪ Partnership agreement clearly describes vision, mission, values, guiding principles, and goals. ▪ Performance measures for staff include Neighbourhood Associations liaison ▪ Terms of Reference developed that identify the type of skills and representation desired by Neighbourhood Associations members ▪ City departments define how they will jointly work with Neighbourhood Associations and process for how Neighbourhood Associations issues will enter City system ▪ Code of Ethics and a Code of Respectful Behaviour adopted ▪ Neighbourhood Associations have an approved set of bylaws and constitution ▪ Dispute Resolution mechanism articulated ▪ Conflict of Interest policy ▪ Personnel manuals ▪ Board protocols ▪ Cash handling procedures
<p>5. Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Collaborative planning ★ Service level standards ★ Connected with broader service networks and initiatives (other organizations, levels of government, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative strategic planning and project planning processes ▪ Identified and documented process for taking City issues to Neighbourhood Associations and vice versa ▪ Clearly delineate and define roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers

<p>6. Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Processes for effective 2 way internal and external communication between partners ★ Joint communication mechanisms for partnership ★ Documented history of accomplishments and challenges ★ Information and reporting systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assign a staff person as main contact/liaison with each Neighbourhood Associations, with clearly described roles and responsibilities ▪ Develop and implement a Communication Strategy ▪ Standards set related to communication and what type of information is shared ▪ Annual Reporting process, identifying financial position, population served, in-kind services, special projects ▪ Marketing strategy and process created and shared ▪ Communication tools range from day to day interaction, meetings, emails, phone calls, attending monthly board meetings and attending AGM's
<p>7. Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Co-ordination and support tools and services to each partner and to the partnership ★ Financial and non-financial assets such as budgets, qualified staff, facilities, policies ★ Clear processes for handling financial, human resources and risk management ★ Clear understanding of individual partner ownership/allegiance or resources and shared ownership/allegiance ★ Stable funding and sound fiscal management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive Volunteer Development and Management plan ▪ Staff understand their role and responsibility for allegiance to City; understand challenges related to dual relationship with Neighbourhood Associations ▪ City determines if it is going to support Neighbourhood Associations financially ▪ Funding policy developed with funding reflective of have and have-not areas ▪ Clear process for handling revenue

<p>8. Training and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Ongoing commitment to improvement and flexible/responsive to change ★ Investment to develop the necessary skills and attitudes to sustain a partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff job descriptions, required knowledge, skills and attributes redefined to include community development skills such as facilitation, community engagement, volunteer development, conflict resolution, communication skills, relationship building, board development, participatory decision making, meeting management, needs assessment, budgeting, mediation, strategic planning and organizational capacity building ▪ Professional development and training program for staff developed to address gaps ▪ Training opportunities and plan for volunteers implemented
<p>9. Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Performance evaluation methods to regularly measure progress and success ★ Commitment to continuous improvement ★ Evaluation of the partnership progress as well as the outcomes of the partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Performance measures identified ▪ Community development philosophy and practice described and integrated into staff performance measures ▪ Evaluation procedures in place ▪ Annual audit and report by Neighbourhood Associations to City ▪ Annual report by City to Neighbourhood Associations
<p>10. Recognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Fair and honest recognition of each partner's contribution and the "added value" afforded by the partnership ★ Demonstrate appreciation and encouragement towards partner ★ Celebrate successes ★ Respect lifecycle of each partner and demands/circumstances outside of the partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Milestones defined and celebrated in strategic and operational planning processes ▪ Volunteer recognition program

The Importance of Criteria

In developing further neighbourhood associations, it is vitally important that the community partner with the City to decide how to frame the beginning steps of this work. Strategies around community development and effective partnering are included in this Plan. An essential ingredient is a community steering committee that works with the City to sort out how to define neighbourhoods and decide the criteria that could help to determine the neighbourhoods for focus. At the end of our external stakeholder workshop, several community members have already volunteered to be part of these community conversations. Their input for next steps is included in Appendix 7.

Some possible criteria for inclusion include: the lack of history with neighbourhood connections (i.e., newly developed neighbourhoods which do not have a base of community knowledge and shared history to draw from); presence of social issues which require a more coordinated City response and community solutions (such as safety, drug use, isolation); neighbourhoods who are struggling with their efforts to build community and wish further support; neighbourhoods without any central gathering place or sense of connection, and “have not” neighbourhoods whose members have multiple needs for support.

Core Strategies

The issues to which the city must respond in order to implement a successful neighbourhood association plan surfaced through the input from the Best Practice and internal/external stakeholder community research. These issues formed the basis for establishing the goals, objectives, and draft action plan.

Goal: **To create a culture and structure within the City organization and broader Community, that enables and supports a sustainable Neighbourhood Association Framework.**

The Neighbourhood Association Framework details, recommendations and action plan situates itself within the five Core Strategies of the City's Strategic Plan, so that approved initiatives can be moved directly into the City's strategic plan and department work plans. The recommendations identify short (1 – 2 years), medium (2 – 3) and long term (3+) time horizons and are cross-referenced to the Core Strategy.

Core Strategy: Community Liveability (8 recommendations)
Enhancing the environment and quality of life of our community

Recommendation # 1: Increase inter-departmental collaboration and planning.
(Short-term)

Objective:

Develop an inter-departmental planning process to identify all current activity related to neighbourhoods, and reposition itself to ensure that Abbotsford can deliver an integrated package of services rather than fragmented along staff department lines.

Actions:

- Identify inter-departmental task team (ITT) to review existing Department plans and activities from the perspective of fostering joint planning between the departments
- Integrate all references and plans for neighbourhood development and volunteerism into one over-arching action plan and make recommendations for a coordinated and consistent approach to service delivery for current initiatives related to neighbourhood development

Recommendation #2: Engage the community with the interdepartmental staff team in further planning.
(Short-term)

Objective:

Develop an inter-departmental plan to engage the community in a discussion and planning process related to the development of a Neighbourhood Association Framework.

Actions:

- Identify inter-departmental task team (ITT) to lead planning process

- Identify one staff person as the lead for the ITT
- Estimate and secure the resources required to effectively conduct community engagement process
- Articulate the desired outcomes of the engagement
- Identify individuals and organizations to be contacted, paying particular attention to the identification of groups that do not traditionally participate in the community engagement process, such as minority, ethno-cultural, faith and low-income communities
- Establish education and awareness communication initiatives and means to access information, so that groups or individuals can obtain timely, accurate information that enables them to have a meaningful influence in the process and decision-making
- Translate materials to ensure cultural participation
- Make sure that every member of the staff understands the process as it is important that communication is correct and consistent
- Provide timely and frequent announcements of meetings and other consultation methods
- Build upon existing social and cultural networks such as schools, churches, and civic organizations and develop sponsoring and co-planning relationships with community groups
- Maximize the ability of stakeholders to participate by planning meetings that are accessible and accommodating. Consider holding meetings at locations within various neighbourhoods, handicap accessible and access to public transportation. Consideration should also be given to such issues as childcare, access for the disabled, and language interpreters.
- Plan schedules to accommodate the needs of the stakeholders, for example, holding meetings after usual working hours

Recommendation # 3: Jointly facilitate a community engagement process that brings in the voices of community life throughout all sectors. Jointly confirm a vision and plan for future neighbourhood development, as well as selection criteria to choose the neighbourhoods for focus. *(Short-term)*

Objective:

Enter into a community engagement and consultation process in order to raise awareness; establish communication linkages with a wide range of people; encourage active participation in the planning process; create mechanisms for ongoing involvement; collect views, opinions and ideas; foster community pride, spirit and ownership; and to build trust and confidence between the City and residents.

Actions:

During engagement:

- Maintain clear goals by setting an agenda
- Clarify the objectives for the consultation
- Describe the City vision for a Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Describe the roles and relationships between the City and the Neighbourhood Associations, along with benefits, expectations and priorities for service delivery

- Articulate a commitment to inclusive processes; collaborative approaches to decision making; full discussion and respectful debate; a focus on issues and building common ground
- Agree to a decision-making process and selection process for neighbourhoods for focus
- Create an atmosphere of equal participation

Consultation objectives:

- Develop a Community vision for a Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Create a shared vision between the community and the City
- Conduct a SWOT analysis with community stakeholders to understand the needs, interests and priorities and document community concerns, benefits, opportunities, strengths
- Discuss and find mutual agreement on the mission/purpose and objectives of the Neighbourhood Association Framework, central values to support the framework, and principles to guide the work
- Identify criteria for what will constitute a Neighbourhood Association being formally recognized by Council
- Identify the potential ways of working together and through a Partnership Continuum that recognizes Informal, Formal and Legal partnership agreements
- Develop community criteria for identifying geographic boundaries
- Begin process of drawing geographic Neighbourhood Association boundaries
- Develop selection process for neighbourhoods for focus.
- Identify an ongoing communication and feedback process
- Identify and recruit community leaders to participate in a Steering Committee
- Identify and agree on the Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee i.e. the mandate, goals, time commitment, reporting and accountability, structure, etc.
- Propose and reach agreement on a process to achieve the development of a flexible Neighbourhood Association Framework. One framework for consideration is included in Appendix 10

Recommendation #4: With the community, determine the definitions and boundaries for neighbourhoods. *(Short-term)*

Objective:

Define the preferred geographic Neighbourhood Association boundaries.

Actions:

- Develop City criteria to be used in determining boundaries for Neighbourhood Associations
- Gather and review all existing maps that are currently used to define geographic areas i.e. Fire, Police, Planning & Development, Library, School District, real estate, census tracts, political electoral boundaries, etc.)
- City departments come to agreement on one preferred set of boundaries for Zones
- Engage in community consultation process to identify Neighbourhood Association boundaries
- City formalize boundaries through policy

Recommendation #5: From the outset, develop ways to engage those who otherwise may not be heard. *(Short-term)*

Objective:

Identify potential barriers that may marginalize residents and create methods to remove barriers to inclusion in Neighbourhood Associations, including language, cultural, attitudinal, physical access, age, etc.

Actions:

- Conduct a SWOT with the organizations and identify barriers
- Highlight census data in the neighbourhood profiles to create greater awareness of the make-up of the neighbourhood
- Ensure the Neighbourhood Association governance is representative of neighbourhood demographics
- Ensure diverse populations are represented on Neighbourhood Association committees and in the planning processes
- Translate materials into appropriate languages
- Develop plan to address barriers to enable involvement and participation

Recommendation #6: Develop neighbourhood asset maps to help mobilize and strengthen neighbourhood connections. *(Medium-term)*

Objective:

Develop a neighbourhood profile and asset map for each Neighbourhood, including, but not limited to demographics, business, schools, churches, parks, recreation facilities, resident skills, etc.

Actions:

- Apply Census, Real Estate, Economic development, and Planning department info to a neighbourhood profile
- List of all businesses and associations
- Create an asset map of the capabilities and assets of individuals, existing volunteer organizations, associations, and local institutions
- Complete a community "walkabout" and gather community profile information
- Document a history of the neighborhood

Recommendation #7: Develop a volunteer management plan and approach that supports neighbourhood associations. *(Medium-term)*

Objective:

Develop a comprehensive Neighbourhood Association Volunteer Development and Management plan.

Actions:

- Identify staff person to take lead on NA volunteer development/management planning for City
- Create inventory of all City volunteer programs

- Review effective volunteer systems, processes, tools currently used by and incorporate into Volunteer management system for use with Neighbourhood Associations
- Research the systems, policies and procedures that have been established for successful organizations such as Block Watch, Citizens Patrol and “borrow/copy” any that are applicable for use in Neighbourhood Association Volunteer Management System
- Identify the type of skills and representation required by Neighbourhood Association members
- Develop volunteer job descriptions for NA positions & roles
- Identify benefits and value of becoming involved and include in a Communication plan
- Develop & implement a volunteer recruitment plan
- Develop training opportunities for volunteer leaders, specific to role with Neighbourhood Association
- Facilitate a strategic/neighbourhood planning process with volunteers within each neighbourhood and identify needs, issues, assets, priorities, vision, goals, objectives, plans, etc.
- Work with neighbourhood Associations to develop and implement a volunteer recognition plan and celebration of achievements and successes
- Provide examples of the types of project and initiatives to get involved in
- Develop plan for keeping keep citizens involved
- Assist Neighbourhood Associations with governance issues

Recommendation#8: Ensure that protocols and mechanisms are in place to ensure well-run, democratic, representative Neighbourhood associations.

(Long-term)

Objective:

Actively recruit and establish Neighbourhood Association governance boards for each neighbourhood.

Actions:

- Invite interested residents to a neighbourhood meeting
- Identify leaders and active volunteers in the community to the meeting, soliciting their interest beforehand
- Choose a location for the meeting within the neighbourhood
- Present the bigger picture of the overall framework, benefits, goals and other neighbourhood successes
- Encourage motivated individuals/volunteers who understand and reflect the local community to a governance team/board of directors/advisory committee
- Election procedures for Neighbourhood Associations board identified and process carried out
- Facilitate a strategic planning processes with each neighbourhood, identifying the purpose, vision, mission, goals and action plan for the Neighbourhood Association Board
- Encourage participatory assessment of problems, opportunities and priorities in the neighbourhood

- Conduct a joint SWOT analysis with stakeholders to understand the needs and interests in the specific neighbourhood
- Clearly describe the intended outcomes, success indicators and performance measures for the partners
- Agreement on the goals and objectives of the work, agree on the description of the work or project, roles and responsibilities of the partners, process for carrying out the work, time frame and work plan, standards for work, outcomes and evaluation

Core Strategy: Managing Our Future (1 recommendation)

Anticipating and planning for the community's changing service and facility needs

Recommendation #9: Provide ongoing staff orientation and training and build flexibility into departmental work programmes to reflect community development practice. *(Short-term)*

Objective:

Secure commitment for resources (human, financial, operational) required to develop, support and maintain the Neighbourhood Association Framework.

Actions:

- Develop internal City plan for how NA's are going to be supported, maintained and sustained – short term and long term
- Develop Human resource plan to support the Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Develop staff job descriptions; knowledge, skills and attributes redefined to include community development skills such as facilitation, community engagement, volunteer development, conflict resolution, communication skills, relationship building, board development, participatory decision making, meeting management, needs assessment, budgeting, mediation, strategic planning and organizational capacity building
- Implement a professional development and training program for staff to address immediate gaps
- Conduct community development training with City staff to better understand and plan for shared decision-making, empowerment, collaboration, partnership development, etc.
- Determine whether resources should be directed at neighbourhoods to support their development e.g. Neighbourhoods that are having difficulty organizing are assisted with small grants, matching partnership grants, etc.

Core Strategy: Customer Service (2 recommendations)

Continually improve customer service internally and externally

Recommendation #10: Create Neighbourhood Association governance tools to guide their partnerships with the City. *(Medium Term)*

Objective:

Build a Neighbourhood Association Partnership Framework that provides a structure for work between the City and the Neighbourhood Association.

Actions:

- Develop a template for a Partnership Agreement to use with emerging Neighbourhood Associations, recognizing the continuum of informal, formal, and legal partnerships
- Outline a Planning process to follow for consistency when forming a new Neighbourhood Association
- Specify a process and concrete mechanisms for use in reaching agreement on the nature of the partnership
- Formalize a shared decision-making process
- Clearly delineate and define roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers
- Assign a staff person as main contact/liaison with each Neighbourhood Association, with clearly described roles and responsibilities
- Identify financial mechanisms to support the Framework
- Ensure staff understand their roles and responsibilities when working with Neighbourhood Associations and understand challenges related to the dual relationship

Recommendation #11: Develop tools and systems to ensure effective ongoing Neighbourhood Associations and clear partnership protocols. *(Medium Term)*

Objective:

Develop the tools and mechanisms to support healthy partnerships and the Neighbourhood Association Framework.

Actions:

Develop templates for each of the tools, with samples included in Appendix 9 that the City wants included in the Neighbourhood Partnership Agreement, including:

- Partnership Agreement that clearly describes vision, mission, values, guiding principles, and goals
- Defined Geographic boundaries
- Needs assessment tools
- Evaluation measures and performance indicators
- Financial plan to support the action plan
- Board of Director protocols, roles and responsibilities
- Neighbourhood Association Bylaws and constitution
- Defined roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers
- Neighbourhood Association Terms of Reference

- Membership policy
- Conflict Resolution mechanism
- Code of Ethics and a Code of Respectful Behaviour
- Established principles for level of service
- Conflict of Interest policy
- Cash handling procedures
- Shared decision making process
- Training opportunities and plan
- Process for becoming formally recognized by the City as a Neighbourhood Association
- Process describing how Neighbourhood Association issues will enter City system and vice versa
- Annual Reporting

Core Strategy: Enhanced Communication (1 recommendation)

Staff communication with the public, Council and each other continuously improves

Recommendation #12: Create locally driven communication plans and public awareness campaign to ensure that Neighbourhood Association initiatives are accessible to all residents. *(Medium-Term)*

Objective:

Develop and implement an external Communication Plan, encouraging residents to participate in collaborative planning processes related to Neighbourhood Association development.

Actions:

- Promote the benefits and value of participation for individuals and for neighbourhoods in the Neighbourhood Association Framework
- Interview existing Neighbourhood Association members and obtain testimonials related to the benefits for use in the Communication Plan materials
- Use success stories to promote the benefits
- Create incentives to organize as a Neighbourhood Association
- Translate communications into other languages
- Invite the media into the process as they can be a tool in the overall communications program

The following outreach methods are suggested approaches for improving the community's access to information on Neighbourhood Association development:

- Information on the Neighbourhood Association development project in public locations such as libraries, city hall, recreation centres to allow for open access to information
- Focus groups and workshops
- Advisory committees and task force
- Public meetings & forums
- Polling and surveys & questionnaires
- Media releases and public displays e.g. malls, recreation centres
- Search conference
- Charrette
- Networking
- Round table discussions
- Posters and banners
- Community newsletters
- Local cable TV
- Electronic mail
- Meeting in neighbourhood schools
- Door to door survey
- Business Breakfast to gather views from local businesses
- Posters and leaflet drops in and around each area
- On-line questionnaire
- Presentations to service clubs, agencies and organizations

Core Strategy: Desirable Place to Work (2 recommendations)

Employees choose to work for Abbotsford because they are treated fairly, valued for their contributions, and given opportunity for growth

Recommendation #13: Provide hands on training to equip staff with the necessary community organization skills to foster neighbourhood development and partnerships.
(Short-Term)

Objective:

Training and development opportunities are available to staff and volunteers to support and enhance community development and leadership skills.

Actions:

- Clearly delineate and define roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers in a neighbourhood Association Framework
- Develop training programs to address gaps for staff and volunteers re facilitation of public meetings, communication skills, conflict resolution, strategic planning, volunteer management/development, how to reviews applications for re-zoning and land-use planning, event planning, partnership agreements, conflict management, negotiations, community development, etc.

Recommendation #14: Develop systems to address the internal organizational changes that are required to ensure organizational culture support and resources.
(Long-Term)

Objective:

Develop and implement a Change Management plan.

Actions:

- Determine who will lead and conduct the process
- Identify objectives for the review, timeline, scope, and process for review
- Review the City organizational structure and recommend structure and staff changes, taking into account skills and accountability measures that will enable and support the development of a Neighbourhood Association Framework.
- Review current organizational structure against the goals of the Neighbourhood Association Framework and identify gaps in skills and knowledge, and in the number of human resources required to implement the plan
- Develop a long-range financial projection for the cost of implementation, including human resources, time, operational costs and support to Neighbourhood Associations if applicable
- Develop timeline for implementation
- Identify a change management process to accomplish a smooth transition.

Various appendices within this Report include tools, resources and processes to draw from in the implementation of this Plan. Appendix 9 includes a wide array of Community Partnership Resources; Appendix 10 has templates and organizational structures that facilitate effective neighbourhood associations. Appendix 11 includes measurements for success, potential outcomes, and two current examples of Neighbourhood Associations in action.

In Closing

" Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

The City of Abbotsford is one of the fastest growing cities in Canada. One of the outcomes is the loss of a sense of neighbourhood and community connection. The City wants to support neighbourhood pride and partner with residents to help develop more quality of life and ways for people to positively shape the environments in which they live. Furthering the potential of Neighbourhood Associations is a powerful way to harness community spirit and partner together through shared leadership and neighbourhood expertise.

This Report has outlined the benefits and positive possibilities from the City's investment in neighbourhood development and partnering. Dedicated resources are now required in order to proactively support and assist the development of more neighbourhood associations. Neighbourhood associations can enable staff, Council, community leaders, community organizations, and residents throughout Abbotsford to harness their energy together and build a healthier Abbotsford for all.

It seems very fitting to close with some of the community wisdom that supports further neighbourhood associations:

"People think today that they do not need to be connected! But of course they do need to be connected and the social and family fabric is as important as ever. This is especially important for some of our newly developed areas where they do not have a sense of history or rural connection."

Harry de Jong, Agri-Fair Board of Directors, previous Matsqui Mayor, and MLA

"If people feel that their input is valued and used, they will carry on."

Thelma Schrock, Executive Director, Abbotsford Community Services

"It all works because of the people involved. You need the dream and the wherewithal to know how to implement it. And you need the ability to form a team of like-minded people who can catch your vision and mobilize around it. If it is grassroots driven, they will pay the piper!"

Bob Bos, President, Abbotsford Downtown Business Association

"One way to begin might be to bring together all the different agencies and sectors around some common value(s) and then once that is established, have them see neighbourhood associations as one way to further those values. Like "caring": what should it look like in Abbotsford?"

Des McKay, Superintendent, School District #34

"This could provide an opportunity to build more open mindedness and inclusiveness in Abbotsford; that is very much needed"

Christina Ragneborg, Manager, Senior Services, Abbotsford Community Services

"I think that whoever came out with this suggestion of a neighbourhood association deserves a pat on the back. It is about time we started doing things for our own neighbours...My newspaper, Punjai Patrika, will be willing to assist you in any way you need extra media help, especially for the benefit of the Punjabi speaking neighbours."

Andy Sidhu, Editor, Fraser Valley Punjabi Patrika Newspaper