



ABBOTSFORD
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Business Voices

Five priorities shaped by member input call on candidates to make Abbotsford B.C.'s most competitive city for business.

Abbotsford Municipal Election 2026 Report

The Priorities

Faster business approvals, safer commercial districts, infrastructure for growth and a stronger approach to attracting investment are among five priorities the Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce has put before candidates in the 2026 municipal election. Representing approximately 850 businesses, the Chamber's Business Voices 2026 agenda was shaped by member feedback, ongoing advocacy and direct engagement with local employers. Now, Abbotsford businesses and voters can see where candidates for Mayor and City Council stand on the issues affecting the city's business environment and economic future.

Through the Business Voices 2026 Candidate Survey, every candidate for Mayor and Council was asked to take a clear position on the Chamber's five business priorities and explain what they would do if elected.

The Chamber is calling on candidates to commit to practical and measurable action across five priorities:

1. Make Abbotsford the Fastest Place in B.C. to Do Business

Cut red tape. Speed up approvals. Make City Hall work for business.

Abbotsford should compete on speed, certainty and cost.

The Chamber is calling on the City to establish and publicly report service standards for every major commercial and industrial approval, benchmarked annually against comparable B.C. municipalities, with a 90-business-day target for complete, OCP-compliant development permits by the end of 2027.

2. Make Abbotsford Safe, Vibrant and Open for Business

Address street disorder. Strengthen commercial districts. Bring people back to our business areas.

Public safety is economic policy. Businesses should not be expected to absorb persistent theft, vandalism and street disorder as a normal cost of doing business. The Chamber is calling for a dedicated Business Safety Strategy, public reporting on crime and disorder affecting commercial areas, stronger coordination in responding to repeat commercial offending, and focused action to improve the safety, cleanliness, vitality and activation of Historic Downtown and other commercial districts.

3. Build the Infrastructure to Match Our Ambition

Connect YXX. Move people and goods. Unlock employment land. Invest ahead of growth.

Abbotsford's infrastructure needs to keep pace with its growing role as a regional economic centre. The Chamber is calling for a defined pathway to establish direct transit connectivity to Abbotsford International Airport (YXX), better transit to major employment areas, a 10-year Employment Lands Strategy, and long-term planning for the infrastructure needed to support business and employment growth.

4. Create an Economic Development Engine Built for Growth

Compete for investment. Grow businesses. Deliver results.

Abbotsford should compete aggressively for new investment and make it easier for existing businesses to expand here. The Chamber is calling for a private-sector-aligned economic development model with a clear mandate to attract investment, support business growth and deliver major investment opportunities for the city. That work should be accountable to publicly reported key performance indicators, including capital investment attracted, jobs created and retained, businesses attracted and expanded, investment opportunities converted and employment lands activated. Economic development should also lead targeted strategies around Abbotsford's competitive strengths, including agriculture and agri-food, advanced manufacturing, aerospace and aviation, transportation and logistics, and emerging industries.

5. Close Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Build the places and experiences that attract talent, visitors and investment.

Amenities are economic infrastructure. A city competing for workers, entrepreneurs, investment, conferences, sporting events and visitors needs the infrastructure and experiences to attract and retain them. The Chamber is calling for a clear pathway to unlock new full-service hotel and conference capacity, a coordinated major-events strategy, and investment in sports and recreation infrastructure as drivers of economic development.

The Questions

The Chamber has taken its business agenda directly to candidates, asking those seeking election as Mayor or Councillor to respond to specific commitments under each of the five priorities. Their responses are published in this report, giving businesses and residents a clear look at where candidates stand on the issues shaping Abbotsford's business environment and economic future.

Abbotsford voters and businesses can now compare candidate responses to the Chamber's five business priorities and the specific questions put to each candidate about how they would address them if elected. The questions asked were as follows:

Faster Business Approvals

- Will you support published service standards for major commercial and industrial approvals, including a 90-business-day target for complete, OCP-compliant development permits by the end of 2027?
- What specific changes would you support to make it faster and easier to do business with City Hall?

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

- Will you support a dedicated Business Safety Strategy focused on commercial areas, with public reporting on results and action on repeat commercial offending?
- What specific action would you take to improve safety and economic vitality in Historic Downtown and other commercial districts?

Infrastructure for Growth

- Will you support a defined pathway for direct transit connectivity to Abbotsford International Airport (YXX) and a 10-year Employment Lands Strategy?
- What major infrastructure investment would you champion to prepare Abbotsford for its next phase of growth?

Economic Development

- Will you support a private-sector-aligned economic development model with a clear mandate to attract investment and help existing businesses grow, backed by publicly reported performance targets?
- What results should the City be accountable for delivering?

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

- Will you support a strategy to close Abbotsford's amenity gap and strengthen the city's ability to attract workers, visitors, events and investment?
- What specific amenity investment would you prioritize, such as hotel and conference capacity, sports and recreation, public spaces, arts and culture, dining or the evening economy?

Sukhi Dhani

Mayoral Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

Services and efficiency review that sets staff benchmarks, reviews management roles, improves accountability. Approval process should be clear and consistent. When changes required, staff should identify the specific code, bylaw or standard. Where permitted, the City should rely on qualified professional certifications instead of duplicating technical reviews completed by engineers and architects. Service standards should be publicly reported, separating City review time from applicant time so residents, businesses and Council can clearly see where delays occur.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

Establish a Business and Community Safety Advisory Committee of residents, businesses, property owners, law enforcement and community stakeholders to advise Council on safety, property crime, cleanliness and other challenges facing commercial districts. A major focus can be on Historic Downtown—improving safety, cleanliness, lighting, events and the evening economy to attract more people to live, visit, shop and dine downtown.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would champion major investment in community, recreation and transportation infrastructure. Abbotsford is growing, but our facilities, amenities and internal connectivity have not kept pace. We need to upgrade what we have while building new pools, arenas, sports fields, parks and community spaces. We also need to tackle traffic congestion and improve how people move between neighbourhoods, employment areas and key destinations. We know the growth is coming. It's time to build ahead of it instead of constantly playing catch-up.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

The City should be accountable for measurable outcomes such as investment attracted to Abbotsford, businesses retained and expanded, jobs and employment growth, commercial and industrial development activity, development approval timelines, employment-land availability and progress on barriers identified by the business community. Economic development cannot be measured by how many meetings are held or reports are produced. Residents and businesses should be able to see what was accomplished.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

These are all priorities. Abbotsford has a community infrastructure deficit coupled with a "no-fun city" reputation. Rather than looking at amenities in isolation, we need innovative planning that creates multi-purpose spaces serving sports, recreation, arts, culture, events, dining and entertainment. Done right, we can serve multiple user groups, get better value from our investments and catch up with our community's needs sooner rather than later.

Paul Mahil

Mayoral Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

My belief is streamlining the processes and removing as much red tape as we can without causing negative issues.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

There is not one specific action but multiple actions. Amongst those are doing more help with our homeless issues, increasing police patrols and actions, and possibly using cctv cameras, to list a few.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ✅

Increasing bus service and potentially bringing in the West Coast Express to Abbotsford. Developing Abbotsford airport into a logistics hub would benefit the city and its residents in multiple ways. An new artery from Gloucester to Harris Road/Mission Highway to make Highway travel safer and easier.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✅

The city would be working towards a goal of increasing its revenue, for today and the long term. This would assist in updating and building infrastructure, reducing residents property tax, and much more. Leading to a vibrant Abbotsford for all.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

A convention center with indoor and outdoor sports facilities would be a priority. An entertainment district is a must to not only to attract visitors but also to have local residents enjoy in Abbotsford rather than travelling and spending to adjoining cities and Vancouver.

Ross Siemens

Mayoral Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

The City of Abbotsford has a very effective OCP which has been recently updated. The infrastructure master plans are currently being updated which will give increased certainty and increase efficiency in planning.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I would continue to build on the success of the partnerships between the ADBA, the City, community partners such as Tourism Abbotsford, Cedar Outreach and other organizations. We have a strong foundation.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ✅

Sumas Prairie flood mitigation, complete our new water supply project, internal road connections such as the MacLure to Highway 11 connector overpass pMcKee/George Ferguson connector, advocate for Highway 1 to Chilliwack.

Economic Development

Qualified Support. ⚠️

The City is delivering strong economic growth through the economic development department and the growth at Abbotsford International Airport. Examples are the Exchange Business Park (one of the largest industrial park developments in the lower mainland) and ag-tech and processing sector such as Vitalus (largest investment in dairy processing in Canadian history) and Vanderpol Eggsolutions are both great examples.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

I will continue to work on the framing of the plans for the 50 meter pool and the Emerson/Peardonville site, the twin rinks at Exhibition Park and continue planning the destination tournament site on Lefevure Road. I will continue to advocate for a hotel and conference centre. Partnerships with Tourism Abbotsford, the Chamber of Commerce, FVICBA, Sport Abbotsford and UFV are vitally important in this work.

Patricia Driessen

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

In June 2025, Council directed staff to implement five priorities to improve development permit timelines and processes by November 2026. I would like to request an immediate progress report, followed by a six-month review, to ensure these short-term actions are delivered. Staff should be directed to advance identified medium- and long-term priorities, including developing civil drawing review guidelines and KPIs to reduce internal review time and the number of reviews required. Engineering services, including highways, excavation and soil, must also be aligned to reduce the number of touchpoints.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would like to see a review of our bylaw services in comparison to other municipalities and consider potentially increasing security presence downtown after-hours and on weekends, with other neighbourhood centres considered as well. We should also explore what options are available to improve lighting in the area.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

We must continue to push for the industrial land we know we need in Abbotsford. When it comes to Airport opportunities, I continue to hear the next steps are to keep pushing for expanded public transit options to our Airport lands. To support our airlines and customers, we need to reduce the time it takes for people to get from Metro Vancouver to Abbotsford. The freeway widening will help this, but we need a commitment from the Province to continue the Highway 1 Corridor Project through to No. 3 Road ASAP.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

Reviewing how Abbotsford delivers economic development services and exploring new models (including an independent economic development agency) to better support local businesses, attract investment, and create economic opportunities has been a priority of Abbotsford Voice from the very beginning. Results I would expect: increase in business owner participation of the annual business survey with improving performance when it comes to perceptions of Abbotsford's Economic Strength, Abbotsford's overall "grade" as place to do business, Abbotsford's "overall cleanliness" grade and # of new business.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

Abbotsford desperately needs another hotel and a large-scale convention centre. This was a strategic priority set by Council during the last term, and I would like to see this continue to be a priority over the next four years. The next Council will have an opportunity to close the amenity gap when it comes to sports and recreation projects, and I look forward to ensuring those decisions consider the business perspective, whether that be for employees or attracting visitors to our city. We should accelerate priority projects from the Mill Lake Masterplan, like a permanent outdoor stage

Carmen Fast Hollett

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

I want to build a better Abbotsford by creating a development process that is efficient, predictable, transparent, and responsive. I would accelerate implementation of development review recommendations to reduce unnecessary delays and provide greater certainty for residents, businesses, and builders. I would also improve customer service at City Hall, making it easier for residents and businesses to get answers, access services and navigate City processes quickly and effectively.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support a strong focus on business and community safety, particularly in Downtown Abbotsford. Our downtown should be a place where residents and visitors feel safe walking, shopping, dining, and enjoying our community. I would support more visible security, stronger communication, and explore additional community safety resources, including auxiliary support and a properly trained citizens' patrol program working alongside police.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would advocate for the provincial government to extend SkyTrain to our community and YXX. It's an ambitious vision, but Abbotsford should be part of the region's future transportation network. Better rapid transit would connect residents, workers, students, and visitors to opportunities across the Lower Mainland. Connecting SkyTrain to YXX could strengthen our airport as a regional hub, attract investment, support local businesses, create jobs, and drive long-term economic growth.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

I believe Council's job is to create the infrastructure, policies, and conditions that help private investment succeed. Abbotsford needs practical, creative solutions that support sustainable growth. City staff should also be accountable to Council through clear, measurable goals so we can track results and ensure we are delivering for Abbotsford.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would accelerate projects for ball parks, sport courts, fields and ice capacity, while developing a bold long term vision for our ice needs through partnerships and innovative solutions. At MSA, I would maximize every square inch of city-owned land to create a comprehensive recreation hub. I would ensure the new MSA Aquatic Centre meets user-group needs and supports broad community use. I would advance Mill Lake priorities, including a permanent outdoor stage, and explore an annual Christmas light attraction.

Rupi Kanda-Rajwan

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support published service standards, including a 90-business-day target for complete, OCP-compliant development permits by the end of 2027. To make approvals more efficient, I would support a clear, publicly available checklist outlining required documents, approval steps, responsible departments, and expected timelines for new and existing businesses. Applicants should be able to track their applications, identify outstanding requirements, and receive timely explanations for delays. Clear expectations and transparent timelines would help applicants submit complete accurate applications while improving consistency, accountability, and efficiency at City Hall.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support a dedicated Business Safety Strategy with public reporting on results and coordinated action on repeat commercial offending. I would strengthen existing partnerships with organizations such as the Salvation Army, whose outreach teams can support people experiencing homelessness. I would also address vandalism and graffiti through faster cleanup, improved lighting, and strategically placed, privacy-conscious security cameras. The City should coordinate these efforts with businesses, outreach providers, and police while publicly reporting outcomes. This collaborative approach would create safer, cleaner, and more welcoming commercial districts that support economic vitality.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support a defined pathway for direct transit connectivity to Abbotsford International Airport and a 10-year Employment Lands Strategy. I would champion reliable, frequent transit connecting YXX to residential, commercial, and employment areas. I would also advocate for supporting infrastructure that strengthens the airport's capacity and encourages airlines to offer more direct domestic and international flights, including frequent service to Calgary, Kelowna and Kamloops. Better transit and regional connections would make travel more practical, improve the movement of people and goods, attract investment, create jobs, and support Abbotsford's next phase of growth.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support a private-sector-aligned economic development model that attracts investment and helps existing businesses grow. The City should collaborate with the private sector to establish clear expectations, responsibilities, timelines, and publicly reported performance targets. It should be accountable for attracting investment, creating and retaining jobs, supporting business expansion, converting opportunities into completed projects, and activating employment lands. Similar to a detailed approval checklist, this framework should show businesses what is required, establish timelines for responding to requests, and provide measurable updates so the public can assess progress and results.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support a strategy to close Abbotsford's amenity gap and attract more workers, visitors, events, and investment. I would prioritize attracting private-sector investment in a centrally located hotel with conference facilities, a pool, wellness amenities, and convenient access to dining and entertainment. Abbotsford needs more hotel capacity to support sports tournaments, business events, and tourism. While Tradex accommodates large events and existing venues provide other options, collaboration between the City and private sector could deliver a modern, mid-sized conference hotel that fills an important gap and strengthens our local economy.

Joel Madsen

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ✓

As a builder and business owner, I've personally experienced the frustration and delays of navigating the City's permitting process. When a project is ready to move forward, waiting for answers and navigating multiple layers of review can be costly. I would support a fast-track system separating smaller, straightforward projects from large developments. Complete applications should target approval within one week, where appropriate, with clear requirements and a single point of contact. For larger projects, I support published timelines and service standards. If a business does its part, City Hall should be accountable for moving applications forward efficiently and predictably.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✓

In the downtown core, we need a proactive approach to repeat offending, open drug use, property damage and the misuse of storefronts. I would advocate for better lighting, cleaner public spaces, consistent police/security presence, and more events and activities that bring families and visitors downtown. I'd also like to expand or implement a downtown cleanup program that provides individuals using local shelters an opportunity to contribute to their community while helping keep downtown clean. Safety isn't only about enforcement; a busy, well-maintained downtown feels safer. Businesses should feel the City is working alongside them, not simply asking them to tolerate ongoing problems.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I would support exploring rapid-transit connectivity between Abbotsford and the Lower Mainland, including the possibility of eventually extending SkyTrain here. I have concerns about the land, cost and infrastructure such a project could require, but I believe we need to have the conversation. Anyone who regularly travels Highway 1 understands the challenges of commuting between Abbotsford and other communities. Better rapid transit could improve access to jobs, education and opportunities while creating economic activity. We should be planning for the transportation needs of Abbotsford 20–30 years from now and making sure our city is part of that regional conversation.

Economic Development

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I don't want more reports and studies—I want visible results: new investment, expanding businesses, jobs created, commercial and industrial development, business retention, and a City that makes it easier to do business. Downtown, that means private investment and redevelopment, updated buildings and storefronts, greater walkability, and events and entertainment that bring people into the core. The City should actively work with developers and businesses to help make that happen. Our job is to create an environment where people want to spend time and businesses want to invest. That investment creates momentum, jobs and economic activity throughout Abbotsford.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✓

I would prioritize expanding and modernizing Abbotsford's sports and recreation facilities. We should upgrade aging fields, courts and facilities while adding capacity on land the City already owns. I would also champion a major, centrally located multi-sport destination with modern fields, diamonds and courts that serves our growing population and attracts regional and provincial tournaments. We should better utilize existing assets. Mill Lake, for example, has underused areas that could accommodate additional amenities, including a larger multi-court pickleball facility. This isn't simply recreation infrastructure. These investments serve our community, attract visitors, support local businesses and generate economic activity.

Kristy Mills

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I would work on finishing and enhancing changes from the last 4 years - I would ask for development permits and rezonings fully online, with completeness checks and tracking the building portal. I would push for publication of timelines for each application type and ask for quarterly reports. I'd want status updates on the ones that are outside the 90 business day target. I'd push for one point of contact for every major commercial and industrial file. Businesses need certainty, and I'll hold city hall to it. Evaluation of changes is essential.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✅

I would build on what is working: Project lighthouse, project clearview, and the police crime map. We need to add commercial area targets with public reporting. We need to bring back a business safety strategy with measurable targets for Historic downtown and other commercial districts. I'd push for more visible enforcement and presence of bylaw and police foot patrol in the area. I'd like to see expanded lighting, cameras, and cleanup of graffiti and vacant properties. A downtown people feel safe in draws customers and investment.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ✅

The investment I would champion is servicing the airport corridor's employment lands. Abbotsford's utility master plans were built for 200,000 people and the new OCP plans for about 250,000. I'd move a motion to ask staff to update them and bring back a costed plan to get water, sewer, and road capacity to industrial land already designated near YXX and Highway 1. Ready-to-build land is how Abbotsford turns tight industrial supply into jobs and investment, and I'd keep progress public.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✅

The city should be accountable for results businesses can see: private investment attracted, jobs created and retained, businesses attracted and expanded, and how many investment inquiries become projects. I'd add permit turnaround times and serviced land ready for development. I'd ask staff to set baselines and targets in the next strategic plan, with business representatives helping shape them, and report annually to the public. What gets measured gets managed, and businesses deserve to see whether city hall's economic development work is paying off.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

Abbotsford should be a tournament host city, not just a tournament stop. We already own strong venues; but require new indoor facilities and host-capable upgrades. I'll move to have staff work with sport associations and tourism groups to explore facility needs to win provincial and national events, with a strategy to attract private investment alongside public dollars. Every event that fills a hotel, restaurant, and shop is local business growth. We'll track events won, visitor spending, and repeat bookings, and build amenities that make people want to live, visit, invest, and come back.

Amrik Narang

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would pursue one accountable City contact for each major application; clear submission requirements; concurrent departmental reviews and online progress tracking. Quarterly reporting to City Council by staff indicating turnaround times, how often targets are met and what is causing delays would be mandatory. Also, I would promote a resident-facing, regularly updated dashboard showing current performance against established targets. I would also explore AI tools to seek efficiencies including an AI review of the application submission identifying deficiencies and corrective action before the application is submitted for City staff review should the applicant wish to use this tool.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

My experience at the Abbotsford Police Board reinforced the idea of coordinated public safety efforts. I would advocate for collaboration among police, bylaw officers, community service providers and a visible police presence in recurring trouble spots. Businesses can't flourish if customers don't feel safe walking in to the businesses and the area is visibly unclear. My discussions with downtown business owners reveal a lack of profitability due to factors including high rental rates, lack of vehicular traffic (due to parking issues) and reduced foot traffic due to lack of public transportation. I would consider all options including enforcing the time limits to park in designated spots; finding additional parking on nearby lands; faster predictable permitting; and hosting events and gatherings to draw people to the area.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

The single biggest infrastructure requirement in Abbotsford currently is to protect the Sumas Prairie from recurrent flooding. Abbotsford farms generate billions in annual revenue and the Trans Canada Highway through Sumas Prairie has been dubbed "a critical corridor for national transportation and energy infrastructure." I would highlight that the infrastructure (highway, rail, pipelines and transmission lines) is a combination of provincial and federal assets and they would be responsible for its repair and replacement in the event of a catastrophic flood. I am uniquely qualified with my legal, business and policy backgrounds to be a strong advocate on behalf of Abbotsford on this topic. I comprehend the legalities of the root cause of the flooding - the overflow of the Nooksack River into Abbotsford - and have familiarized myself with the International Joint Commission to referee this dispute with our American neighbours if it comes to this.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

I am limiting this response to economic development as I assume this is the intent of this question. With respect to business retention and growth, the City should be accountable for net business growth (openings minus closures) tracked on an annual basis in addition to tracking the annual dollar value of investments. The City should provide regularly published data on actual jobs created in target sectors including aerospace, agri-tech, manufacturing, etc). On the real estate development side, the City should be accountable for timely application and permit approvals with an open and transparent tracking system, cross referenced with established targets. File review delays resulting from employee vacations, sick days (or any reason) should be identified and tracked so similar scenarios can be avoided.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

My first priority would be expanding sports and recreation capacity, particularly pools, ice facilities and sports fields, with project sequencing based on demonstrated demand. My aim would be to provide the best option(s) for our taxpayers while respecting their tax dollars. Once the demand for our sports facilities increases, tournament hosting would lead to increased private sector investments in hotels, conferences and dining.

I believe The Reach Gallery Museum does an excellent job promoting arts and culture and regular check ins should be encouraged with supports provided if and when necessary.

Jasmit Phulka

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. 

We need to ensure the people making decisions have the capacity to make informed, effective choices without being weighed down by unnecessary administrative work. Introducing AI tools to streamline routine paperwork is one practical step. The goal isn't to replace staff, but to free up their time so they can fully focus on the work that truly requires their expertise.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. 

Through my volunteer work with Archway, I've seen how powerful prevention can be when people have mentors, support, and places to gather and grow. Safety is something communities build together. The first step is ensuring first responders have the resources they need. The next is making sure supports for people in crisis exist and are accessible. And when crimes occur, there must be appropriate consequences. We can't ignore the problem. We need open, honest conversations about how to create a community that is safe for everyone.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. 

Abbotsford is growing quickly and preparing for the next phase means investing in both the basics and longterm infrastructure. I would note infrastructure isn't just big projects, it's the basics that make neighbourhoods safe and livable, including roads, sidewalks, crosswalks and traffic calming. With only a small percentage of our land base available for development, longterm planning is essential. A signature infrastructure priority would be a comprehensive, multiyear plan that upgrades neighbourhood level safety features while also building the recreation and community facilities a growing city requires. I believe success is a planned event and we need both small fixes and big investments to keep up with growth.

Economic Development

Answer: Qualified Support. 

Council plays an important role in creating the conditions for strong economic development. Clear direction in the Official Community Plan and a permitting process that's easy to understand both help attract new businesses. We need those businesses, the jobs they create, and the tax revenue they bring. I'm open to exploring a privatesectoraligned economic development model, but I'd want to see evidence that it's the most effective path forward. I'm interested in reviewing all options to ensure we choose what works best for Abbotsford.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. 

Proper sports amenities have played a huge role in my life. I still go to the rec centre every morning to train. That's why I would support a comprehensive recreation and public space plan that expands sports facilities, improves parks and upgrades the everyday infrastructure families rely on.

Preet Rai

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

I support the 90-business day target for complete, OCP-compliant development permits by the end of 2027, provided it is practical and measurable. I would support streamlined approvals, clear timelines, better departmental coordination, digital tracking and early issue identification to reduce delays and give businesses greater certainty.

With 18 years on the Abbotsford School Board and over 35 years as a professional accountant, I understand the importance of accountability, efficient use of resources and Responsible Growth, while protecting taxpayers dollars.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

After 18 years on the Abbotsford School Board, where my focus was on every child, my focus as a City Councilor will be on taxpayers and businesses. I would work to make Historic Downtown and other commercial spaces safe, clean, attractive and welcoming by addressing street disorder and repeat offending, improving cleanliness, lighting, beautification and public spaces.

We need a business and customer-friendly downtown where people want to visit and businesses want to stay, invest and grow in Abbotsford. City policies should support business, remove barriers and use taxpayer dollars responsibly.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

I would champion infrastructure that supports responsible growth, including improved connections, roads, transit, servicing for employment lands, and more recreation facilities to meet the needs of a growing community.

With 18 years on the Abbotsford School Board and over 35 years as a professional accountant, I understand the importance of long-term planning, sound financial decisions and delivering major infrastructure projects on time and on budget. Growth should be planned, infrastructure keeps pace, and taxpayer dollars should be invested responsibly for Abbotsford's long-term benefit.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

The City should be accountable for measurable results: investment attracted, jobs created and retained, businesses expanded, employment lands activated, and projects completed. I would require annual public reporting against clear targets, including investment, jobs, business growth, project timelines and economic development spending. Missed targets should require explanation and corrective action. My focus is Fiscal Responsibility and Responsible Growth supporting businesses, growing our tax base and creating jobs while delivering value for taxpayers.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

We need investment across hotel and conference capacity, sports and recreation, public spaces, arts and culture, dining and the evening economy. My priority is a long-term, fiscally responsible plan addressing our pressing gaps and attracting private-sector investment where possible. Better amenities will help attract workers, visitors, events and investment while improving residents' quality of life. With Fiscal Responsibility and Responsible Growth as priorities, we should invest strategically, leverage partnerships and ensure taxpayers receive lasting value.

Patricia Ross

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

Early in our last term this council directed staff to develop ways to speed up the process and we've made significant improvements. However, I'm always in favour of looking to see how we can improve even more. I like the idea of published service standards and approvals, but would like to see if there would be increasing costs like staffing and would that would be. A 90 day business target is a great goal, but these projects can be very complex, involving multiple agencies and levels of government, so that can be somewhat out of our control.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✅

Consultation with these business areas is vital. They know better than I what is needed and sometimes can come up with innovative ideas we may not have considered without them. We've done business walks with these areas to do just that, but expanding it further and implementing some of their suggestions will be important.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ✅

It is absolutely vital that we implement the flood mitigation plans to ensure we don't repeat the devastating flood damage we've had. This is not only important to the agricultural industry and food security, but also to every aspect of life and business in the Fraser Valley, ensuring transportation corridors for the delivery of food and services, etc. Along with that, we must extend the highway expansion through to Chilliwack. We need provincial and federal government funding to do so and are already aggressively pursuing that.

Economic Development

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

There are many different models for private sector aligned economic development, so I'd like to review them all and in consultation with the business sector, develop one that would work best for our specific needs. It would be a team effort that would develop the best results. Increased economic opportunities, quality of life indicators, meeting residents and workers needs and enjoyment of life here, while also ensuring we are protecting and enhancing our natural environment.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

I always have difficulty with being asked to pick a favourite and prioritize it. I don't believe that is sustainable, nor good planning. That is not my approach to decision making, but rather to consider the economic, social and environmental needs with balance, research and common sense, developing sustainable, long term plans that work toward accommodating all needs. That is what we've tried to do with our master plans after extensive public consultation.

Dave Sidhu

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

For a stand-alone development permit, that target is achievable, but timelines can become more complex when rezoning is required. Abbotsford has made real progress modernizing development approvals by streamlining permitting and expanding digital services. I support building on that progress with clear service standards that provide greater certainty while recognizing that complex applications may require additional review. As Chair of the Development, Transportation and Infrastructure Advisory Committee, I have seen the value of early coordination, clear expectations and reducing avoidable delays to keep City Hall responsive and competitive for investment.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

A strong business environment starts with safe, welcoming commercial districts. I support continuing to build the Ambassador Program while strengthening collaboration between AbbyPD, businesses, property owners and community organizations. We should continue targeted enforcement, practical crime-prevention measures and transparent reporting on results. Historic Downtown and every commercial area should be places where employees feel safe, customers want to visit and businesses are confident investing. Continued coordination between the City, police and the business community will help ensure Abbotsford remains a safe and welcoming place to do business.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

Abbotsford's growth depends on infrastructure keeping pace with opportunity. YXX, our employment lands and our transportation network are major economic assets, and they need to be planned together. I support a clear pathway toward stronger airport transit connectivity and long-term employment-land planning, while ensuring decisions are grounded in demand, feasibility and value for taxpayers. Council has already advanced major transportation, transit and long-range planning work. The next step is maintaining that momentum so roads, transit, water, sewer and employment areas support business growth rather than becoming barriers to it.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

Abbotsford has already strengthened its economic-development work through an updated Business Retention and Expansion Strategy, a Business Hub and greater direct engagement with employers. I support continuing a private-sector-informed approach with clear public accountability. The City should report on outcomes businesses actually care about: retention and expansion, new investment, development timelines, employment-land availability and issues identified through direct business engagement. Economic development should be practical, measurable and responsive. The businesses already investing, employing people and paying taxes in Abbotsford should remain central partners in shaping our economic future.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

Abbotsford is making important progress on long-term recreation and amenity planning, and that work should continue. Amenities are not simply quality-of-life investments; they also help attract workers, visitors, events and private investment. I support expanding sports and recreation capacity while also recognizing the importance of hospitality, public spaces, arts, culture and events. Major investments should be assessed carefully for demonstrated demand, accessibility, transportation and parking, operating costs, economic benefit and partnership opportunities. The goal is to strengthen Abbotsford's competitiveness while ensuring taxpayers receive lasting value from every major investment.

Jag Sidhu

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ✓

I would like to make the approval process faster and more efficient reducing any unnecessary delays. Better coordination between departments is also extremely important to avoid delays and ensure applications move forward seamlessly.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✓

I would support increased surveillance and more frequent bylaw patrols in commercial areas where businesses are already experiencing ongoing issues. Collaborating with local business owners to keep the historic downtown clean and welcoming can boost economic vitality.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠

Focusing on Long term transportation and infrastructure growth to keep up with the pace of Abbotsford.

Economic Development

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠

Make permits easier for businesses in Abbotsford and move forward seamlessly working directly with the city business department. Make communication easier and more efficient.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠

Investing in high quality recreation facilities is extremely important for families, the youth, and seniors in Abbotsford. I would also focus on improving current recreation facilities to maintain and expand opportunities for sports and community events. At the same time investing in public spaces, support local businesses, strengthen arts and cultural attractions to bring in more visitors and attract new workers to our community.

Rick Thiessen

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ✓

Dedicated staff whose main tasks revolve around ensuring that approvals are expedited.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠

A greater police presence in the downtown plus identifying repeat offenders to ensure that the provincial courts cooperate and apply appropriate consequences.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠

Explore partnerships with airlines willing to set up at the airport. In addition, ensure that appropriate supporting infrastructure at the airport is in place, such as a hotel on site plus a variety of dining options.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✓

Identifying barriers to economic development and removing them as expeditiously as possible.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✓

Hotel and conference facilities nearer to the airport would help draw new conferences and trade shows. The sports and recreation infrastructure gap is evident to all of those involved but the city needs to identify short and longer term amenity investment that would address those gaps. Creating a more welcoming environment in the downtown area, while also supporting the arts community in its desire to expand regular offerings, would draw more visitors and Abbotsford residents to the historic downtown area.

Mark Warkentin

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I support time-based targets for applications, and measuring the results. I don't know if 90 days is the right number - that would take further consultation with industry and City staff.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✅

I have called for, and will call for, detention of repeat/chronic property offenders while awaiting trial. This will take provincial and Crown counsel support. If we could take the most prolific 30 offenders off the streets after arrest, it will make a measurable difference in crime and safety.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

Sports amenities will be the major piece that is not part of our normal budgeting - it will require borrowing. The public needs to be fully informed of the cost and the impact on property taxes.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✅

The City should be most accountable for things within our control: approving housing applications (approvals are ahead of targets); speed and clarity in permit applications; planning and building infrastructure; delivering core services; and adequate funding for police and support for their work.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

I'm on record supporting the ice, fields/courts, and aquatic strategies to move them ahead. The aquatics facility - how large and complex it should be - will be a top priority for the next term.

Skully White

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I support faster approvals, and I believe 90 business days should be viewed as a maximum, not the goal. I would like to see a concierge-style point of contact, essentially a maitre d' for business and development applications, who can help guide applicants through the process, coordinate between departments, identify delays early, and keep files moving. I also believe we need to make sure Abbotsford can recruit and retain experienced staff. That means regularly benchmarking compensation and working conditions against comparable municipalities so we are not losing good employees to surrounding communities. Faster approvals require both a better process and the skilled people needed to deliver it.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✅

Business owners and their staff deserve to feel safe. Theft, vandalism and violence are not just part of doing business, and we cannot keep acting like they are. I know this first hand. Before the fences went up to secure my work area at lullys, I would wake up each morning wondering what destruction or vandalism was waiting for me. I would push for police, bylaw, outreach workers and local businesses to work together, with clear public reporting so we know what is actually getting done. I would also push the provincial and federal governments for more funding for mental-health care, detox, treatment and housing. Help must be available for people who want it, but repeat offenders must be held accountable. Clean up the streets, improve lighting and put more boots on the ground will help bring people and business back.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

I support improved transit connectivity to YXX, but I would want a clearly defined regional plan before committing to a specific model. That should include which municipalities would be directly served, who would operate the service, how it would be funded, and how costs would be shared. YXX is a regional economic asset, so any long-term transit solution should reflect the broader Fraser Valley communities it serves. In my opinion, Abbotsford is growing fast, and we need to get ahead of the growth. We cannot keep waiting until our roads are jammed and our services are pushed to the limit before we act. We need to plan now, support local businesses, bring new employers and good jobs to Abbotsford, and stop taxpayers from paying more later because we failed to prepare.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✅

The City should be accountable for bringing new businesses and investment to Abbotsford, helping the businesses already here grow, creating and keeping good local jobs, and making it easier for employers to invest here. We should be able to show residents and businesses real results, not just talk about them.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✅

I don't think Abbotsford can afford to look at just one amenity in isolation. We need better sports and recreation facilities, more hotel and conference capacity, stronger public spaces, arts and culture, dining and more reasons for people to stay in Abbotsford instead of leaving the city for those experiences. I also think we need to look harder at corporate sponsorships and private partnerships to help make these projects happen, instead of putting the full cost on taxpayers. Rogers Forum is a good example of how corporate sponsorship and naming rights can help bring private dollars into public facilities, reducing the need to rely entirely on taxpayers.

Shirley Wilson

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ✓

I think an efficiency rapid review of procedures and greater alignment to what is being asked vs what is being delivered is necessary. Streamlining actions into deliverables. Interestingly the city does have a separate reference to permit revenue in its 2026-2030 Financial Plan so it makes sense that streamlining processes increases city revenue and it makes easier work for everyone. Council provides oversight but not operations in this regard. It doesn't mean they can't be part of the solution.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ✓

Increase supports for local policing. But policing alone is not enough. Continuing to work collaboratively, moving ideas for improvements into action for those who own a business property, including public spaces, for employees and guests alike. Aligning our practice with evidence-based actions will help ensure that we are moving in the right direction for everyone involved. Continuing to create more partnerships for housing along with provincial and federal funding to support the capital and resources required is still very key to solving our problem.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Qualified Support. ⚠️

Looking at the master plans, expedite expanded recreational spaces for residents, and for tournament expansion to increase economic drivers. Growth is coming, and the goal should be to make sure new homes and jobs come with the local neighbourhood infrastructure needed to create safe, healthy, and efficient physical and leisure activity places. We need to do more today rather than leaving infrastructure deficits for the next generation. That, and we need a much more responsive transit system.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ✓

The city should be responsible - accountable - for promoting and delivering more refined permitting processes. While many businesses call Abbotsford home and are happy to do business here, we have the capacity to break down barriers for new investments, to listen to what investors want, and to learn from other jurisdictions about what is working well and why. When we say we are open for business, make sure the door isn't revolving, but is instead rolling out the red carpet.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ✓

I've already spoken about the expedited expansion of parks and recreational spaces. But with YXX in our backyard, we can do more, especially when we consider that we are often overlooked because of local transit and space. Abbotsford has so much to offer, yet we are missing out on the bigger events and conferences that instead land in Surrey (transit/hotel/venue) and into Richmond, as well. We support this, and that filters out to small businesses that make Abby unique.

Doris Woodman-McMillan

Council Candidate



Faster Business Approvals

Answer: Yes. ☒

Waiting months for a simple answer costs businesses money and can drive investment out of Abbotsford. That is not being open for business. Every major application should have one staff contact responsible for moving it forward. Applicants should be able to track their file online and see exactly what is missing, who has it and when the next decision is due.

I support the 90-day target, but targets mean nothing without enough qualified staff, better processes and consequences when timelines are repeatedly missed. Council should publish approval times and compare Abbotsford with other cities.

Safe and Vibrant Business Districts

Answer: Yes. ☒

A strategy alone will not make downtown safer. Businesses are paying for broken windows, theft and cleanup, and they deserve action, not another report. I will push for police, bylaw, outreach workers and businesses to share information and respond quickly to repeat offenders and problem locations. The public should be told what is working and what is not. Safety matters, but so does bringing people back. We need clean streets, good lighting, visible patrols and events that give people a reason to come downtown. I also support downtown street-level shops with housing above.

Infrastructure for Growth

Answer: Yes. ☒

An international airport with no practical transit connection makes no sense. Employees need to get to work, travellers need an alternative to driving, and businesses need reliable access.

I would push for a direct, frequent bus route connecting YXX with central Abbotsford, major employment areas and regional transit. But I will not support an expensive route that runs empty. The schedule must reflect actual employee shifts and flight times. We also need to identify which employment lands can realistically be serviced and developed. A strategy that sits on a shelf is useless.

Economic Development

Answer: Yes. ☒

The City should not measure economic development by how many meetings it holds or reports it produces.

I want public reporting on new investment that actually lands in Abbotsford, businesses that open or expand, jobs created, employment land brought into use and how long projects take to move from inquiry to approval.

The City should also track why businesses walk away or leave. That information matters.

Targets must be realistic, not vague. If taxpayers are funding economic development, Council should know what we are getting for the money and change course when it is not working.

Abbotsford's Amenity Gap

Answer: Yes. ☒

Abbotsford has grown, but our amenities have not kept up. Families leave the city for sports and recreation, and we lose the spending that goes with them. My priority would be tournament-capable sports and recreation facilities, including more fields, indoor courts and spaces that can be used year-round. These facilities serve residents while attracting visitors and business. I want real projects with proper costing, timelines, partnerships and operating plans. We should also clear the road for more hotel and conference capacity and remove barriers so Abbotsford can actually host the events.

The following candidates did not submit a response to the survey by the deadline:

Mayoral Candidates:

- David Pellikaan

Council Candidates:

- Les Barkman
- Matthew Cavacece
- Simon Gibson
- Jeremy Klix
- Dao Tran
- Thomas Votik