Investment-Ready
Abbotsford

THE STORY OF AN INTELLIGENT COMMUNITY

ICF

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I n 2018, the City of Abbotsford began a dialogue with the Intelligent Community Forum through its ICF Canada national organization. The goal was to increase the city's ability to attract inward investment and stimulate greater investment by companies already in the community – and to do it at a time of unprecedented economic change driven by digital technology.

ICF Canada has since delivered workshops, metric analysis and advisory services to the leadership of the city to deepen understanding of today's economic development challenges and opportunities, and to contribute to the evolution of new strategies and programs.

While working with Abbotsford's leaders, ICF Canada also undertook to develop a guidebook that would draw on the community's experiences and the ICF Method to capture a snapshot of a city involving into an Intelligent Community. The guidebook is being developed in two stages. The first stage, represented here, provides a snapshot overview of Abbotsford's development projects at the end of 2018, less than one year after the start of work with ICF Canada. A subsequent stage will report on the results of those activities and the updated plan and programs that Abbotsford will develop to accelerate its progress.

Inspired by its work with ICF Canada, Abbotsford submitted a questionnaire to ICF's Intelligent Community Award program. Through independent evaluation by ICF's team of academic and professional Analysts, the city was named in October 2018 as one of ICF's Smart21 Communities of the Year. This is the first of three stages in the year-long evaluation program based on analysis of data from hundreds of communities around the world. In February 2019, the city was named one of the Top7 Intelligent Communities of the Year from among the Smart21.

These achievements signaled the arrival on the world stage of this midsize city in western Canada and Abbotsford's forward momentum on building out its smart city infrastructure and fostering collaborative partnerships with key community stakeholders. While the great cities of the world increasingly act as economic magnets, midsize and smaller cities and counties are carving out a niche of their own. Digital technology has helped concentrate wealth in such iconic places as San Francisco and New York, Berlin and London, Singapore and Taipei, but that power can also be harnessed by the emerging cities and regions. It takes a determined strategy and consistent execution to replace the natural magnetism of great cities. But the digital revolution that has upended so many ways of life and work also gives lesser-known places new and exciting opportunities to build a better future.

A New Path to Growth

If you've ever considered visiting the west coast of North America, you've likely heard of Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada – just as you have heard of Seattle, San Francisco and Los Angeles, San Diego, Las Vegas and Phoenix. But unless you live in the Greater Vancouver Area, you may not have heard of the City of Abbotsford.

Abbotsford is located on the eastern edge of the Greater Vancouver Area along the United States border. Approximately one hundred forty thousand people call it home and it is also the largest city, by geography in the province. Abbotsford is one of the most diverse cities in the nation, next to Vancouver and Toronto, with more than a quarter of its population hailing from South Asia. Agriculture is its biggest industry sector, with much of its land base utilized for farming. Its farmers make good use of that land, earning the highest income per acre of any place in Canada.

Abbotsford could be seen as just another smaller city – a nice place with a rewarding quality of life. But it is well worth a second look. Because it is setting out to do something that only big cities are supposed to do in the 21st Century: make itself an investment magnet operating on a national and even global stage. This is the story of how the city started out on an unlikely journey. It is the story of how one place marshalled its assets, the ambitions of its leaders and the imagination and energy of its people to begin creating an economy poised to prosper in the decades ahead.
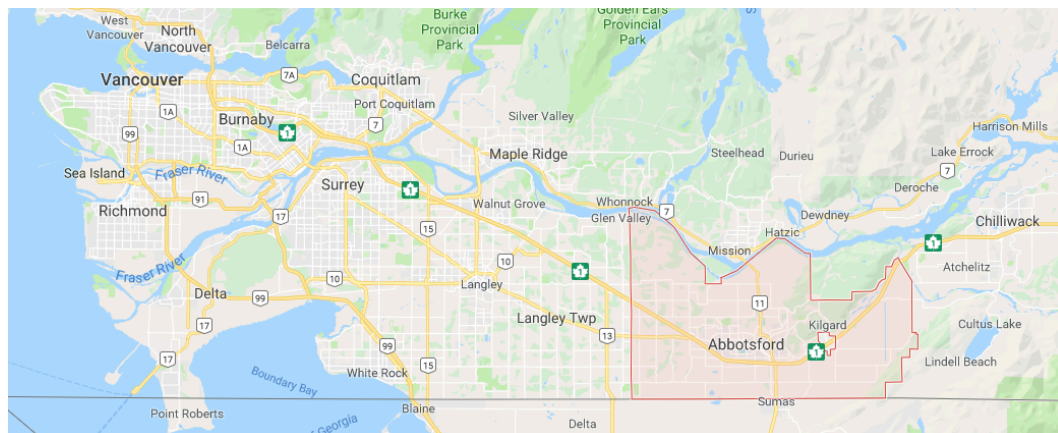
What Kind of Growth?

As the 21st Century entered its second decade, Abbotsford's leadership began taking a serious look at the future. Demographers were predicting that its population,

driven by the continued fast growth of the Vancouver economy, would increase substantially from 140,000 to 200,000 people in a matter of years. The burning question was what form that growth would take.

Would Abbotsford's economy continue to be dominated by the export of agricultural products? Would its future lie in becoming a bedroom community for Vancouver and home to retail and a smattering of light industry? At first glance, Abbotsford's leaders wanted another box to check: none of the above.

Agriculture can be a frail reed on which to rest an advanced economy. While it creates wealth for the owners of Abbotsford's extensive farmland – total gross farm receipts in 2010 were over C$635 million – it employs relatively few people; in Abbotsford's case, only half of one percent of the population. In business terms, the growing of food adds relatively little value compared to turning that raw material into consumer products. Nothing illustrates this better than the astounding fact that tiny Holland is the world's second largest food exporter by dollar value – second to the United States, which is more than 200 times its size. Holland specializes in not only growing the food but also in processing it into higher-valued food products.

Abbotsford's farmers, however, are in the business of growing food for export. The top three crops by acreage are hay and fodder; fruits, berries and nuts; and corn. Over 9 million poultry birds were raised in 2010 as well. Once the food leaves Abbotsford's boundaries, so does most of its economic value.

Mayor Henry Braun has been an Abbotsford resident for most of his life and was the co-owner, president and CEO of Abbotsford-based Pacific Northern Rail Contractors Corp until his retirement in 2003. Mayor Braun was first elected to serve as a Council Member in 2011. In November 2014, Henry was elected to serve his first term as the Mayor of Abbotsford, and in October 2018, he was re-elected to serve his second term as Mayor. Henry is a champion for the City of Abbotsford. He is a strategic thinker and exemplifies this through Council's strategic plan that centers Abbotsford as the Hub of the Fraser Valley.

Being a bedroom community has benefits. It brings outside money into the city. But it also brings costs, both tangible and intangible. What impacts on the city's qualify of life would those additional 60,000 residents impose if most drew their salary from neighbouring Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond or Vancouver? Or to put it another way, what opportunities would Abbotsford be missing if a significant part of its economy depended on the economic vitality of places beyond its borders? That is a familiar and much unloved tradition in Canada – to serve as the "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for outside owners who gain most of the value of those products, from lumber to automotive assembly. Maintaining that unloved tradition was not high on the priority list for Abbotsford's leaders.

What if there was a third way? Instead of shipping food or sending workers to other places, might Abbotsford work to create new opportunities within the city?

Might they make Abbotsford its own economic centre beyond the outer edge of the Greater Vancouver Area, which could generate continued prosperity and ensure that it spreads as widely as possible across the community? Could that economic dynamism, in turn, make Abbotsford a place that people commuted to rather than only commuted from?

There is a name for what Abbotsford wanted to be, a name usually associated with cities much larger and better known. Abbotsford was setting out to become investment-ready.

Investment Readiness

Investment readiness as an idea arising from the last decades of globalization. It recognizes that business investment washes around the world in great waves, seeking places where it can earn the best long-term returns. It also recognizes that businesses and institutions in the community are on the hunt for locations that can help them to succeed. If a city does not offer what they seek, it will lose out on the next opportunity. Worse, it may lose an existing employer to a competing location that can deliver better conditions for success.

What makes a location investment-ready? According to a 2014 report by the Urban Land Institute, the top traditional factors are:

- Easy access to markets and customers

- Availability of qualified staff

- Quality of telecommunications

- Transport links with other cities and internationally

- Costs for land, buildings, rental space and employees

- Simplicity and predictability of government processes and taxes

- Quality of life in terms of housing, environment, transportation and amenities

These are time-honored criteria. Economic centres rise where roads cross and water meets land. As people gather there, they create economic opportunity as workers and consumers. In our global economy, distances shrink and the ability to communicate with, and transport people and goods to, faraway places becomes essential.

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Traditional Foundations

Abbotsford certainly possesses assets that form a solid foundation for investment-readiness. The city is home to the Abbotsford International Airport, which is becoming the Vancouver region's second airport of choice, served by Westjet and other low-cost carriers. The airport also houses the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) Aerospace Centre, which provides technical education on maintaining, repairing and overhauling aircraft structures. UFV's main campus is east of the airport in what has been named the UDistrict. The third leg of the stool is the Abbotsford Regional Hospital and Cancer Centre. This LEED Gold-certified facility opened in 2008, tripling the size of the previous facility.

Supporting Abbotsford's attractiveness to investment is its location on the US border, with two international border crossings, and a transportation network that includes the Trans-Canada Highway and two national rail lines, plus proximity to the Port of Vancouver. The city is also home to the Fraser Valley Trade & Exhibition Centre with 120,000 square feet of space.

Add up these assets and they point to the kind of traditional investment-readiness strategy advocated by the Urban Land Institute. Assemble large parcels of industrial land, equip it with basic infrastructure and offer it to developers eager to leverage a prime location and excellent transportation at low cost.

For Abbotsford, however, that road is marked "no exit." More than 80% of its land is set aside for agricultural use, and the agricultural sector is dominated by small farms, with more than half farming fewer than 70 acres. The remaining industrial lots for sale are spread in small chunks across the city and their relative scarcity means that land prices are high relative to similar Canadian and US locations.

This reality poses a challenge to the city's chances of attracting a major industrial developer seeking cheap dirt to build on. On the other hand, it is one more factor that has driven Abbotsford to seek a different approach to becoming investment-ready.

Traditional Approaches to Making It Better

Building on the Urban Land Institute's advice for communities that want to improve their investment readiness, ICF recognizes several traditional strategies including:

Enhance the Community's Physical Environment

The initial – and often lasting – impression a site locator or an investor takes away from a community is its physical presence. Is it memorable or just another community in a long list of cities, towns and regions that an investor or site locator visits to determine a potential new branch operation or business expansion opportunity? Communities make investments to impress outside investors as well as send the right signals to current residents and businesses. This normally includes streetscape improvements, parks and interesting town centres with outdoor cafes, architectural lighting of trees and buildings and interesting urban design features.

Enhance the local business climate

No business operates in a vacuum. To make themselves more attractive, cities invest in upgrading the infrastructure and commercial facilities of their business districts. They work on safety, transportation, parking, communications access and the commercial vitality of the city centre – but also on providing social and cultural attractions for visitors and the people who work in those businesses. They form Business Improvement Areas (or Districts) (BIAs), undertake regular events to bring visitors and citizens "downtown" and help nurture unique quarters for galleries, restaurants, cafes and entertainment. Some cities also encourage residential construction in commercial areas to ensure vibrancy around the clock.

Deliver services to support and enhance business growth

In addition to the business environment, cities develop services to support businesses and entrepreneurs seeking growth, from improving licensing and permitting to offering help and training with business formation, financing, operations and customer acquisition.

Enhance the perception of the local business climate

Developing infrastructure, facilities and services is not enough to change the investment climate. Perceptions linger long after circumstances on the ground have changed. So, municipalities must also work hard to communicate the new advantages it offers to existing businesses and potential inward investors. Local Chambers and Economic Development offices representing the community develop presentations on their competitive advantages and, in some countries and regions, offer various incentives for business retention or attraction.

Focus on business retention

Communities seeking investment naturally focus outward – but the majority of economic growth in most places is produced by companies and institutions already located there. Municipalities do well to focus on existing employers to ensure that growth and to head off the potential for them to relocate to competitor cities. Strategies range from getting to know the local business needs through regular contact to business achievement awards. Engaging local businesses in committees,

social organizations and as sponsors of local events and sports teams is a traditional practice to develop loyalty and appreciation of the community spirit.

A New Model for a New Age

These criteria and improvement strategies are time-honored for a good reason. They work. Their very success, however, comes with a cost. Because they work, everybody uses them. Every community looking for a boost spends money or organizes business improvement districts in its downtown.   Every economic development agency publishes a map showing its community at the centre of transportation networks and runs glossy campaigns declaring that it is open for business.

That kind of thing works well as long as competition is slim. But the global economy puts every ambitious place in competition with every other, and as any small business owner can tell you, competition is about offering something of value that sets you apart.

The search for something of value that sets them apart is leading more and more cities and towns to adopt the Intelligent Community model of development. It is an approach that considers the community as a whole and investment readiness to be as much a matter of people as of things.   It translates the time-honored path to investment readiness into a method for creating inclusive prosperity, solving social challenges and enriching culture – and doing it at a time when digital technology progress threatens all three.

In addition to addressing the traditional factors that affect investment readiness, the leaders of Abbotsford adopted the ICF Method for turning their city into an Intelligent Community – one with a set of home-grown advantages that will sustain it through good times and bad in a region and nation changing dramatically by the year.

Intelligent Investment-Readiness

Intelligent Communities, whether urban or rural, pursue a better future along six lines of development. They take the traditional markers of investment-readiness and update them for a time when connectivity determines competitiveness, when standard ways of doing business are evolving at high speed, and employment depends more on skills than a strong back.

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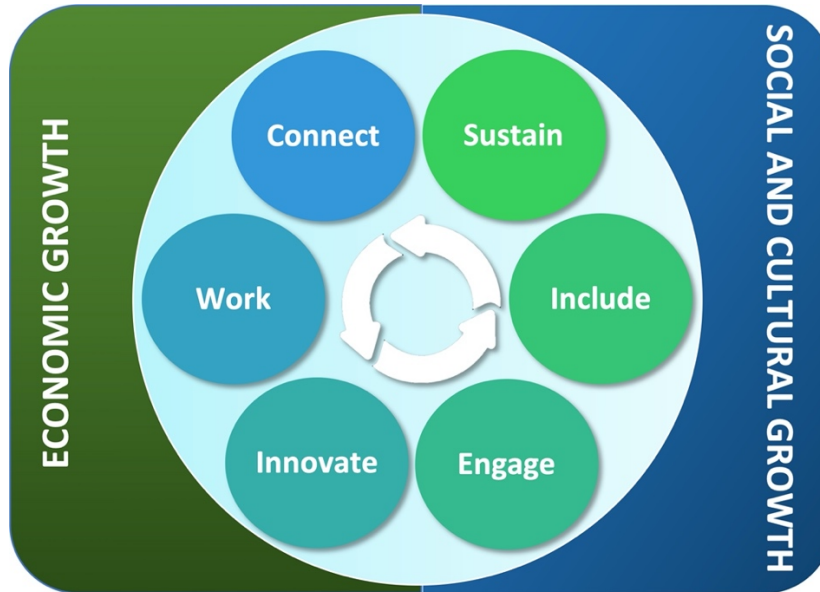
Broadband and information technology, operating at high speeds and at competitive cost, are the new infrastructure driving economic growth. They are also disruptive forces changing how we work, play, learn, shop, entertain ourselves and relate to each other. Intelligent Communities express a strong vision of a broadband future and work in many ways to encourage deployment and adoption.

Work

Intelligent Communities exhibit the determination and demonstrated ability to develop a workforce qualified to perform knowledge work, from the factory floor to the research lab and from the construction site to the call centre or corporate headquarters. Knowledge-based work is the source of all employment today paying good wages.

Innovate

Intelligent Communities pursue innovation through a three-way relationship among business, government and such institutions as universities and hospitals to create new knowledge and technology applications that feed the local economy. Government leads by

example through investment in technology to improve services and reduce operating costs.

Include

Intelligent Communities ensure digitization does not marginalize segments of the population, creating social strain that contributes to unemployment and crime. They instead create policies and fund programs that provide everyone with access to broadband, digital technology and digital skills training, and they motivate people to acquire skills.

Sustain

Intelligent Communities understand that sustainability is more than a good cause – it is a major new industry that also contributes to local quality of life. Sustainability goals can organizations, community groups and neighbourhoods to actively participate, contributing to civic pride, local identity and mutual understanding.

Engage

Intelligent Communities devote time and resources to educating and engaging their citizens, businesses and institutions as true partners in understanding challenges, identifying solutions and planning a better future. They patiently build common understanding to minimize the resistance that can prevent a community from making critical changes. Intelligent Communities are also good marketers to the outside world of their digital age advantages for economic development and investment attraction purposes.

The First Step

The hardest part of any journey is the first step. Intelligent Communities start their journey from different places, depending on their challenges, their opportunities and the individual passions of their leaders. One of the best places to start, however, is with **engagement** – last on the list above but fundamental to every effort a community makes to change its destiny.

Creating Advocates for Positive Change

Engagement is the glue that binds Intelligent Communities to a better future. It is the deliberate effort through civic leadership to engage citizens, business, institutions and community leaders in understanding the need for change, identifying opportunities and becoming champions of that change.

Successful engagement provides the foundation for the community's public identity in its outreach to the world. It energizes economic development, investment attraction and business generation, because the community has built a unique vision of its character and its future. In their own eyes, its people are no longer just living in one community among hundreds of thousands like it. They are in the best place to live, work, start a business, raise a family and pass their heritage to the next generation.

Community leaders – whether they are elected, appointed or volunteer – can create an overall game plan and bring citizens, businesses and organizations together. But only by engaging the energies of champions across the community will you achieve the progress you are looking for.

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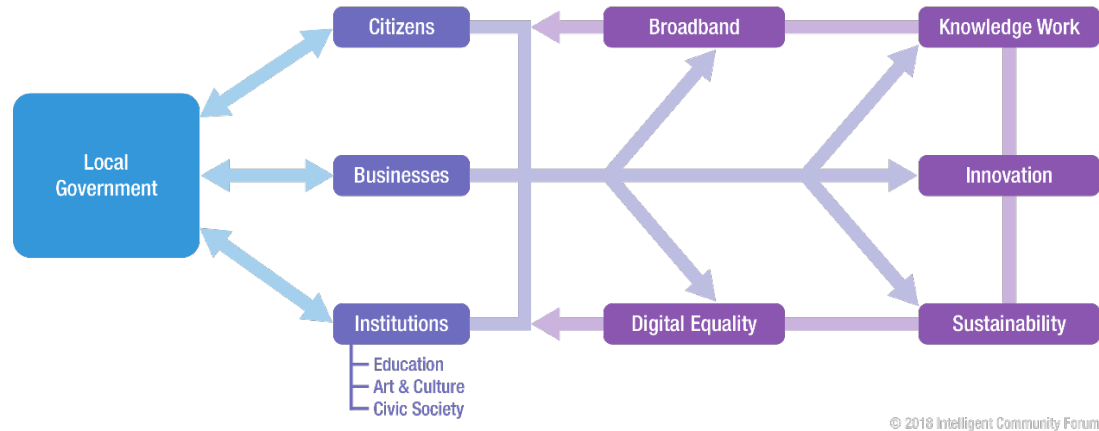
How Engagement Works

Local government connects with citizens, businesses and institutions through events, discussion forums and brainstorming that educate them on the challenges and opportunities facing the community. They combine physical meetings with digital interaction that ensures the broadest possible participation. They target recognized leaders of the community, who can serve as champions for their followers and convincingly explain the emerging vision and its benefits.

Engagement at a Glance

- Public discussion forums and brainstorming to fully understand and appreciate the challenges and opportunities facing the community.
- Physical meetings and digital interaction to ensure the broadest possible participation.
- Government convening, facilitating and turning ideas into specific strategies and plans, and marshalling resources to carry them forward.
- Citizens, business people and nonprofit leaders providing the energy and commitment that make change possible.
- Building on early successes, continuously raising community confidence in its ability to do things that once seemed impossible.

It is in close collaboration with these constituents that Intelligent Communities develop an action plan based on the framework of the Intelligent Community Indicators. Government plays its essential role at convening, turning ideas into specific strategies and plans, and marshalling resources to carry them forward. Citizens, business people and nonprofit leaders, however, provide the energy and commitment that make change possible. Taking energy from early successes, the

community continuously raises its expectations and revises its vision, daring to do things that seemed impossible at the beginning.

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Engagement in Abbotsford: Abbotsforward

Abbotsford's Official Community Plan – called Abbotsforward – brought together almost two years of background research, growth scenarios, and broad community engagement with stakeholder groups and Abbotsford residents; and iterative review with City Council, staff across all departments, and a Citizen Advisory Commission.

Abbotsforward was designed to create a plan for tomorrow, not yesterday or today. It embraced the power of a plan-making process as a catalyst and was defined by broad engagement and robust technical due diligence over four stages of work.

Broad Community Engagement

The engagement in Abbotsforward was highly successful for two main reasons:

- The engagement effectively reached a broad and diverse audience. A wide variety of opportunities were provided for engagement throughout the process, resulting in several thousand residents coming into meaningful contact with Abbotsforward, with more than 7,000 distinct interactions in which participants directly provided input. This was the largest engagement in the City's history. Based on demographic data collected through online surveys, the engagement process included voices representing all age groups; females and males equally; diverse ethnic backgrounds and languages; residents living in all areas across urban and rural Abbotsford; and people who live, work, study, and/or own a business in Abbotsford.

- Strong themes emerged from the community input. While there were many different views, as is the case in any engagement process, strong themes emerged

that transcended engagement activities and demographic groups. These themes are the building blocks of the vision, big ideas, and big moves throughout this Plan.

Big Ideas to Realize the Vision

This vision of Abbotsford will be brought to life through smart, strategic land use regulation and policy direction outlined in the Plan. These directions are diverse, providing guidance for land use, urban design, housing, transportation, infrastructure, jobs, open space, arts and culture, heritage, climate change and energy conservation, natural areas, and agriculture. Policy directions are organized around seven Big Ideas for the future of Abbotsford that comprise the most essential and transformative ingredients of the Plan.

CREATE A CITY CENTRE

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

ESTABLISH COMPLETE AND DISTINCT NEIGHBOURHOODS

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

MAKE WALKING, BIKING AND TRANSIT DELIGHTFUL

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

MAKE PLACES FOR PEOPLE

Abbotsford will have attractive and interesting public spaces. While pedestrian-friendly buildings will provide the frame for public life, streets and other open spaces such as parks and plazas will provide the stage.

IMPROVE NATURAL AND BUILT SYSTEMS

Abbotsford will become both more "city" and more "country," where the city becomes more urban and the integrity of the country becomes stronger. In the country, Abbotsford's cherished natural areas will remain intact. Habitat will provide space for wildlife to thrive, recreational areas will provide residents access to nature close to home, and ecosystems will provide Abbotsford with clean air and water.

ENHANCE AGRICULTURAL INTEGRITY

Abbotsford's agricultural areas – which comprise a long-standing pillar of the local economy and form a vital part of Abbotsford's character – will be protected as places for agricultural production and processing, and of thriving livelihoods. Agriculture is changing and Abbotsford is well positioned to sustain a strong base of traditional agriculture while also looking to the future.

MAKE THE PLAN WORK

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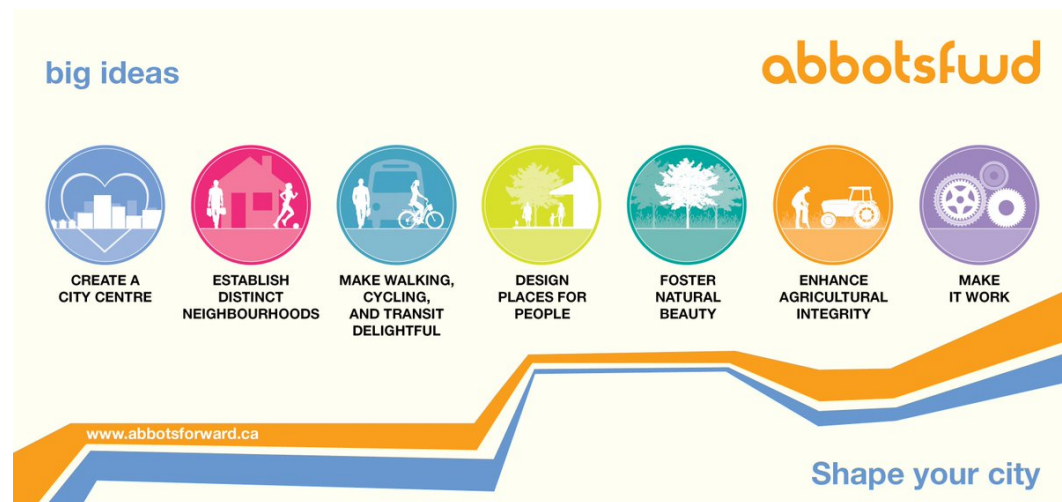
Charting the Future

The Official Community Plan resulted in the following key priorities adopted by Council in 2016:

LIFE IN THE CITY

Our city has more street life, more night life, and more public life as we grow. There are many options for entertainment, culture, recreation, and gathering with others. These include public places like libraries, community centres, cafes and night spots.

CITY CENTRE

Our city sees the beginning of a true City Centre as the heart of public, economic, and cultural life. It has a clear identity as the most vibrant urban area in the city with diverse destinations and activities. It is also a successful and complete urban neighbourhood.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICE

We have real, attractive choices in the way we move around our city. We will be able to safely and enjoyably get around by foot and bike, and have access to transit that is frequent, fast, and reliable.

WALKABLE, BUSTLING NEIGHBOURHOODS

More of us are able to walk to a grocery store and other daily needs in our neighbourhoods. We have more destinations for celebrating heritage, learning, shopping, playing, gathering, and working close to home.

NATURAL AREAS AND TRAILS

Our cherished trails and natural areas are protected for generations to come, and the quality of our air, water, and parks improve each year.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the backbone of our history and a pillar of our economy. As an important part of our past, it is also an important part of our future. We keep agricultural areas for agriculture.

HOUSING OPTIONS

We have more affordable ownership, rental, and shelter housing options, including housing types for all stages of life, allowing people to stay in their neighbourhoods as they age.

COMPACT CITY

We build up much more than we build out. In the process, we respect the character of our existing neighbourhoods even as they continue to change.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS

We collectively conserve resources and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through more efficient, well-designed, and cost-effective systems of open space, housing and buildings, infrastructure, and transportation.

JOBS

We are expanding our diverse economy and employment base, building on our existing strengths including the university, airport, hospital, and agriculture. We have shorter commutes to and from work, within a compact urban area.

MILL LAKE

Mill Lake is the jewel in our city. It will be maintained, enhanced, and celebrated as an integral part of our city identity.

Mill Lake Park

Plan 200K

After the City's adoption of this new Official Community Plan, a new initiative was launched called Plan 200K. This included the implementation of 20 different projects to implement the vision of the Official Community Plan and provide a roadmap to a future when Abbotsford's population reaches the 200,000 mark.

These projects include nine new masterplans (Parks Recreation and Culture, Fire Rescue, Transit, Transportation, City Water, City Wastewater, Abbotsford/Mission Joint Water, Abbotsford/Mission Joint Wastewater, and Drainage) as well as four neighbourhood plans, and seven studies and projects including an Affordable Housing Strategy, Zoning Bylaw Update, and an Industrial Land Supply Study.

This visionary initiative will position Abbotsford for its future as the Hub of the Fraser Valley.

So Far, So Traditional

It is hard to make predictions, observed baseball great Yogi Berra, especially about the future.

In engagement, when we ask people for their vision of the future, what we inevitably get is largely about the past. It's hard to envision a community that you do not yet live or work in, just as it is difficult for you to envision what consumer product will satisfy needs that you don't yet have. (That is why Steve Jobs was considered such a visionary in technology circles.)

CANADA DAY IN ABBOTSFORD

The list of Big Ideas in Plan 200K will sound familiar to anyone who keeps up with the latest trends in urban planning. Creating a sense of place so that neighbourhoods have a culture, a feel and a vibe that makes each distinct in its own

way. A city centre that combines business, housing, retail and entertainment within a compact and vibrant space attractive to the urbanized tastes of the new generation. Expansion of transportation to encompass walking and biking, and increased transit options from shuttle buses between prime locations to light rail and street trolleys, so that people can get out of their cars and into the streets and sidewalks.

These are the things being tried in many places both large and small. They work. Investment in them will make a positive difference to the community over the long term. And the process of engaging citizens and organizational leaders in designing the future has great value in preparing the community for change that might otherwise run into resistance. It also signals to potential talent and investors that its citizens are engaged and the municipality is open to the future.

But Abbotsford's leaders and planners also recognize that the Big Ideas will not by themselves fundamentally transform the city's attractiveness as an investment destination – not with the land use constraints the city faces and competition from Vancouver to the west and Seattle to the south. Such transformation requires the ICF Method and launches the city on a journey whose outlines are only beginning to become clear.

Other Opportunities for Engagement

- Develop a website focused on foreign direct investment that answers all the preliminary questions an investor will have about Abbotsford and its people, including statistics, images, testimonials and concierge services for such specialized area as TV and film production.

- Develop webinars focused on industries where Abbotsford has strengths to attract and engage potential investors, which can also create opportunities to develop investment attraction missions to other cities.

Digital Infrastructure

Your daily life today began to take shape in the 1980s. That was when the personal computer began putting serious computing power into our hands to do everything from writing and arithmetic to creating software. Year by year, the devices got smaller, cheaper and more powerful, spreading from businesses and governments to homes and schools. Something called email came along in the 1990s and transformed how we communicate. It was the first hugely successful application of something new called the internet. Another decade of advances gave birth to social networks on the internet and extended all this computing and communicating to gadgets we hold in our hands.

Connect

Here in the 21st Century, the ability to connect ever-cheaper computing power through the internet has produced the first truly global economy, changing how we live, earn a living, deliver services and products, educate and govern ourselves, and connect to those we know and those we do not.

The digital economy is not just about the software, mobile apps and social networks we use. Using digital technologies, industrial manufacturers, banks, waste collectors, electric utilities, trucking companies, restaurants and hotels have reorganized, streamlined operations and made their people and facilities much more productive. Big companies have led the change and created pressure for midsize and small companies to do the same. Today, broadband and information technology have become a kind of infrastructure – like electricity, roads, water and sanitation – that no place can do without and call itself competitive or investment-ready.

The Investment Decision

Investment in most kind of infrastructure that delivers a public good is judged successful not only when it generates money but when it delivers a public good. The challenge for communities is that communications in most of the world is a private-sector business, not a publicly-controlled utility. Decisions on communications investment have only one metric: the income that investment will produce.

Which makes life hard for communities whose communications service providers struggle to make the financial case. Even if they have reasonable coverage of broadband at acceptable speeds and prices, communities can find themselves falling behind because employers lack access to the very high speeds and capacity they need as digital technology becomes central to how they do business.

Intelligent Communities understand this reality and take action to change the facts on the ground in ways that motivate the private sector to invest and keep investing – or sometimes to force the private sector to compete. There are five major strategies that communities pursue, depending on their willingness to take unconventional action that can lead to controversy.

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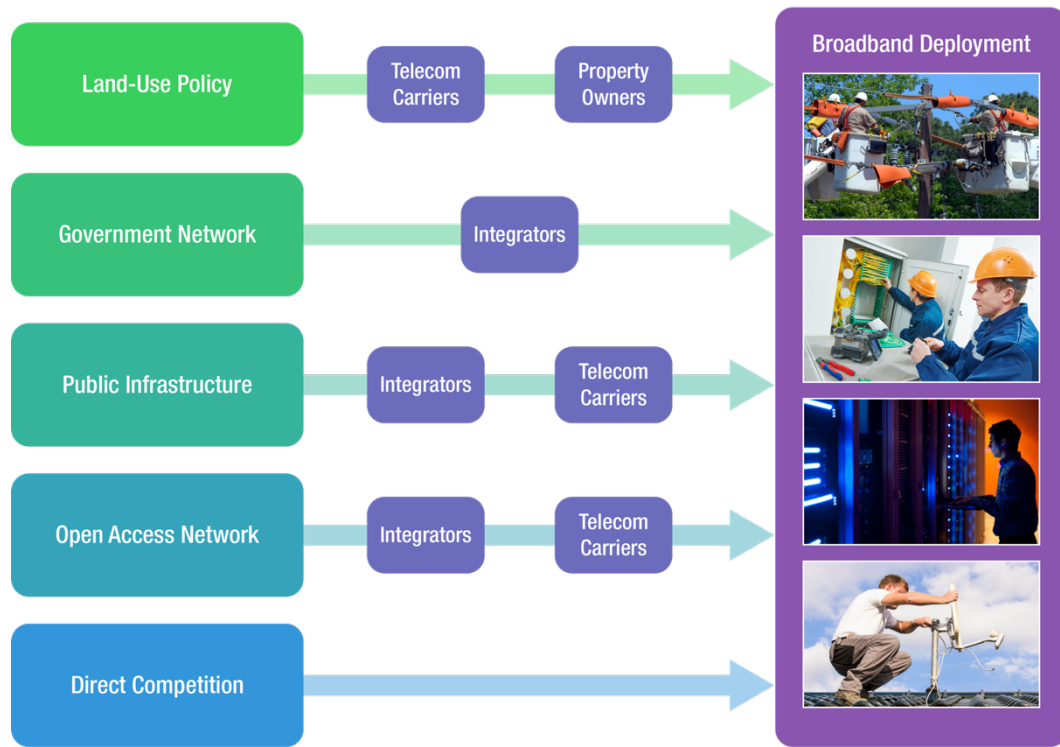
Land-Use Policy

At the least controversial end of the spectrum, governments can direct the accepted tools of land-use policy to encourage broadband deployment, including:

- Mapping existing broadband networks to identify gaps, then bringing that knowledge to negotiations with private-sector carriers.

- Improving access policies for poles and conduit.

- Requiring the installation of conduit during all street excavation for lease to carriers, which will generate income to offset the cost.

- Change building codes to require that new and renovated developments be broadband-ready.

Government Network

In most jurisdictions, governments can build and operate networks to serve their own facilities. This investment is easy to justify, because it replaces monthly telecom bills and typically pays off in less than five years. Using the network, government can deploy free Wi-Fi in public locations and develop online constituent services that increase user demand for broadband. Public investment in networks also begins to change how private carriers view the costs and benefits of continuing to withhold investment in extending and upgrading their own networks.

Creating Public Infrastructure

Building infrastructure is the traditional business of government. Some local governments build "dark" telecommunications assets: conduit networks, optical fibre networks and wireless towers. They market this infrastructure to carriers and organizations with major communications needs. Those buyers install equipment, activate circuits and deliver services. Lease payments from these users cover the capital, maintenance and upgrade costs of the network. This approach steers clear of concerns about government competing with the private sector while creating greater competition in the market.

Open Access Network

Some communities go beyond "dark" infrastructure to create open access networks. They build, activate and manage a government-owned or public-private network. It provides the "transport layer" – the foundation level of digital connection between physical locations. On this foundation, companies and carriers operate the services that meet the needs of their users. By further reducing the costs and risks for the private sector, open access networks have proven their ability in many different markets to produce a sharp increase in competition.

Direct Competition

The most extreme step communities can take is to compete directly with the private sector. This typically happens when private telephone and cable incumbents oppose all efforts at collaboration, most often in rural communities where not even the construction of dark or open access networks can make the market attractive to outside competitors. It may take advantage of municipally-owned utilities whose existing infrastructure reduces the capital needs of network construction. The primary goal of these networks is to contribute to economic growth and better quality of life for residents, businesses and institutions.

The Private Sector Steps Up

When it comes to digital infrastructure, Abbotsford has location on its side. It is part of the Greater Vancouver Area with its population of 2.5 million and is the province's second biggest city in population terms. The reservation of so much of its land for agriculture, which is an obstacle to traditional economic development, is a benefit for broadband investment, because it concentrates people, businesses and institutions in a relatively small area. Density is good for communications: the more potential subscribers packed into a square mile or kilometer, the higher the possible return on investment.

These considerations enabled Telus, the incumbent communications provider, to justify a Can$80 million investment to connect more than 90 percent of homes and businesses in Abbotsford with optical fibre. The installation was completed in 2017 and offers subscribers speeds of up to 300 Mbps. Capacity expansion is expected to increase that speed up to 1 Gbps. Further extending the capacity is a Telus project to

install smart small-cell base stations on street poles throughout the city to improve mobile and Wi-Fi connectivity without building more cellular towers.

Investment has a way of begetting more investment. Another company, Zayo, completed its own optical fibre installation in 2017. This network aims to provide technology businesses, including data centres, with dedicated, very high capacity connections to support massive throughput. Shaw Communications, another major carrier, is turning Abbotsford into one huge Wi-Fi hotspot, mirroring a project the company completed in Vancouver. By July 2018, Shaw had already installed more than 1,000 hotspots in the city, including in all government-owned facilities. And on the horizon is Rogers Communications which is also looking at opportunities in Abbotsford.

TELUS WORKERS INSTALLING OPTICAL FIBRE

With its digital infrastructure in place, Abbotsford is in the fortunate position of being to concentrate its full energies on turning that asset into greater prosperity, social connection and cultural strength.

Foundations of Growth

A competitive local economy in the digital age has two major features. It has found a way to create and attract a growing workforce that uses specialized skills and broad knowledge to do the work of the digital economy. It also excels at innovation in both the private and public sectors, which generates robust growth.

Knowledge Workforce

The term "knowledge work" was coined by management consultant Peter Drucker, who forecast in 1973 that, within two decades, it would become impossible to maintain a middle-class lifestyle by working with your hands. Drucker's forecast signaled that the world we knew was changing. He called the new work that would be required to enter the middle class "knowledge work" and the people who performed it "knowledge workers."
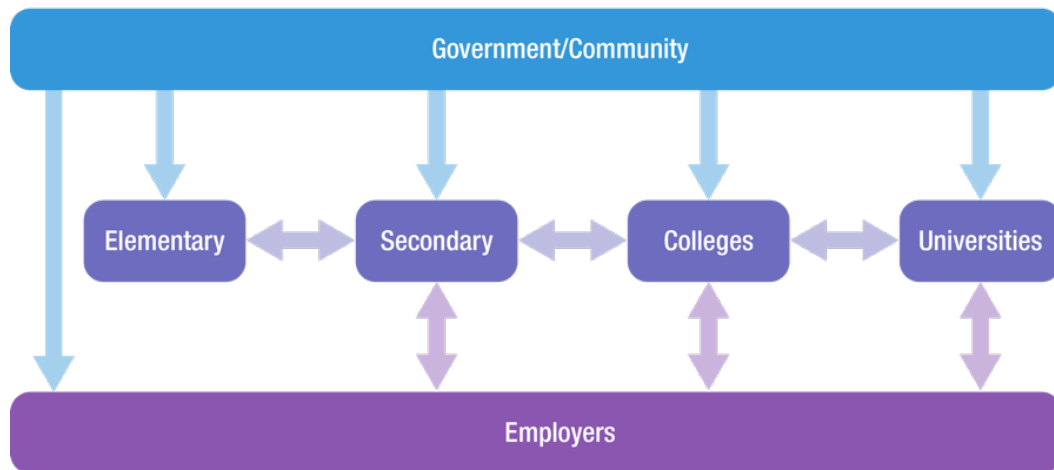
Work

In the last decade of the 20th Century and first decades of the 21st, we have seen Drucker's prediction come true. Today, all desirable jobs in industrialized economies – and increasingly in developing economies as well – require a higher component of knowledge than they did in the past. It is by applying knowledge and specialized skills that employees add enough value to what they do to justify the cost of employing them. That has made a continuous improvement in an expanding range of skills the only route to personal prosperity.

How to Build a Smarter Workforce

Intelligent Communities build a knowledge workforce through collaboration among government, schools and employers. While preparing individuals for work in a knowledge-driven economy, Knowledge Workforce programs also work to raise demand in the local economy for their skills.

Public education, colleges and universities are the traditional rungs on the educational ladder – but that ladder is less sturdy than it appears. There is a curriculum in the public schools that advances students, year after year, in skills and understanding. But in most schools, interaction between the different grade levels is minimal. When it comes to colleges, universities and employers in the community, there are seldom built-in opportunities for any exchange of ideas, knowledge and people that could make education a powerful community asset.

Intelligent Communities view their educational assets differently and work to create those exchanges.

Government/Community

Elementary ↔ Secondary ↔ Colleges ↔ Universities

Employers

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Knowledge Workforce at a Glance

- **Universities** interconnect with career-focused **colleges** to share research programs and career courses, and providing college students with access to 4-year degrees

- Universities and colleges interconnect with **secondary schools** to provide high school students with advanced learning opportunities and offer their own students project and work experience.

- Secondary schools send students and programs into **elementary schools** to make an early introduction to content on future local careers.

- **Employers** bringing real-world career content, business mentors, work-study programs, internship and other programs into education to expand students' awareness of their local career opportunities and create excitement.

- Local, regional and state/provincial **governments** acting as conveners, bringing together educational leaders through commissions, advisory boards and other structures that create a permanent platform for collaboration.

- Individual **citizens, civic groups** and **businesses** and **institutions** providing demand for programs that enrich education, and support them through fundraising, volunteer leadership, etc.

CityStudio Abbotsford

In 2010, CityStudio was established in Vancouver as a partnership between the City and Simon Fraser University as well as the University of British Columbia Looking for new educational models that broke with tradition, Abbotsford decided to import the program in

CITYSTUDIO

ICF

partnership with the University of Fraser Valley (UFV) as well as pilot the program with a local secondary school, Rick Hansen. CityStudio in Abbotsford is an innovation lab where students, city staff and community volunteers co-create experimental projects. The activity of prototyping solutions aims to make the city more sustainable, livable and joyful, while bringing new perspectives from students into local government.

For secondary and university students, Abbotsford's CityStudio provides practical learning about real-world challenges, career training, exposure to local business and the chance to gain valuable skills. For city government, the dialogue with students and experimental projects are already shifting the culture of City Hall from perpetuating the past to innovating for the future.

In its first year, CityStudio held 18 classes for students and city staff and launched 11 experimental projects, of which one on reducing littering in city parks won an award from UFV and was featured in a TedX event in Abbotsford. In its second year, CityStudio plans to open its meeting spaces to citizens through events that encourage them meet, connect and collaborate on community-changing projects. CityStudio Abbotsford provides an immersive and innovative studio-based education while further energizing city staff.

CityStudio represents an innovative step into the community for the University of the Fraser Valley. This institution offers undergraduate programs in agriculture business and computer information systems, as well as the humanities, fine arts and social sciences. UFV's graduate programs extend into data analytics, social work, public administration and criminal justice.   There is a strong potential for the university to extend its programs into the community in collaboration with business and government partners.

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Other Opportunities for the Knowledge Workforce

- Working with UFV and local business people, identify advanced agricultural technologies such as precision farming, robotics, drones and artificial intelligence. Engage UFV to develop curricula to train students in these disciplines and employers to develop capabilities that require this talent.

- Once agriculture has been addressed, repeat the process for other Abbotsford industries that can be made efficient and productive using digital technologies.

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Innovation

Innovation means creating something new, developing a new process or finding a new source of supply. It is what drives growth in the economy – and we have a Nobel Prize winner to thank for proving it. In 1987, economist Robert Solow won the prize for demonstrating that introducing and using new technology was responsible for as much as 80% of the growth in the national economy.
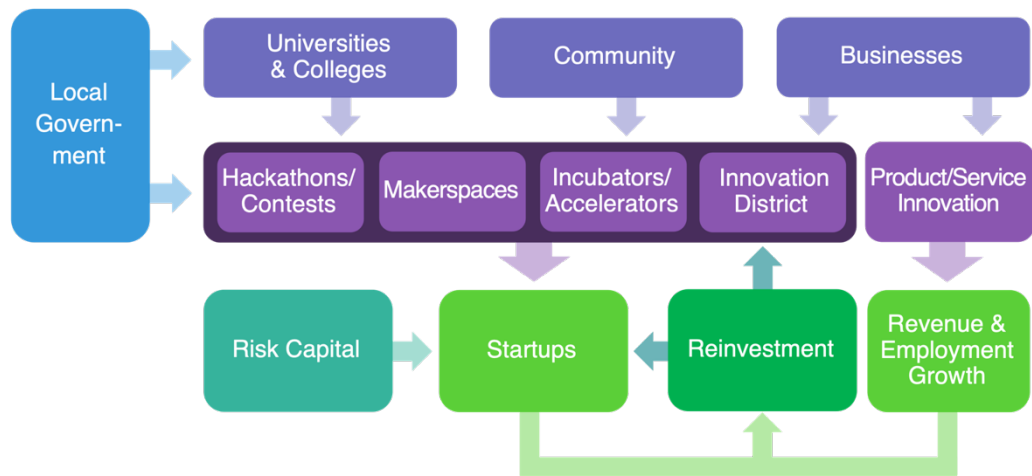
Innovate

That number puts the issue in stark perspective. Would you prefer to have the place you live participate in the 80% of growth coming from innovation, or are you content with the 20% that comes from doing the same old thing over again? For almost every place we call home, people would prefer Choice #1.

But how does a city, town or region get into the innovation game? Intelligent Communities approach the challenge in two ways. They work to create an ecosystem that promotes innovation in the private sector, while also innovating in government and institutions.

Private-Sector Innovation

The innovation ecosystem of an Intelligent Community draws on educational institutions and citizens of the community who have a passion for making something new. To turn those assets into a continuing cycle of innovation, local government and institutions create a structure of programs and facilities that encourage and challenge talented people to innovate.

These are the programs you may expect to find in a big city where technology companies dominate. But they can be found in midsize and small cities around the world, operating at a scale appropriate to their population but creating a multi-faced innovation ecosystem that generates growth.

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Private-Sector Innovation at a Glance

- **Local government** acting as a convener and seed-funding partner of businesses, educators and citizens intent on improving the economic prospects of the community.
- An **educational sector**, established **business sector** and **engaged citizens** bringing knowledge, resources and ambition.
- Combined and collaborative by these parties in:
  - Public **hackathons**, **apps contests** and other STEM events.
  - **Makerspaces** where anyone can bring an idea and make it real (and potentially profitable) with the informal support of other innovators.
  - **Incubators**, where potential entrepreneurs go through a disciplined process to turn concepts into saleable products and services, then find their initial customers.
  - **Accelerators** that take the survivors of incubation and help them mature into sustainable enterprises with growth potential.
  - **Innovation Districts** that house these facilities as well as R&D and open innovation centers, and space for established and emerging businesses, including co-working spaces, manufacturing facilities and wet labs.
- **Product and service innovation** by established businesses participating in public-private programs.
- **Start-ups**, which emerge from makerspaces, incubators and accelerators.
- Successful start-ups attract **risk capital** from angels, grants, venture funds and private equity that permit them to scale the business significantly.
- Successful entrepreneurs and growing established businesses tend to **reinvest** in the innovation ecosystem from which they benefited. It is succeeding generations of innovators, each giving back, who ultimately drive the community forward.

CASE STUDY
Valley Field and Farm Collaborative

While the City of Abbotsford has some of the highest gross farm receipts in the country, local entrepreneurs in the food and hospitality sector saw that there was little local food to be found in stores and restaurants. Citizens and local businesses had little incentive to support the local food producers.

To change the culture, the local entrepreneurs partnered with a local brewer, the Chamber of Commerce, University of the Fraser Valley, the Fraser Valley Regional District and a community market to create the Valley Food and Farm Collective. This nonprofit organization brings together a cross-section of people from the community to integrate food production into community life and boost local commerce in food. Not by coincidence, its founder also chairs Abbotsford's Community Innovation Partnership, started by the Economic Development Department to foster an innovation ecosystem throughout the community.

Funded by private investors, government grants and community banking partners, the Collective launched a summer farmers market in 2018, where local growers sold directly to the public and local businesses. Later that year, the Collective began work on a more ambitious plan to create a central kitchen and food innovation hub, communal brewhouse, local food café, music venue and community rental space.

Building on this, University of the Fraser Valle, offered a number of programs that address issues of food security and local agriculture, including a new research institute, The Food and Agriculture Institute. The City of Abbotsford is in discussions with this institute, along with the Abbotsford Food Bank and the new Food and Farm Collective, on the potential for research and mobilization of a food security community infrastructure, which would include emphasis on growing, production, food supplies, distribution, and overall food security in the region.

Other Opportunities for Innovation

- As a local food culture evolves, develop a dedicated tourism campaign to attract visitors to Abbotsford. Digital marketing should include a central website and apps with images and videos promoting the food and beverage experience and upcoming events. Provide local businesses with a high-quality Abbotsford-branded booking service that let visitor make restaurant and event registrations and book accommodations with a few clicks.

- Create an international agricultural and agritech investment attraction program consisting of an annual tech investment and matchmaking event, hackathons and a "soft landing" program that reduces the cost and difficulty of opening and staffing an office or research facility for companies seeking a foothold in North America.

- Leverage the immigrant community to identify investment potential for South Asian companies to come to Abbotsford with the support of national and provincial incentives.

Public-Sector Innovation

Innovation is not just a game for business to play. Intelligent Communities pursue innovation in government services and processes to reduce operating costs, improve service delivery and make governing more transparent to the public.
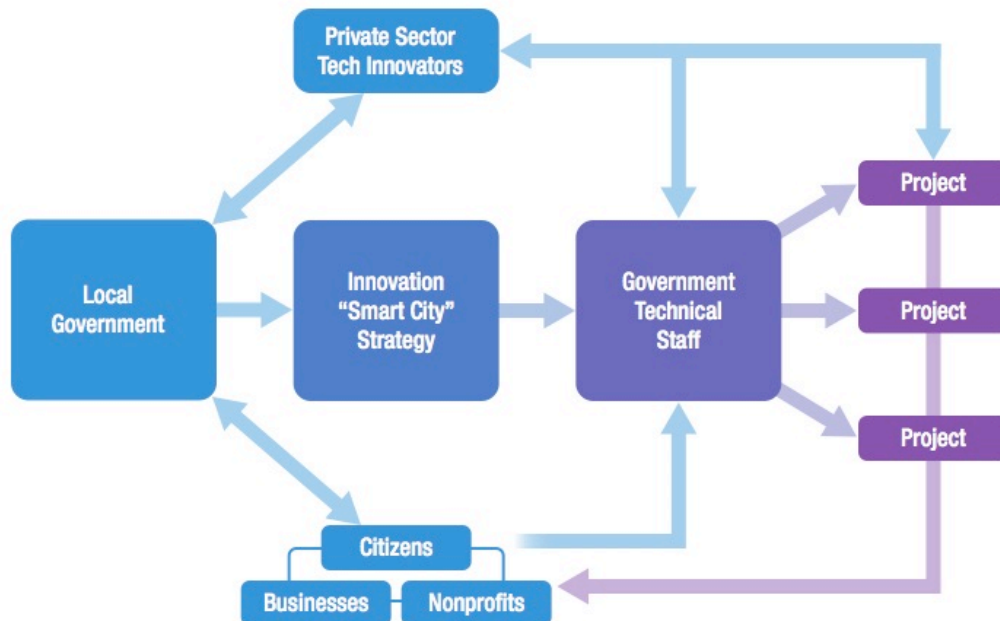
Public-Sector Innovation at a Glance

- **Government** engages citizens, businesses and the nonprofit sector in helping to decide where innovation in services and infrastructure is needed most. They also turn to the local **technology sector** for practical advice on what is possible and likely to be the most cost-effective.

- This intensive collaboration helps local government develop an **Innovation Strategy** that addresses real needs, sets ambitious goals and defines a realistic roadmap for accomplishing them.

- Then it is the turn of the **government's information technology staff** to plan, develop and launch **projects** specified in the strategy, sometimes with citizen participation through tech competitions and hackathons. Wherever they can justify the cost, they turn to the private technology sector for implementation, so that the pursuit of better governing also produces economic gains for the community.

Change at the Pace of Culture

Abbotsford's knowledge workforce and innovation programs are so far modest in scope. That is by design, whether conscious or unconscious. This aligns with the ICF method that prioritizes keeping faith with culture to ensure that change is seen as an improvement rather than an attack of treasured values.

More importantly, the programs are designed to penetrate deeply into the community and, through engagement, change minds about what education looks like and the value of experimenting with new ways. Installing $90 million worth of optical fibre is easy compared with changing people's minds. As the programs produce results, as they continue to experiment, fail in some areas and grow in others, they will give citizens and organizations permission to do the same. Educational change and innovation will beget more change and innovation, leading incubators and accelerator to rise in partnership with University of the Fraser Valley, generating startups and new waves of innovation in established companies, while preparing the youth of Abbotsford to lead a knowledge-based, innovation-focused wave of growth.

Caring for the Community

Digital infrastructure, the knowledge workforce and programs to drive innovation to new heights: these are the foundations of an investment-ready economy in the digital age. They create the conditions for growth and feed it by liberating the ingenuity and ambition of the community's people and equipping them for careers that bring new value to their employers and themselves.

But they are not enough to make the place called home live up to its potential. Cities are not just roads and networks, buildings and businesses. They are also collections of stories. They have deep roots in the first decisions of people to settle in that place, to group together by a riverbank or lake or ocean, or at a sheltered place where roads cross and both water and fuel could be found. The visible parts of the city – and today, the invisible elements of the digital web being weaved within it – are the outward signs of an inward spirit.

The life of a city begins with its people. Their satisfaction and happiness in that place depend on more than infrastructure, services and a paycheck. Given half a chance, people will make almost any place a home. We are deeply attracted to the familiar. We treasure comforting habits and known personalities. If that home reward us with a great quality of life, however, the bond becomes so much deeper.

People need to care about the community. They also need, just as much, to feel that the community cares for them in return. Caring for the community through times of great change is part of the project every Intelligent Community takes on. It begins with the engagement that makes a city's people and organizations into its greatest champions. It continues through efforts to include everyone in the community's future, and to tie the things that people love most about the community to its economic and social success. Though they cannot be measured, these efforts contribute to investment-readiness by making the community a place that no resident wants to leave.

CASE STUDY
Abbotsford Community Services and Foundry

Foundry Abbotsford is a place where any youth or parent in the community can find easy access to the help they need, when they need it. It is an integrated youth and family initiative that is transforming how mental health and substance use services are delivered in Abbotsford and providing early intervention to support young peoples' well-being.

This collaborative community supports youth and families to learn, grow and thrive amid life's challenges. Foundry Abbotsford offers an interdisciplinary team of dedicated health care providers focused on providing holistic, person-centred care to young people and their families. The centre provides access to a skilled team of knowledgeable and compassionate health-care and social-service professionals. They

work together to prepare the most well-rounded and appropriate plan and course of action, based on the unique needs and circumstances of each youth.

The centre, operated by Abbotsford Community Services, brings together a variety of local organizations. These include services provided by Fraser Health, Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, and other community partners. They seek to transform the way substance use and mental health and wellness services are provided to the city's youth. Youth and families have been active members in the leadership of Foundry Abbotsford's design and programming.

<u>CASE STUDY</u>
Deepening Public Engagement

Like other municipalities, the City is working on enhancing and improving public engagement in the community. Council recognized that the City's past engagement practices were not reaching as many citizens as possible and made it a priority to seek out new ways to reach citizens about important projects.

With this in mind, a 2019 priority item was added to the City's Corporate Strategic Plan to develop an online engagement platform. The new "Let's Talk Abbotsford" engagement portal will focus on complementing face-to-face engagement with a digital component. The City's current Public Engagement framework uses the IAP2 principles for planning engagement activities and is driven by an objective to empower, collaborate, involve, consult with, or inform the community.

Let's Talk Abbotsford launches in the spring of 2019 and will complement the City's continued efforts with face to face engagement activities. By offering more opportunities for the community to become informed and gain an efficient way to provide feedback, the City will ensure that projects move forward with the feedback reflective of Abbotsford's residents.
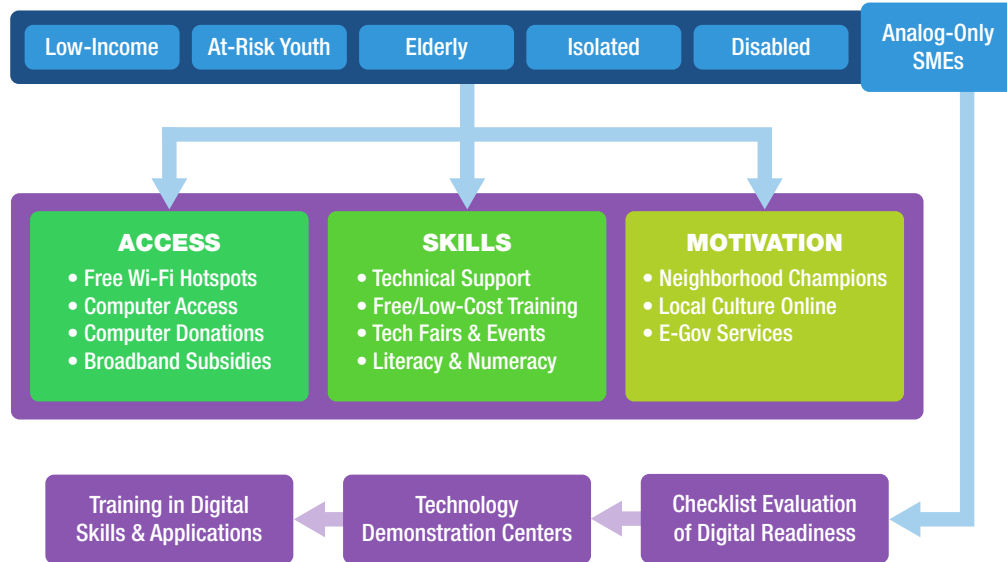
Digital Inclusion

Even with a state-of-the-art network available to every home and business, part of the population always remains offline. And being offline today carries real penalties, from lack of access to discount prices on shopping to the ability to do schoolwork or apply for a job. Those penalties tend to fall on people who are already on the margins of the economy and society, whether due to poverty, lack of education, prejudice, age, disability or simply where they live. Their situation is made all the harder by the economic disruption wrought by the digital age on industries from manufacturing to retailing. The job opportunities that match their skills are declining, and they don't have what it takes to change with the times.

Include

Intelligent Communities take care of the community by promoting digital inclusion: the principle that everyone in the community deserves to have access to the digital world and the skills to take advantage of it. Why do they do it? First of all,

because it is the moral thing to do. But there are persuasive practical reasons as well. People who are excluded from the economy and society cost enormous amounts of money for social services, criminal justice and acute healthcare. They damage the social welfare of the whole community. The more people we include in the community's digital future, however, the better that future will be for everyone.

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Digital exclusion affects more than people. Small-to-midsize enterprises (SMEs) are collectively the biggest employers in every community. Startup companies aside, they are also less likely to put digital technologies to work than bigger companies, because they are worried about costs, complexity and lack of support.

Eighty-nine percent of big companies in North America have plans to adopt or have already adopted a "digital-first" business strategy, according to a 2018 report from IDG.[1] Meanwhile, 45% of small businesses do not even have a website and only 36% use theirs to communicate news to customers and potential customer, according to a 2017 CNBC/SurveyMonkey survey.[2] Because SMEs are so important to the local economy, Intelligent Communities include their owners in digital inclusion programs.

Employers require a different set of programs, though with a common focus on access, skills and motivation. One proven technique is to ask businesses to complete simple checklists that measure their digital readiness. The checklist leads to a readiness score for that organization with a comparison to other local companies and recommendations for improving it. The checklist process provides both specific help and peer pressure that can spur positive action. Employers scoring low for digital readiness can be targeted for training in digital skills and specific applications,

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[1] *Understand How Digital Organizations Evolve to a Digital Business Model*, IDG, 2018 (https://resources.idg.com/download/white-paper/2018-digital-business)

[2] "You'll Be Shocked to Learn How Many Small Businesses Still Don't Have a Website," by Eric Rosenbaum, CNBC, June 2017 (https://www.cnbc.com/2017/06/14/tech-help-wanted-about-half-of-small-businesses-dont-have-a-website.html)

typically provided by the local community or technical college. Many Intelligent Communities also create technology demonstration centres, where businesses can see and experiment with the latest technology before taking the plunge.

Digital Inclusion at a Glance

- Intelligent Communities identify their **populations most in need of help**, as well as **SMEs** missing the economic opportunities of going digital.

- They **provide access** to broadband and digital technology. The most common access points are public libraries, but communities also bring technology to such places as community centres and retirement homes.

- They offer training to give individuals and organizations with the **ability** to use technology. Skills training takes place in libraries and community centres and may involve library staff, students or the staff of local colleges and universities.

- Just as important as access and skills is the **motivation** to acquire them. Putting social and cultural content, as well as valuable services, online is a proven way to motivate people.

Abbotsford Community Library

Abbotsford is served by the Fraser Valley Regional Library, the largest in British Columbia. It is a library system with an interesting past. A survey of the rural population of BC in 1927 revealed a significant demand for a large library district to serve communities that could not afford their own local libraries. A grant from the Carnegie Foundation made it possible to build the library system and run it for a few years. But when those funds began to run low, voters were asked if they wanted to pay taxes to support library services. Voters in more than 80% of districts said "yes."

Libraries everywhere are struggling to stay relevant at a time when we turn to the internet for information and entertainment, and we download books and music to our phones and tablets. To keep up with the times and provide an on-ramp to the online world, the library provides free Wi-Fi, laptops, printing and copying services. While ensuring access to the internet at broadband speeds, the library also offers a range of digital content designed to serve local needs, including:

- Books and audiobooks in downloadable form
- Lynda.com, an online learning library featuring thousands of video sources
- A car repair database
- Mango, an online language learning platform
- Tumblebook online read-along stories for children and adolescents.

By delivering value online, these offerings give offline residents a reason to give digital technologies a try, with the friendly guidance of library staff, and to take their first steps into the digital culture and economy.

The work of the Fraser Valley Regional Library represents a good start for Abbotsford. There is work still to do: understanding the offline population and ensuring that services meet their real needs; developing training programs that systematically improve digital skills; and assessing and addressing the digital readiness of the city's small-to-midsize enterprises.
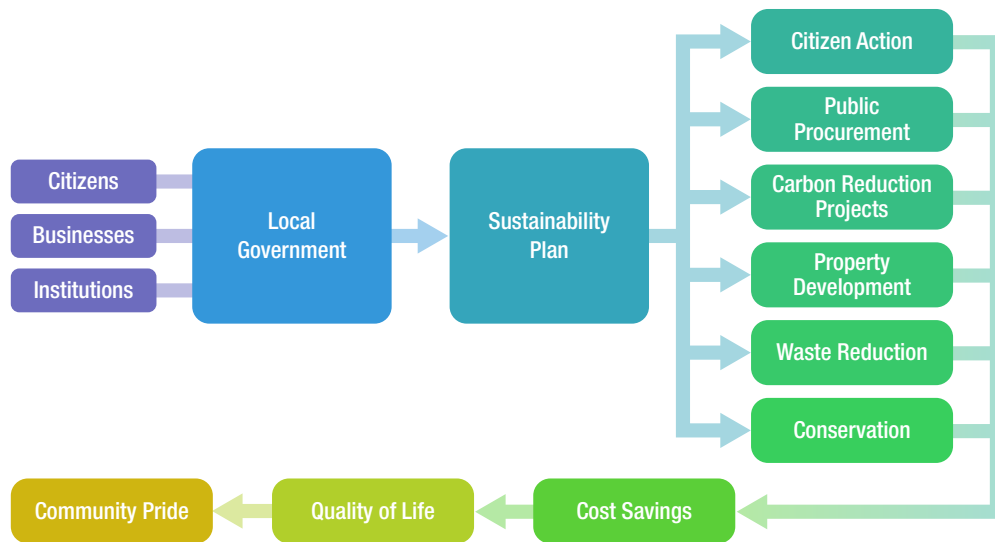
Other Opportunities for Digital Inclusion

- Survey the offline population to learn their demographics, digital readiness, needs and concerns.
- Develop training programs that systematically address gaps in digital readiness, taking needs and concerns into account.
- Develop a digital readiness survey for local businesses with a rating system that lets business owners compare their digital readiness to that of their peers. Make training programs available to help businesses upgrade their technology and skills.
- Engage the leadership of indigenous communities in a digital inclusion program that engages youth in capturing their cultures in digital form while creating opportunities for collaboration across the generations.

Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has become a priority in cities around the world. It is their contribution to meeting the global challenge of climate change. Throughout human history, economic growth has always involved the consumption of more resources and the production of more waste. As humanity begins to push up against the limits of the ecosystem, we need to find ways to continue growth – with all of its positive impacts– while reducing the environmental impact of that growth.

But there are other, purely local benefits to sustainability programs. Sustainability can also be about improving local quality of life, from cleaner air and water to improved public transportation and greater livability. This is something that many residents feel passionately about, which can make it a powerful driver of community engagement and pride. Sustainability is also a growth industry around the world, from solar and wind to carbon reduction and pollution control. Sustainability technology is all but certain to generate major new opportunities for business growth and employment in green industries.

MILL LAKE

Citizens

Businesses

Institutions

Local Government

Sustainability Plan

Citizen Action

Public Procurement

Carbon Reduction Projects

Property Development

Waste Reduction

Conservation

Cost Savings

Quality of Life

Community Pride

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Sustainability at a Glance

- **Local government** engages **citizens, businesses and institutions** through events, workshops and online forums to learn their concerns and collaborate in setting priorities. The issues are environmental – but also about quality of life, property values, government budgets and the cost of living and doing business in the community. The goal of this collaboration is to create priorities that meet with broad public acceptance and approval.

- The vision and priorities guide the creation of a **Sustainability Plan** that sets goals and identifies specific actions to take in pursuit of those goals. These range from citizen action groups to changes in public procurement and land-use regulations, and from waste reduction and recycling to resource and energy conservation. Technology plays an important part in monitoring and improving utility services, traffic flows, purchasing and much more.

- Intelligent Communities set out on the sustainability path expecting **results**. The Sustainability Plan documents specific objectives for cost savings, lower emissions, reduced consumption and improved quality of life. Government measures and reports on results, and works with citizens, businesses and institutions to make course corrections as needed and re-energize community participation.

Sustainability Report

In Abbotsford, climate action planning is a critical part of designing a better future for the community. It is also a provincial priority – and local governments are expected to help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and create more energy-efficient communities.

In 2017, Abbotsford's government completed a Sustainability Report on the city's commitments and actions, covering planning, buildings and lighting, parks and open space, solid waste, transportation and water/wastewater. Notable achievements in 2017 included:

- Reducing energy consumption by over 320,000 kWh annually.
- Planting thousands of trees, flowers and shrubs in various locations around the city.
- Diverting more than11,000 tonnes of compostable waste and 4,800 tonnes of recyclables from landfills through a curbside collection program
- Continuing a water conservation program including the implementation of water restrictions from May 1st through September 30th and an Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) water meter program including bimonthly billing and the installation of 525 new water meters.

These achievements reflect credit on Abbotsford's Council. The sustainability project has the potential, however, to do much more. Still to come are organized efforts to identify the sustainability concerns of residents and employers, and to engage them in developing community-based solutions. As sustainability becomes a part of community culture, it should also tie into economic development strategy. Working with its educational and business partners, Abbotsford can stimulate the development of new companies in green industries and, as a cluster takes form, begin attracting outside investment into a growing industry sector.

Other Opportunities for Sustainability

- Survey residents and businesses about their sustainability concerns and priorities and, as part of the process, solicit volunteers to advise on Abbotsford sustainability programs.

- Create a neighbourhood sustainability program that solicits proposals for small-scale projects and provides small amounts of funding to support them. Promote the successful programs throughout the community.

- Tie sustainability into economic development by working with educational and business partners to stimulate development of new companies in green industries and, as a cluster takes form, attract outside investment to it.

Adapting to Change

Abbotsford is a small enough city that caring for the community is a manageable task. The traditional structures of neighbourhoods, community groups and an active and engaged Council serve its needs relatively well. But Plan 200K forecasts dramatic change ahead, and the increasing dominance of digital in all walks of life will only accelerate the pace of change. Managing that change will require Abbotsford to raise its game in digital inclusion and sustainability to ensure that future residents find a place that rewards them for caring deeply about it, and where they know they will be cared for.

The Road Ahead

This is the story of a city at the beginning of its journey toward investment-readiness. The traditional paths to growth based on cheap land and low-priced labor are not an option for Abbotsford. Instead, it has chosen to apply the ICF Method for development of an Intelligent Community, to serve a population that will be nearly 50% bigger within the next few years.

Its first actions have aligned well with that Method. Thanks to investments from telephone carriers, Abbotsford has an impressive digital network that will increase in capacity as the city grows. Its knowledge workforce and innovation programs are modest in scope but well-designed to engage the community, change minds and begin building an ecosystem that rewards experimentation in education and business. It has also taken visible steps to care for the parts of the community that will suffer from change, from its offline population to its environmental quality of life.

Abbotsford and the Intelligent Community Forum

Abbotsford's experience of the Intelligent Community Forum has had immediate impacts as well as planting seeds for the future. In 2018 and 2019, ICF contributed to community engagement workshops that built a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing the community. This gained momentum from coverage in local media of Abbotsford's success in the international awards program and the journey to New York by the Mayor and other officials for the naming of the final winner.

Beyond the region, the publicity generated by the ICF awards program gave the city exposure across Canada and around the world, producing what people in economic development call the value of "earned media." While in New York, the Abbotsford team met with 20 companies at the ICF Summit's Matchmaking Day, all interested in development opportunities in Abbotsford. The ICF process also was instrumental in persuading Shaw Communications to develop extensive Wi-Fi in the central business district.

Adapting to the Future

Most of the journey, however, still lies ahead. It will take long, patient work – but the city's culture, with its deep roots in Mennonite religious tradition, is an asset. With so much of its current economy based in agriculture, it is a culture that knows how to sow and nurture a crop and wait patiently for a rich harvest. That spirit can sustain the community through much of the journey.

The journey will also require Abbotsford to adapt to the uncertain demands of the future. While holding fast to the core of their culture, its people must be willing to dispense with traditions that no longer serve the city's interest. Experimentation, adaption and collaboration must be core skills of leaders, whether elected, appointed

and volunteer. It is their challenge to engage closely, share generously and stand firmly by what they believe is right. That is how Abbotsford will navigate through internal obstacles and external shocks to build a more prosperous economy for all and to preserve and enrich its social and cultural richness.

More About Abbotsford

These links will take you to online content, where you learn more about the planning and development processes that have set Abbotsford on its journey.

City of Abbotsford Strategic Plan

https://www.abbotsford.ca/Assets/2014+Abbotsford/Communications/Strategic+Vision+Documents/July+2016+Strategic+Plan+Update.pdf

2018-2018 Strategic Vision Booklet

https://www.abbotsford.ca/Assets/2014+Abbotsford/Communications/Strategic+Vision+Booklet.pdf

Plan 200K

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