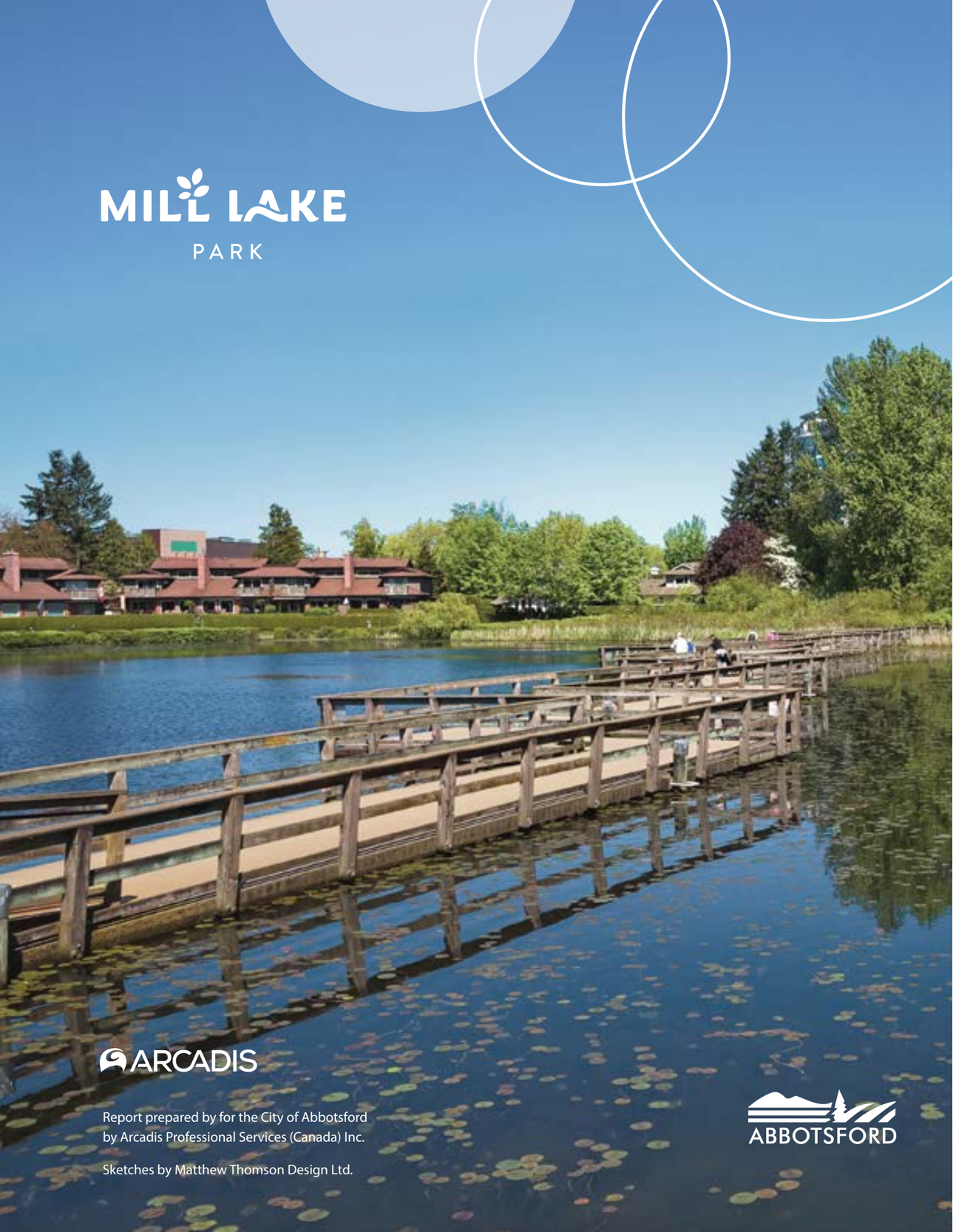
MILL LAKE
PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

July 22, 2025

ABBOTSFORD



Report prepared by for the City of Abbotsford
by Arcadis Professional Services (Canada) Inc.

Sketches by Matthew Thomson Design Ltd.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 7

1 Introduction 9
1.1 Plan Purpose 9
1.1.1 What is a Master Plan? 9
1.1.2 The Need for a Master Plan 9
1.2 Plan Overview 10
1.2.1 Project Goals & Outcomes 10
1.2.2 Project Process 11

2 Site Overview 13
2.1 Site Context 13
2.2 Park History 14
2.2.1 First Nations 14
2.2.2 Post Settlement History 14
2.3 Policy Context 17
2.3.1 City Policies 17
2.3.2 Relevant Federal & Provincial Policies 24
2.4 Site Assets & Inventory 25
2.4.1 Mill Lake & Lake Edge 25
2.4.2 Materials Used in the Park 25
2.4.3 Buildings & Associated Structures 25
2.4.4 Park Infrastructure 27
2.4.5 Park Amenities 27
2.4.6 Culture Zone 29
2.4.7 Feature Gardens in the Park 29
2.4.8 Site Uses & Recreational Activities 29

3 Site Analysis 31
3.1 Legal Parcels & Land Use.....31
3.2 Gateways & Entrances.....31
3.3 Park Character, Facilities & Amenities 32
3.4 Biophysical Analysis.....32
3.4.1 Landform, Surficial Geology and Soils 32
3.4.2 Waterbodies and Watercourses 32
3.4.3 Existing vegetation 33
3.4.4 Wildlife including species at risk.....36
3.5 Safety & Security.....38
3.6 Events & Seasonal Programming.....39
3.6.1 Events in the Park.....39
3.6.2 Go Play Outside Program.....39
3.7 Key Park Projects 39
3.7.1 Aquatics Strategy.....39
3.7.2 Tree & Vegetation Inventory 40
3.7.3 Lake Fountain Including Power Service Upgrade to Park 40
3.7.4 Reconstruction of Dock 41
3.7.5 Bike Lanes Around the Edge of the Park 41

4 Engagement Process & Outcomes 43
4.1 Engagement Process.....43
4.2 Who We Engaged With.....43
4.3 Engagement Opportunities 43
4.3.1 Engagement Stage 1.....43
4.3.2 Engagement Stage 2.....44
4.3.3 Engagement Stage 3.....45

5 Vision,
Guiding Principles
& Big Moves.....47
5.1 Vision.....47
5.2 Guiding Principles.....47
5.3 The Big Moves 48

6 Master Plan Concept 51
6.1 Park Zones (Key Areas) 51
6.2 Mill Lake Park Plan.....52
6.2.1 General Park enhancements.....53
6.2.2 Enhancements or amendments to Area 1.....53
6.2.3 Enhancements or amendments to Area 2.....54
6.2.4 Enhancements or amendments to Area 3.....55
6.3 Responding to the Vision, Guiding Principles & Big Moves.....56

7 Design Program 59
7.1.1 Environment & Landscape.....60
7.1.2 Amenities.....61
7.1.3 Safety & Accessibility.....64
7.1.4 Culture.....65

8 Implementation Plan.....67
8.1 Phasing.....67
8.2 Financial Strategy 77
8.3 Future investigations, Studies & Assessments.....79

Executive Summary

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

Executive Summary

Abbotsford is one of the fastest growing communities in BC. The estimated population in 2024 is approximately 172,000 people, and a future population of 250,000 people is estimated by approximately 2050 under a medium growth scenario of 1.45% per year (Draft Official Community Plan) .

Mill Lake Park is Abbotsford's premier urban Park located in the City Centre. The Park has been providing sport, play, recreation, and culture amenities for residents and visitors for the past 68 years. Population growth, along with population density envisioned in the Official Community Plan (OCP) is expected to substantially increase the number of visitors and users of the facilities and amenities within the Park.

This Master Plan provides a framework for the Park's ongoing development, management and use within the context of its location, natural assets, and the community's vision. The Plan will provide the direction and prioritization of park projects and programming that can enhance Park use for the next 20 years.

This report includes extracts from the Key Findings Report prepared in Stage 1 of the project including an outline of:

- A draft vision and guiding principles for Mill Lake Park;
- The culture and history of the Park;
- The role of the Park in the green space network;
- An inventory of assets; and
- A review of opportunities and constraints;

Subsequently, key themes and guiding principles were identified to guide the conceptual design work in the Master Plan, including themes of:

- Environment and landscape;
- Amenities;
- Safety and accessibility and
- Culture.

Three proposed concept design options were formulated and shared with the community and stakeholder organizations. Based on community perspectives and insights, a draft preferred concept design option was developed, which included elements of the three proposed concept design options, with a focus on 7 Big Moves identified for the Park:

1. Create space for community and culture
2. Prioritize broad public use
3. Reallocate parking
4. Enhance amenities
5. Environmental enhancements
6. Upgrade the lake loop
7. Improve park entrances and edges

To ensure the Master Plan was going to serve the community's needs for the Park over the next several decades, consultation was conducted to confirm the key elements for the Park's future. These key elements included:

1. Fenced dog off-leash area
2. Centennial Pool
3. Food services
4. Mixed use lake loop pathway width
5. Lighting in the Park
6. Lake Loop Boardwalk
7. Temporary event space
8. Permanent covered event space
9. Multi-purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building
10. Ball Diamonds

With affirmation that the direction of these key elements proposed in the Master Plan, which includes consideration of the future of some key elements in parallel planning processes, the Mill Lake Master Plan provides direction for the future of the Park as *Mill Lake Park is the "heart" of the City of Abbotsford's parks system connecting our diverse population with nature and each other in a Park where ecological integrity is prioritized, play and exploration are fostered, and where culture is celebrated.* The Master Plan is predominately focused on social and recreational pursuits centered around Mill Lake and the cherished Lake Loop Pathway, including the Boardwalk.

Introduction 1

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

1 Introduction

1.1 Plan Purpose

The purpose of this project is to produce a Master Plan to guide the long-term strategic approach for the use, enhancement and management of Mill Lake Park through the next 20 years.

The Mill Lake Park Master Plan provides a practical community-based vision and guiding principles, illustrative conceptual plans for future improvements, and a phased construction strategy to guide the direction and prioritization of park projects and programming.

1.1.1 What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan builds on existing City plans, policies and initiatives while identifying public needs and priorities for the Park. The Plan also provides direction for environmental protection and recommends civic, cultural and recreational uses that are appropriate to the area.

In summary, a Park Master Plan:

- is a strategic planning document that reflects City policy;
- is a framework for future planning and decision-making regarding environmental protection, suitable recreation activities, park facilities such as trails and other open space infrastructure;
- articulates a vision for the Park and highlights priorities and long-term aspirations;
- includes an analysis of existing Park conditions and design options based on site characteristics and the recreation needs of the community;
- describes the investigation and design options;
- includes a preferred plan based on stakeholder and public input; and
- sets out a clear implementation plan to facilitate funding for improvements and ongoing Park management in alignment with other City projects and operations.

1.1.2 The Need for a Master Plan

With a quickly growing community, an overall Master Plan for Mill Lake Park is a significant, and necessary, step in upgrading and maintaining the quality of outdoor offerings in the Park. Building on existing assets the Park is to be a central gathering hub that both preserves natural spaces and provides for an array of recreational opportunities.

A comprehensive long-term Master Plan provides a framework for the Park's ongoing development, use and management, within the context of the location, natural assets, and community's vision.

A draft Master Plan for Mill Lake Park was last prepared in 2013. Some recommendations from the draft plan were undertaken. The City's 2016 Official Community Plan (OCP), subsequent and related Master Plans, as well as changes to adjoining development and recent land acquisition, have resulted in the need for a new Master Plan for the Mill Lake Park.

1.2 Plan Overview

With a quickly growing City, the overall Master Plan for Mill Lake Park is a significant and necessary step in planning, upgrading and maintaining the quality of offerings in the Park. Building on existing assets and reflecting current City strategies, the Park is to be a central gathering hub that both preserves natural spaces and provides for an array of suitable recreation opportunities.

A long-term vision and associated guiding principles specific to the Park has been prepared based on stakeholder and public input as part of the master planning process. The Plan provides a framework for the Park's ongoing enhancement, use and management, within the context of the location, natural assets, and community's vision.

The master planning for Mill Lake Park considers the existing inventory and uses of the study area, the priorities identified by the public, applicable standards and regulations, and strategic goals of the City.

1.2.1 Project Goals & Outcomes

The Mill Lake Park Master Plan will be a long-term plan for the Park based on an understanding of the Park's heritage; assessment of the state of current Park programs; infrastructure and amenities; development of a vision and conceptual plan; accompanying principles to guide construction of future amenities; and an implementation strategy to move from the present state to the vision in a structured way.

The goals of the master plan project were to:

- Review previous master plans and studies related to the Park
- Consider the history of the Park and its future role
- Ensure alignment with current City plans and policies applicable to the Park and its context
- Broadly assess the existing conditions and character of the Park
- Assess the existing recreational uses of the Park and identify suitable additional recreational uses
- Consider the environmental and aesthetic assets of the Park and confirm protection of these assets
- Investigate design options and a preferred option for the enhancement of the Park
- Ensure community and stakeholder engagement in the Master Plan formulation

The outcome of the Master Plan is to:

a. Ensure that Mill Lake Park remains a celebrated and cherished public space;

b. Provide quality park space for current and future generations;

c. Offer an enhanced public realm to host events;

d. Optimize all-season use of the Park;

e. Ensure integration of land use and programs in a manner that meets Citywide, partner and community needs; and

f. Provide a road map for the management, operation and enhancement of the Park.

1.2.2 Project Process

The Master Plan will be delivered in five stages as outlined below.

- Stage 1 – Key Findings Report (complete)
- Stage 2 – Exploring Options (complete)
- Stage 3 – Draft Master Plan (complete)
- Stage 4 – Final Master Plan
- Stage 5 – Implementation of Master Plan

Stage 1
The primary deliverable from Stage 1 was a Key Findings Report.

Stage 2
Informed by the findings of Stage 1, three concept options were developed to explore different directions for Mill Lake Park over the horizon of the Master Plan. The three directions represented different balances on the scale of "urban park" to "nature park." They also demonstrated interpretations of 7 Big Moves for the Park in a variety of ways to show different possibilities and approaches to achieving these moves.

Stage 3
Stage 3 aimed to advance a preferred concept plan based on community consultation as well as an implementation strategy. Stage 3 included:

- Developing and updating the Preferred Concept Plan to reflect input/comments
- Draft Phasing/Implementation Plan
- Developing a Draft Master Plan

The outcome of Stage 3 is a Park Master Plan reflecting public input and Council review.

Stage 4
With the Draft Master Plan reviewed, Stage 4 focuses on the finalization of the Master Plan and the transition to implementation, which is supported by a Phasing Plan.

Stage 5
Stage 5 tasks are primarily actions that the City will undertake to implement the endorsed Master Plan. This future work is guided by direction from Council and is reliant on available funding, including the opportunity to leverage City resources with external funding and resource opportunities.

Site Overview

2

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

Figure 1: Neighbourhoods Adjoining the Park

2 Site Overview

2.1 Site Context

The Park is located in the 'heart' of the City of Abbotsford and in some ways the community grew around the lake and what now constitutes the Park.

The Park is bound by Bevan Avenue and residential neighbourhoods to the south, Ware Street and residential neighbourhoods to the east, Emerson Street, Gladwin Road, recreational facilities and residential neighbourhoods to the west and commercial property, Bourquin Crescent, and residential neighbourhoods to the north.

Four schools are located immediately around the site: Centennial School to the north-west, Godson School to the south, and Abbotsford Middle and Senior Secondary Schools to the south-east. The MSA Arena is located directly west of Mill Lake Park across Emerson Street. In addition, there is the large Ravine Park not far east of the Park.

The Park is surrounded mostly by a grid street system that generally provides good connectivity from the neighbourhoods surrounding the Park, however, some large developments like the commercial property to the north are barriers to safe pedestrian access. There is also no obvious walking link through the MSA Arena site to the adjoining streets to the west of the Park. Some access points to the park from adjacent intersections may need better delineation to make them safer.

There is opportunity to enhance a trail link between Mill Lake Park and Jubilee Park and the historic downtown via Ravine Park.

Post Settlement History

2.2 Park History

The lake in Mill Lake Park has been an important site for many people throughout history.

2.2.1 First Nations

Stó:lō (people of the river)

Long before Abbotsford existed as a community and Canada as a country, the Stó:lō (people of the river) occupied the land called S'ólh Temexw in the Fraser Valley.

S'ólh Temexw is the traditional, ancestral shared territory of the Semá:th First Nation and Mathekwi First Nation. These two First Nations are part of the Stó:lō Nation, the People of the River. They lived in the large geographic area from Yale to Vancouver and spoke Halq'emeylem, also known as the upriver dialect.

The Stó:lō people have occupied the territory including Mill Lake since time immemorial (Neighbourhood History Walk, The Reach Gallery Museum, Nd).

Lekw'ōquem is the Halq'emeylem name by which Mill Lake was known to the area's original Stó:lō residents.

2.2.2 Post Settlement History

European settlers first named Mill Lake, Bais Lake, after a pioneer farmer. It then later became known as Abbotsford Lake due to its proximity to the Village of Abbotsford, even though the lake was technically located in the then District of Matsqui. It eventually adopted its current name of Mill Lake due to the prominence of logging in the area and the mill adjoining the lake.

Mill Lake has contributed to the economy, health, and recreation of the settled Abbotsford community for over a century.

The first sawmill established on the lake was owned by Charles Hill-Tout and produced 50,000 railway ties for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Yet, it wasn't until the Trethewey brothers – (Joseph Ogle Trethewey, Richard Arthur Trethewey, and Samuel Dunn Trethewey), purchased the mill in 1903 and in 1912 established the Abbotsford Timber and Trading Company, that mill activity on the lake really took off. The Trethewey's owned timber rights to most of the District of Matsqui, the western section of what is now the City of Abbotsford. By the 1920's, their company was one of the largest employers in British Columbia. At its peak of operations, the Mill was the third largest employer in British Columbia, and the largest employer in the Abbotsford community making the mill important to Abbotsford's early economy.

Trethewey House was built in 1920 as a residence for Rita and Joseph Ogle Trethewey.

Mill Lake was central to the Mill as it was used to sort logs as they arrived by rail from the surrounding area. The Mill remained active until 1934 when the Trethewey brothers shut it down due to the Great Depression and a severe depletion of the forests in the area.

Summary of the History of the Park

DATE	RECENT MAJOR EVENTS RELATED TO THE PARK'S CREATION
1919-1920	Trethewey House constructed
1936	Abbotsford Lumber Company donates 8.23 acre park south of Mill Lake
1944	Park dedicated
1955	Lions Club donates 7.5 acre park on the Mill Lake foreshore
1958	Centennial Park & Centennial Pool opening
	David F. Gosling Memorial Square dedicated
1970	Lake closed to power boats
1979	John Mahoney Park established
1995	Lions Point Viewing Platform constructed
2006	Rotary Crossing Playground constructed
	John Mahoney Park added to Mill Lake Park

Establishment of the Park

As early as the 1930's, Mill Lake was recognized as a potential site for a community destination Park, and in 1936 the former District of Matsqui acquired 8.23 acres south of Mill Lake Road from the Abbotsford Lumber Company for the donation price of $1.00. Then in the Late 1940's the Abbotsford Lions Club purchased the lakeshore mill site after the Mill's closure, and with the cooperation of local municipalities, undertook a cleanup of the site which resulted in the reclamation of Mill Lake as a community recreation area. The name "Mill Lake" seems to have become permanent when it was being rehabilitated. (Neighbourhood History Walk: Mill Lake Exploring Place Names in the Mill Lake Park Neighbourhood, The Reach Gallery Museum, Nd and Council Report No: 07-2004 March 17, 2004. Renaming of Centennial Park to "Mill Lake Park").

A wharf and boardwalk were built, sectioning off part of Mill Lake to protect bathers from powerboats. Hundreds of local children took their swimming lessons at the Mill Lake swimming area under the instruction of Mrs. Jessie Carson. The shoreline was leveled, and sand added to create a beach. The Lions Club constructed bathhouses, public washrooms and a concession stand. Overnight camping was permitted and popular with visitors from Vancouver. By the early 1950s, Mill Lake was established as a very popular community recreation facility.

John Mahoney Park was located on the southeast side of the lake and became part of Mill Lake Park in 2006. This Park was originally named for John "Jock" Mahoney who came to B.C. in the early 1900s and found work with the Abbotsford Lumber Company as a logger. Logging paid well, allowing Jock to buy 40 acres where he tried his hand at farming. Later in life, Jock bought three acres of land by the lake and built a house there in 1920.

The legacy of the Mill is still visible around Mill Lake today. Aside from the remains of the trestle on the western end of Mill Lake, peaty, boggy soils on the lakeshore bear testament to decades of mill tailings. Invisible to lakeshore strollers is the tangle of sunken logs in the lake's depths. Another reminder of the lake's history is the former home of Joseph Ogle Trethewey, on the east side of the Park, now a designated local heritage property and operated as a heritage house museum by the Heritage Abbotsford Society.(Kris Foulds, Local Historian, Nd).

Image: Margaret's brother, Norman Hutchison, diving into Mill Lake. Sawmill in the background. Catalogue no. P6816, The Reach Gallery Museum, circa 1918

Source: Trethewey House, Parks Canada, nd.

Source: The Reach Gallery Museum p892; C1918

Land Assembly/Acquisition to Create the Park

In 1955, as options for a community Centennial project were being considered, the Abbotsford Lions Club offered to donate its 7.5-acre Park on the Mill Lake foreshore if a commission would be created to oversee management of the Park; the commission over time has morphed into what could now be considered the Parks, Recreation & Culture Department of the City of Abbotsford.

In 1958, a farm on the 20-acre bench land property west of Mill Lake was purchased and a new concrete swimming pool, two smaller wading pools and playground were built to mark the Centenary of British Columbia.

The newly expanded Park was named "Centennial Park" to mark the occasion.

In August 1958, David F. Gosling Memorial Square was dedicated with a plaque on a raised concrete base. Gosling was a Sumas Councilor, and a Lion's club member, who dedicated considerable time and energy to the Centennial Park and Pool project but passed away before it was unveiled.

In 1979, the District of Matsqui purchased the former John Mahoney property adjoining Ware Road on the east side of the current park and converted the 3-acre property into parkland.

Improvements to the Park have continued over the years, many supported by local service clubs, including the Lions Point viewing platform added in 1995 and Rotary Crossing playground at John Mahoney Park added in 2006.

Heritage Structures/Places on the Site

The following sites are identified in the City's Community Heritage Register.

DATE BUILT	NAME/LOCATION OF STRUCTURE	COMMENTS
1919/1920	Trethewey House construction	Added to register in 1983.
1907	Log dump/Trestle Bridge	Added to register in 2014.

Source: Government of British Columbia, circa 1940

2.3 Policy Context

The following outlines City, provincial, and national strategies and policies that provide a framework for the Mill Lake Master Plan.

2.3.1 City Policies

Strategic Plan (2022-2026)

The City of Abbotsford is the Hub of the Fraser Valley. As the cultural and economic centre of the region, Abbotsford will be home to centralized services and agencies including health care, courts, transportation, university, airport, provincial, and federal government, entertainment and cultural facilities, and commerce. We are a vibrant, prosperous and generous community.

The Strategic Plan has four cornerstones:

- Inclusive & Connected Community
- Sustainable and Safe City
- Vibrant and Growing Economy
- Organizational Excellence and Integrity

The cornerstone that is most relevant to the Mill Lake Park Master Plan is Inclusive and Connected Community:

The City of Abbotsford is a community of inclusive, diverse, and green neighbourhoods, connected to convenient and affordable transportation and vibrant commercial centres. Our community is built on the foundation of our cultural heritage and natural beauty and we provide active living opportunities for all residents which contributes to the vitality and social cohesion of our City.

Identified principles that relate to this cornerstone include:

- Implement Culture Connect Strategy
- Capitalize on transportation opportunities in and through the City
- Value recreation and support facilities, amenities and activities that connect us; and
- Ensure development decisions are based on our long-term strategies and are not swayed from our community vision by short-term goals

2016 Official Community Plan (OCP)

Source: 2016 Official Community Plan, City of Abbotsford, 2016

OCP 7 Big Ideas

In 2016, Abbotsford City Council adopted "Abbotsforward", its new Official Community Plan (OCP). Abbotsforward sets out policy directions organized around "7 Big Ideas" to support quality of life and social and economic vitality.

The subsequent 2018 Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) Master Plan supports achieving each of these "7 Big Ideas". As part of 'Create a City Centre', parks, recreation, and culture facilities are fundamental to creating a sense of place and community identity and key to developing the City Centre as a community and cultural hub and destination.

In particular, Mill Lake Park and the civic precinct are defining components of the City Centre.

The OCP identifies land within and adjoining the Park that is planned for open space which will affect future land acquisition related to extending the park boundary.

City Centre Neighbourhood Plan (CCNP)

The study area for this Plan is focused on South Fraser Way and includes Mill Lake Park.

Mobility

The plan focuses on breaking up existing large blocks and providing a fine-grained street network with redundancies to improve connections for all users. The new street grid serves as the foundation for increasing connectivity and creating vibrant, human-scaled environments.

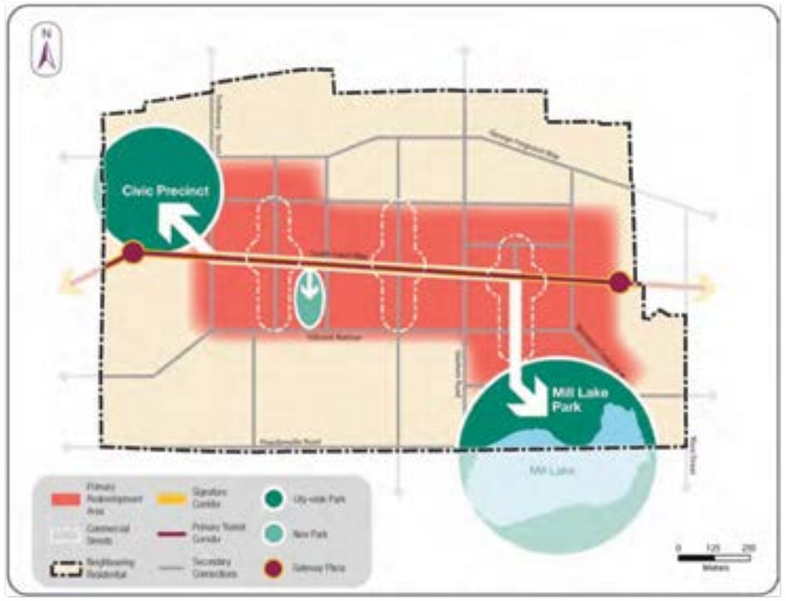
A new street extending from Ventura Avenue to Mill Lake Road is proposed through the current commercial property. This will increase the connectivity between the Park and the City Centre.

Culture

The plan is to establish two distinct cultural hubs within the City Centre: Civic Precinct and Mill Lake.

The Mill Lake Cultural Hub will encourage public art and cultural facilities that highlight and make space for stories related to the area, and align with existing nearby institutions including, but not limited to the Gur Sikh Temple, Trethewey House, and Kariton Art Gallery and Boutique.

The plan also proposes to elevate cultural stories and art that reflect the area's Stó:lō people and way of life.



Source: City Centre Neighbourhood Plan, City of Abbotsford, p. 29, 2019

It advises us to continue engaging with the Sumas, Matsqui, and Leq'a:mel peoples and ensure the City Centre becomes a space that welcomes dialogue and makes progress toward reconciliation.

Open Space

Open space within the City Centre will take advantage of the two existing 'City- Wide' parks: Mill Lake Park and the Civic Precinct. The neighbourhood structure seeks to reveal them both to the greater area by establishing more direct links between the two but especially to South Fraser Way.

A larger urban plaza, located where the commercial property to the north meets Mill Lake Park, will act as a transition space from a very urban condition into a quieter, natural park setting. It will highlight the large glacial erratic rock that today sits at the back of the mall in its southern parking lot.

Land Use

The plan identified land uses, including open space, for some of the privately-owned lots adjoining the Park. This will affect future land acquisition related to the Park.

On-Lot Stormwater Management

While the soils in the CCNP area consist of rapidly to well-drained soil groups, the aquifers below are classified by the Province as being highly vulnerable to surface contamination. As such, while infiltration should be promoted from a hydrologic perspective, the siting and design of infiltration facilities should consider water quality. Specifically, infiltration systems should be prohibited in high pollutant risk sites and runoff treatment should involve media filtration.

Low impact development (LID) measures, or source controls, that promote the infiltration of water are encouraged and include rain gardens, grass swales, porous paving and absorbent soils for lawns and gardens.

In particular, the current tree canopy in the CCNP is very low in coverage and increasing it will likely offer significant rainwater retention through rainfall interception and evapotranspiration. LID measures could be implemented in the park to reduce and filter run-off into Mill Lake. Applying these measures to Mill Lake's catchment could decrease flooding.

Downtown Market Plans Concept Plan - 2011

The series of Concept Plans developed as part of this investigation identified trail linkage opportunities between the Downtown and portals or activity nodes, like Mill Lake Park, in adjoining areas.

Historic Downtown Neighbourhood Plan 2019

The Historic Downtown was the original town site for the Village of Abbotsford, subdivided in 1891 and incorporated in 1924. Mill Lake Park is within the context of the Historic Downtown.

Public Spaces & Amenities

Just outside of the Historic Downtown to the west are Jubilee Park and Ravine Park, with trails that connect to Mill Lake Park through Farrant Crescent.

Trails & Paths

The Plan proposes to build trails and paths to, and through, the neighbourhood, connecting it to destinations such as Jubilee Park, Ravine Park, Mill Lake, the railway corridor and the Discovery Trail. This could improve connectivity between Mill Lake Park and the Historic Downtown.

Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan - 2018

The vision identified in this document is: City Parks such as Mill Lake Park, Abbotsford Exhibition Park, and Albert Dyck Memorial Park attract many recreation and sport users and spectators, contributing to tourism, economic development, and quality of-life experiences.

The plan outlined the many health, social, environmental and economic benefits of parks and recreation.

This plan should be a guide to the recreational and cultural activities to be considered in Mill Lake Park.

Culture Strategy – Culture Connect

The Vision identified for the City strategy is: Rich Cultural Experiences for All:

Abbotsford will be a place of rich and diverse cultural experiences and resources that are the essential ingredients of a vibrant community of connected people and neighbourhoods.

The following recommendations from the Strategy are specifically relevant to Mill Lake Park.

- 1.2.4 - Identify and protect important built, natural and intangible heritage assets throughout the City (re the natural heritage gardens and trees near Trethewey House and the historical log pilings in Mill Lake)
- 1.2.7 - Develop educational heritage opportunities to learn from the past and ensure Abbotsford is a welcoming and inclusive community
- 2.1.4 - Strategically invest in current facilities and public spaces to ensure continued use and community enjoyment
- 2.2.1 - Plan and provide for amenities in Parks and open spaces that allow for spontaneous creativity and organic cultural gatherings
- 2.2.3 - Align and provide for space needs with neighourhood and Park development plans
- 2.2.5 - Plan a central cultural district in Abbotsford in alignment with the Official Community Plan
- 2.2.6 - Leverage new technology and expand Wi-Fi in the key public Parks and plazas to support digital placemaking and greater connectivity and accessibility
- 4.1.1 - Improve wayfinding for local cultural assets and facilities

Age-Friendly Assessment Report (2017)

The populations in British Columbia and Canada are aging and living longer. In response to these trends, Abbotsford completed an age-friendly strategy to help meet the needs of its older residents, while providing a physical and social environment that is inclusive of all people.

The Report identified what can be done towards achieving an Age-Friendly Future, including.

A. Identify locations to improve physical connections between neighbourhood parks and other local destinations through sidewalks, bike routes, and off-street trail connections.

B. Review and or create trail guidelines for accessibility provisions such as width, grade, surface materials, way finding – and consider adopting an accessible trail standard for some trails.

C. Review Park washrooms and ensure a standard amount of Park washrooms are wheelchair friendly.

D. Explore grant funding to retrofit identified locations to make them more age-friendly.

Fees and Charges Bylaw and Policy Framework (2021)

This framework included a series of recommendations intended to help the City of Abbotsford meet its objective of providing a practical, transparent, and fair approach to setting fees and charges. A feature of this process was the "Benefits Based Approach".

Benefits that are particularly relevant to Mill Lake Park, as a destination City level park, include the following:

Community Benefits

- Special events
- Protecting community natural resources
- Beautify the community

Individual Benefits

- Opportunities for seniors
- Interpreting the environment
- Reflection/escape

Urban Forest Strategy 2022

The strategy is built around five goals:

1. PLAN for a connected Green Network of trees and natural assets
2. PRESERVE trees strategically on public and private land
3. MANAGE public trees so they are healthy and safe
4. GROW the urban forest equitably
5. PARTNER broadly to foster urban forest stewardship

Sections of the strategy which are particularly relevant to Mill Lake Park include the following:

Native Forests

Abbotsford is home to a variety of native forest ecosystems, most of which have been distributed by historic logging, agriculture or urbanization at some point. As a result, most of the forest is young second growth or riparian stands.

Urban Forest Character

SIGNIFICANT STANDS

Significant stands indicate the presence of protected species, sensitive ecosystems or tall stands of trees found across the landscape. They occur throughout the city in ravines, riparian areas and parks. Natural area character should be enhanced and extended by planting native species adjacent to these areas whenever possible.

Acquisition Strategy (Mill Lake Action Plan Update - Property Acquisition Plan 2003)

The creation of Mill Lake Park started in 1944. A Mill Lake Park acquisition strategy was identified in the 1987 development plan for the park and updated in the 2013 Mill Lake Master Plan with properties and functions identified for future development. Privately owned properties designated as open space, were also identified in the OCP and CCNP.

These documents will be a guide to future acquisition to expand the Park.

In 1986, Council approved the first stage of land acquisition adjoining Mill Lake to expand the Park. There were a number of objectives which guided the preparation of the acquisition plan. These were:

- To acquire sufficient space around Mill Lake to allow for appropriate Park development and to minimize the sense of crowding;
- To acquire a significant amount of frontage on surrounding roads so the Park will establish a strong presence in the community;
- To acquire land to allow for development of new areas in the Park;
- To retain some blocks of residential property adjacent to the Park to allow for overseeing of the site;
- To retain relatively new homes until they have reached their typical lifespan, except where there may be only one or two such properties in a key Park location; and
- To provide a better link between Trethewey House and the Park.

Since 1986, the Park has grown in area from 14.9 ha (36.85 acres) to 44.95 ha (111.07 acres). The majority of the properties identified in the Acquisition Plan have been acquired by the City with the exception of lots north of Mill Lake Road.

Engineering & Regional Utilities, Drainage Master Plan

The most relevant chapter of this Plan is related to runoff volume and run off quality control.

Issues & Opportunities

There is very little runoff volume and quality control in some of the older neighbourhoods of the City. The Drainage Master Plan reviewed and made recommendations to the current drainage policies and design criteria to mitigate impacts of past practices and guide future developments.

Strategies & Improvements

About 75% of the urban development area, of which Mill Lake Park is a part of, is on well draining soils, which provides opportunities to infiltrate runoff back into the ground to replenish the aquifer and provide base flow for creeks and streams. It will also reduce runoff volume downstream to slow down the erosion process and reduce the chance of flooding, including flooding around Mill Lake.

Willband Creek Integrated Stormwater Management Plan (ISMP)

The Willband Creek watershed, which Mill Lake Park is located in, has a catchment estimated at 1,800 ha. It is located within the heart of Abbotsford with a tremendous diversity of land uses. Major land uses within the catchment include residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, institutional, and park and school use.

Mill Lake and its creek through Ravine Park are some of the significant water bodies within the catchment.

Before the development of the City, the terrestrial portion of the study area was dominated by coniferous forests with western hemlock and western red cedar being the most common tree species. Much of the coniferous forest within the study area has been removed and replaced with non-native species.

Mill Lake & Mill Lake Outlet Channel

Mill Lake is fed by ground water and the storm sewer system. It is approximately 16.35 hectares (ha) in area, with approximately 73% of the surface area less than 2.0 m in depth (CH2M Hill, 2003). It has a maximum depth of 10.5 m. It is anticipated that substrates would consist almost entirely of silt and decaying organic matter.

There are a number of factors that impact water quality in Mill Lake, the primary factor being a high faecal coliform count from the waterfowl that frequent Mill Lake.

There is also a lack of oil/water separators for the storm sewer system. As a result, hydrocarbons are known to discharge directly to Mill Lake (personal communication). Finally, the lack of depth through the majority of Mill Lake would likely result in high summer water temperatures, which would significantly affect dissolved oxygen levels.

Fish species in Mill Lake include Largemouth Bass and Rainbow Trout, both of which have previously been stocked. The bass is an aggressive, introduced species that can have a significant impact to native fish species as a result of predation.

There is limited indication of fish presence within the outlet channel, with one record of a Rainbow Trout from June 2010. As such, the channel provides Class Red (A)-P habitat. Red (A)' refers to fish presence while '–P' refers to water permanence. Fish habitat quality is fair in the channel due to the comparatively low depth and complexity.

This plan provides a guide to the management of water quantity and quality in Mill Park Lake.

Streamside Protection

Riparian areas are the areas bordering on streams, lakes, and wetlands that link water to land. The blend of streambed, water, trees, shrubs and grasses directly influences and provides fish habitat.

The City's Streamside Protection Bylaw (SPB) and Natural Environment Development Permit (NEDP) guidelines inform the protection of the riparian areas around Mill Lake and the determination of the 30 m Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA).

The Province's Riparian Areas Protection Act (RAPR) legislation calls on local governments to protect riparian areas during development activities by ensuring that their bylaws, regulations, and/or permit approval process complies with or exceeds provincial directives on streamside protection. The City currently addresses this requirement through the SPB and NEDP guidelines.

The SPB does not apply specifically to municipal parks, however utilizing it is relevant to Park planning and management as it ensures compliance with senior government legislation and it aligns with the policies contained in the NEDP guidelines.

Development should be restricted within the 30 m SPEA as it has the potential to damage vegetation and/or interfere with the ability of the riparian area to provide fish habitat.

Infrastructure design within the 30 m SPEA would need to follow the NEDP guidelines, including the Mitigation Hierarchy (1st avoid, 2nd mitigate, 3rd compensate), and should also consider guidance in 'Access Near Aquatic Areas: A Guide to Sensitive Planning, Design and Management' (Fraser River Action Plan and Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks 2012). Some amenities may require senior government approvals, particularly those below the high-water mark.

As private properties are developing and redeveloping, the SPEA will be protected and lands transferred to the City as parkland.

2.3.2 Relevant Federal & Provincial Policies

Government of Canada

Federal policies that are relevant to the management of the Park include:

- Parks for All, 2017
- A Framework for Recreation in Canada 2015 – Pathways to Wellbeing
- Canadian Sport for Life – Long-Term Athlete Development
- Canadian Sport Policy 2012 (CSP 2012) – Sport for Life
- Fisheries Act (related to fish and fish habitat protection and water quality)
- Species at Risk Act (Western Painted Turtle - protection of critical habitat)

Government of British Columbia (BC)

The most relevant BC Provincial policy related to recreation is Active People, Active Places – Action Plan 2.0.

Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (2019)

The Riparian Areas Protection Act is Provincial legislation that requires local governments to enact bylaws that protect riparian areas.

The RAPR provides the legal requirement to local governments to implement riparian protection, which the City achieves through the Streamside Protection Bylaw and Natural Environment Development Permit Guidelines.

Other Provincial Environmental Legislation

Other provincial environmental legislation includes:

- Wildlife Act (protection of nests, salvage permits),
- Weed control regulation (requires removal of noxious weeds),
- Water Sustainability Act (related to fish and fish habitat protection as well as water quality and quantity), and Groundwater Protection Regulation.

2.4 Site Assets & Inventory

The following provides a summary of the existing features of the site.

2.4.1 Mill Lake & Lake Edge

There are three primary Mill lake edge conditions. The natural edge consists of native wetland vegetation in the shallow water. Along some of the well-used shoreline of the Park a rock wall has been constructed. In places this is at the water's edge but along the north shore, from the Mill Lake Road parking lot to the east this is set back, and compacted shoreline is exposed. The third edge condition is turfgrass.

2.4.2 Materials Used in the Park

Stone has been used effectively throughout the Park for edging to Mill lake, retaining walls and free-standing walls. The use of stone reinforces the natural character of the Park.

Although the shelters and washroom buildings in the Park have a relatively consistent character, the quality of the materials used for these structures is quite ordinary.

Walkway pavements are generally simple asphalt or concrete with some gravel in forested areas. Detailed pavement has been used in the west Park entry adjoining Emerson Street.

2.4.3 Buildings & Associated Structures

Trethewey House

Trethewey House was built in 1919 and is located on the east side of the lake at 2313 Ware Street (Trethewey House Heritage Site, Heritage Abbotsford Society, Nd). The House is built in the "Craftsman" style and is constructed using primarily local materials, making it distinct from other buildings of similar age within the City of Abbotsford. Constructed using locally sourced fir (processed at the Trethewey's mill on Mill Lake), along with bricks and tiles crafted from clay mined on Sumas Mountain (processed by the Clayburn Company at Clayburn, B.C.'s first company town), Trethewey House represents two of Abbotsford's most important early industries (Trethewey House Heritage Site, Heritage Abbotsford Society, Nd).

The house used to have a landmark stand of Douglas Fir trees at the front of the property formerly known as the Cinq Arbres and is now the home of the Heritage Abbotsford Society (Trethewey House, Parks Canada, Nd). Both the interior and exterior of the house have been restored, and it is now used for interpretive purposes (Trethewey House, Parks Canada, Nd).

Heritage Value

Trethewey House is significant as the most substantial historic house in the Mill Lake area, and for its sophisticated Craftsman style architecture, which retains a high degree of original integrity. The interior is notable for its intact character, which reflect the status of the original owners in this rural community (Trethewey House, Parks Canada, Nd).

Added to the City's Heritage Register in 1983, the house has been restored to its circa 1925 interior and exterior appearance and is an important cultural site for the interpretation of Abbotsford's history to the public (Trethewey House, Parks Canada, Nd).

The gardens (2) directly to the north and northeast of Trethewey House are managed by the Heritage Abbotsford Society and maintained by the City of Abbotsford.

Kariton House

Kariton House is located on the east side of Mill Lake at 2387 Ware Street. Kariton House is named for Werner Kariton who lived in it until he passed away in 1983. Today, Kariton House is home to the Abbotsford Arts Council. The Abbotsford Arts Council promotes the vision, creativity, and energy of Abbotsford's communities. The organization provides artist development for local artists and builds community and connections within the local cultural sector. One of the ways they support artists is by showing local artwork at the Kariton Art Gallery located inside Kariton House (Abbotsford Arts Council, Nd).

Source: Neighbourhood History Walk: Mill Lake Exploring Place Names in the Mill Lake Park Neighbourhood, The Reach Gallery Museum, pg. 1, circa 1953.

Source: 13 Top-Rated Things to Do in Abbotsford, BC, Planet Ware, pg. 1, 2020

Washrooms

Park Shelters

Centennial Pool

The first Mill Lake swimming area was a portion of Mill Lake sectioned off to keep swimmers out of the path of speedboats. In 1958, this natural swimming area was replaced by Centennial Pool. Centennial Pool is a 25 metre, 8 lane outdoor swimming pool offering public swims as well as lessons seasonally.

Park Shelters

Three picnic shelters in the park can be used spontaneously or rented out for special occasions:

- North side of Mill Lake, just east of the playground;
- Campbell Picnic Shelter, playground;
- South side of Mill Lake, just east of the playground

Washrooms

Seven permanent washroom buildings (seasonal or year-round) are located throughout the Park:

- Trethewey House (access when house open - managed by Heritage Abbotsford Society);
- Mill Lake Road parking lot (main) (year-round); Mill Lake Road west of parking lot (Fishermans) (seasonal);
- Centennial Ball Diamond (Kiwanis) (seasonal);
- Children's Park/Centennial Pool area (seasonal);
- Bevan Road parking lot (year-round); and
- Mill Lake Adanac (year-round).

These washrooms require further assessment to ensure accessibility.

Parking

Mill Lake Loop Pathway

Centennial Outdoor Pool

2.4.4 Park Infrastructure

Roads & Parking Areas

There are four paved parking areas in the Park. Mill Lake Road is the only portion of public road in the Park. It separates the main portion of the Park from the northern forest area.

The parking area adjoining Kariton House is small, and its access is partially screened at Ware Street.

The parking area adjoining the ball diamonds off Emerson Street is compact but services both the ball diamonds and the activity areas in the west side of the Park.

The parking area off Bevan Avenue in the south area of the Park services the adjoining play area and is a trail head.

The parking area in the north area of the Park services the dock and the trail system. It is too close to Mill Lake and restricts pedestrian movement along the lake edge. Run-off from the parking area also goes directly into Mill Lake. Considering the type and quantity of watercraft that are used on Mill Lake, the parking area does not need to be this close to the water. There is no "on street parking" along the roads bordering the Park.

Locations for larger vehicles (buses, etc.) to stop and drop-off or pick up park visitors should be considered for the parking areas in the Park and in the streets adjoining the Park.

2.4.5 Park Amenities

Pathways & Trails

The Park includes a 2.2 km circuitous asphalt path with connecting trails and a boardwalk along the east edge of Mill Lake. Pedestrian and cyclist circulation around Mill Lake is constrained by a number of pinch points where private development is close to Mill Lake.

Many users have requested a divided, two way or usage segregated path system around the lake to improve safety.

Sink holes and depressions form regularly along the asphalt trail near Alta and Adanac St. Rebuilding of the subgrade seems to be needed.

In the Bevan conifer stand, poorly delineated trails lead to excessive soil compaction from foot traffic. Digging for the creation of bike jumps and trails, litter and dumping all have negative impacts on this area of the Park.

Black cottonwood trees adjacent to the trail, in several areas, and the north parking lot, cause root related heaves and cracking of the pavement. For most of these trees, root pruning is not an option. Tree removal, species conversion, or installation of structural soil or soil cells under pathways are options.

The boardwalk at the northeast corner of the Park has vegetation growing up through it which is difficult to manage. Options for preventing this should be investigated.

The sidewalks at the edges of the Park could be made more appealing to pedestrians by providing separation between the road and pedestrians – most of the sidewalks are currently mono-walks. A treed and landscaped boulevard or a railing could be used to provide separation.

Playground

Interpretive Signage

Regulatory Signage

Sport & Recreation Facilities

The existing sport and recreation facilities in the Park include:

- 2 ball diamonds on the corner of Emerson Street and Peardonville Road
- 1 ball diamond on Mill Lake Road
- An 8 lane, 25 metre outdoor swimming pool (Centennial Pool)
- 24 horseshoe pits (Abbotsford Horseshoe Club)
- A Seniors' Fitness Park
- 2 table tennis tables
- 1 sand volleyball court
- Lawn Bowling green with a temporary clubhouse
- Outdoor chess board with chess pieces

Children's Play

Play opportunities in the Park include:

- Spray park and playground on the west side of the park near Centennial Pool;
- Playground near the Bevan Road parking lot; and
- Playground (John Mahoney) near the Ware Street parking lot.

Signage

Identification &
Wayfinding Signage

The Park has limited identification/ wayfinding signage at the entry points along its edges. The Park contains little in the way of directional/wayfinding signage within.

The best developed Park entry is from Emerson Street north of Centennial Pool. This includes ramps for accessibility.

Interpretive Signage

There are a limited number of interpretive and dedication plaques in the Park, including locations on the west and north ends of the Park which will be updated when the Plan is completed.

Regulatory Signage

The Park contains standard City signage outlining the rules and regulations.

Other Park Amenities

Other recreation amenities and features in the Park include:

- A single width boat launch off Mill Lake Road;
- A fisherman's wharf;
- A Waterwise Demonstration Garden;
- An air quality monitoring station (Fraser Valley Regional District);
- Mill Lake viewing areas; and
- General Park site furniture and memorial benches.

Other Park Amenities

Gardens

2.4.6 Culture Zone

Kariton House is a City owned building and home to the Abbotsford Arts Council. The Abbotsford Arts Council promotes the vision, creativity and energy of Abbotsford's communities. The organization provides artist development for local artists and builds community and connections within the local cultural sector. One of the ways they support artists is by showing local artwork at the Kariton Art Gallery located inside the Kariton House (Abbotsford Arts Council, Nd). Kariton House is operated through a Fee-for-Service agreement between the Abbotsford Arts Council and the City.

Trethewey House is a designated heritage site and is operated as a museum through a Fee-for-Service agreement between the Heritage Abbotsford Society (HAS) and the City.

2.4.7 Feature Gardens in the Park

Labyrinth

A planted labyrinth was initiated in the southern area of the Park by the Labyrinths of Hope Society. Portions of the labyrinth have been replaced.

Gardens Associated with Trethewey House including Sylvia Pincott Gardens.

HAS operates Trethewey House Heritage Site and interprets the gardens on site. A rose garden is located east of the house, other gardens exist on all four sides of Trethewey House and on the west side of the Carriage House. The Sylvia Pincott Heritage Habitat Garden is located in the northeast corner of the Heritage Site behind the contemplation garden on the north side of the front porch. The Sylvia Pincott Heritage Habitat Garden is a provincially recognized heritage habitat garden which contains plants sympathetic to the era of Trethewey House's construction (1920s) and is designed to show the interconnectedness of flora and fauna.

2.4.8 Site Uses & Recreational Activities

Current uses of the Park are heavily focused on walking, enjoying nature, children's play, social gathering and connecting, picnicking on the grass, and cycling.

A number of community groups have operating and/or license agreements with the City and these agreements may need to be updated.

Site Analysis

3

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

3 Site Analysis

3.1 Legal Parcels & Land Use

Mill Lake Park is 44.95 ha in area including 16.35 ha covered by the lake. Property acquisition to expand the Park has occurred since 1986 in accordance with City policy based on the Master Plans and Action Plans prepared for the Park. Additional properties may be considered for acquisition in future to further improve the Park.

The majority of the park is zoned P1 (Civic Institutional Zone) or P2 (Park, Open Space and School Zone). Some recently purchased residential lots are zoned RS3.

3.2 Gateways & Entrances

Probably due to the fact that the Park has been assembled gradually over numerous decades, the main pedestrian, cyclists and vehicular entrances to the Park do not provide clear identification as a Park entry.

The Park has limited identification/wayfinding signage at the entry points along its edges. Many Park users have requested information boards be placed at the Park entrances to provide information about upcoming activities and events occurring in the Park. There is a need for wayfinding signage to allow visitors to easily navigate their way through the Park.

The west entry to the Park from Emerson Street provides the best treatment as a Park entry, incorporating high quality materials and an accessible route into the Park.

Elements to be considered for the Park entrances include:

- Park identification signage
- Wayfinding signage
- Regulatory signage
- Accessible pathways
- Lighting
- Site furnishings

3.3 Park Character, Facilities & Amenities

The following 'character areas' have been identified in the park:

- natural area;
- passive parkland;
- riparian zone;
- active recreation/recreation infrastructure;
- community facility zone.

These demonstrate the varied aesthetic character of the park from substantially natural forest areas to highly developed recreation space.

3.4 Biophysical Analysis

A desktop biophysical analysis has been conducted for the Park including information provided by the City. It broadly addressed the following:

- Landform, Surficial Geology and Soils
- Waterbodies and Watercourses
- Vegetation
- Wildlife including species at risk

The following includes extracts from the Overview Environmental Assessment conducted by PGL Environmental Consultants documented in a report dated May 2022. This report was appended in full to the Key Findings Report for Mill Lake Park. Other existing biophysical information for the Park was also obtained from previous studies of the area and City information.

3.4.1 Landform, Surficial Geology and Soils

Mill Lake is set in gently rolling to flat terrain. To the north-west, there are slopes of 30% and greater while to the south and east the land is almost flat. The steep slopes, especially with their dense vegetation, visually enclose the lower Park area. The surficial geology of the area consists mostly of glaciofluvial deposits, including recessional outwash sands and gravels up to 38 m thick, overlain by dune sand up to 7.6 m thick.

The soils in the study area fall into two groups. Those immediately adjacent to and north-east of Mill Lake have imperfect drainage and perched water tables. The north-east area of Mill Lake may also be structurally unstable due to sawdust deposition from the former mill. Generally, the soils farther away from the lake have no structural imitations and moderate to good drainage.

3.4.2 Waterbodies and Watercourses

Mill Lake is about 16.35 hectares in size, roughly 40% of the entire Park. A recent bathymetric survey of the lake bottom reported an average depth of 3.7m and maximum depth of 12.75m (AquaCoustics, 2021).

Mill Lake is fed by both groundwater and stormwater draining from the adjacent neighbourhoods and roadways (City of Abbotsford, 2021). Water leaves Mill Lake through a series of culverts to Ravine Park where it daylights as Willband Creek (City of Abbotsford, 2021). Mill Lake is main contributor of water to this branch of Willband Creek. Mill Lake's storage capabilities have resulted in reduced peak flows to downstream systems but also flooding of nearby properties (Urban Systems, 2019).

Mill Lake water quality is considered poor due to poor circulation and stratification. Stormwater entering Mill Lake is believed to carry high levels of sediment and particulate that accumulate on the lake bottom. The abundance of Canada geese and other waterfowl on and around Mill Lake could contribute to elevated faecal coliform levels.

Compounded with high temperatures resulting from shallow water depths and poor circulation, water quality in Mill Lake during the summer and fall is expected to be further degraded.

Aquatic Ecosystems

The aquatic ecosystems within the Park include Mill Lake and Willband Creek. As almost all Willband Creek is culverted, the approximately 10m section of Willband Creek connecting Mill Lake to the culvert headwall was considered part of Mill Lake's ecosystem. Invasive fragrant waterlily (Nymphaea odorata) grew in dense mats around much of the shallow perimeter of Mill Lake and was especially abundant in the southwest and northeast corners of the lake. East of the boardwalk, some Cattail, Douglas' Water-Hemlock, and non-native Smartweed grew amongst the fragrant Waterlily; however, it was generally monotypic.

3.4.3 Existing vegetation

Most of the site is far removed from the natural ecosystems that likely once occurred here. Over 85% of the property has been cleared and disturbed through historical land uses and is now characterized by an assortment of recreational facilities and infrastructure, housing, and manicured lawns and gardens, as well as parking areas, roads, and trails. Some native forest or woodland stands remain on the site and there are numerous specimen trees throughout the Park.

The remnant forest vegetation type is typical of the coast forest zone. The slopes and higher ground contain Douglas Fir, Western Red Cedar, maple and birch, and the lower, wetter ground has alder, willows and cottonwood. In the wetter areas a dense shrub layer of hardhack survives.

Woodlots Ecosystems

The western section of Mill Lake Park includes several stands of young to maturing trees. In the southwest corner, there is a rectangular woodlot consisting of young and maturing Douglas Fir and Western Red cedar with native understories species

The narrow slope between the paved path and two Centennial Park ball diamonds is characterized by a band of young Douglas Fir with an occasional Western Red Cedar.

A stand of maturing Western Red Cedars and patchy understory species characterized the northwest corner of the Park.

East of Gladwin Road, between the northwest woodlot and the band of Douglas fir, there is a mixed stand of maturing Big leaf Maple and Douglas Fir with a few juvenile Western Red Cedar.

Trees

The Park includes many large native conifers and large Black Cottonwood trees. The forest understory is minimal in the large conifer stands due both to forest competition but also due to pro-active vegetation management for CPTED purposes. In the more open, mixed and deciduous stands, invasive plants are reducing biodiversity.

Riparian Ecosystems

The riparian vegetation around Mill Lake varies from narrow bands, like that along the south shore, to dense stands, like that in the southwest corner. Young Black Cottonwood with Cascara, Willow, Hardhack, Fireweed, Sedge and rush species with invasive Common Tansy, Reed Canary Grass, Himalayan Blackberry, and Yellow Flag iris characterize the north shore of Mill Lake, east of the beach.

Riparian vegetation in the northeast corner of the lake, consisted of Hardhack, Cattail, Douglas' Water-Hemlock and Willows with non-native Himalayan Blackberry, Pennsylvania Smartweed, Reed Canary Grass, and Morning Glory.

Vegetation along the southeast section of the lake contained more trees, including Black Cottonwood, Red Alder, Mountain Ash, Big Leaf Maple, Western Red Cedar, and pine. Hardhack, Oso Berry, rose and willow are common shrub species; however, invasive species are quite common.

The western shore of Mill Lake is densely vegetated with the occasional path to or opening at the water's edge. Maturing Black Cottonwood are the dominant tree species with Willows, Red Alder, Hardhack, and invasive Himalayan

Blackberry being the most common shrubs. Along the lake margin, patches of cattail, sedges, Marsh Cinquefoil, and non-native Pennsylvania Smartweed were observed. Non-native, ornamental, or invasive plants are common along the western shore; these include dense infestations of Morning Glory, English Ivy, and Creeping Buttercup.

As per the City's Streamside Protection Bylaw 1465-2005, Streamside Protection and Enhancement Areas (SPEAs) are determined by assessing existing or potential vegetation conditions from the top of bank or ravine, fish presence and ravine morphology. The City's Natural Environment Development Permit requirements are applicable, including the establishment of a setback in accordance with the bylaw (City of Abbotsford 2016).

Mill Lake's SPEA vegetation conditions are discontinuous with some areas of existing or potential vegetation less than 5m and others greater than 50m. Existing structures such as parking lots, asphalt trails, roadways, and residences are the main constraints to the vegetation around Mill Lake. Based on the existing and potential vegetation and fish presence, a 30m SPEA is anticipated for Mill Lake.

Other Vegetation

Invasive Plants

Invasive species in the park include Himalayan Blackberry, Morning Glory, Dead Nettle, English Ivy, Knotweed and Periwinkle. All of these, except the blackberry, will grow in low light conditions and are displacing native groundcover vegetation.

Blackberry thickets choke out the riparian vegetation and intrude onto pathways. They block lake views and cause significant resources to be expended to "control" them. The small "bog garden" was recently rejuvenated after being taken over by blackberry.

While wildlife suffered during and subsequently as a result of the mill's operation, water lilies have flourished. Vast amounts of organic matter in the form of decaying sawdust provides the perfect environment, and with the banning of the powerboats that held them in check, lilies now threaten to choke Mill Lake.

The invasive plant populations pose a significant threat to the long-term health of existing and future natural plant communities, both onsite and offsite. These species can threaten overall succession and sustainability of retained or enhanced ecological. Preparation of a Site-specific Invasive Plant Management Plan will be an important element to successful development of the property and preservation and enhancement of ecological values.

Vegetation & Landscape Assessment

Wetlands and riparian areas

These shoreline wetlands situated around Mill Lake are sensitive ecosystems and critical habitat for a number of species and need to be protected. They are prominent where stormwater enters Mill Lake. There is much opportunity for riparian area enhancements in the forested areas of the lakeshore as well as at in-flow points where urban creek enhancement could also occur.

Coarse woody debris

A management plan is required for ecological management of wood debris and hazardous trees. This must be balanced with public safety and visual aesthetics. Fine forest fuels must be managed to avoid creation of excessive fuel loads easy ignition. Ladder fuels should be managed in the conifer stands to reduce the chances for an intense crown fire.

Heritage Trethewey Douglas-Firs

Douglas Fir trees played an important historical role in the economy of the area. This species of tree and a number of others found in the former John Mahoney Park, are mentioned in the publication "Our Sylvan Heritage". There is an opportunity to provide interpretive signage in the Park that documents the importance of Douglas Fir trees and other tree species in the Park.

Bevan conifer stand

This large conifer stand requires "stand management" as the trees mature to ensure healthy, structurally stable trees in the long term. In the understory of this stand of trees, there are opportunities for enhancement and a trail network through this area could provide an opportunity for a "working forest" interpretive walk.

Specimen trees

There are opportunities to build on these plantings and create an interpretive "tree walk". Large, native specimen trees occupy the SE quadrant of the Park. Opportunities include creating "tree islands" to connect root systems and reduce mechanical compaction by mowers. Complimentary native, horticultural style plantings and other habitat enhancements could occur in these areas.

Deciduous stands surrounding the lake lack seed source for forest succession to occur. Forest succession planning is required. This includes stand management as well as supplemental plantings and soil amendments. (From Shawn Gurney – City of Abbotsford)

3.4.4 Wildlife including species at risk

Wherever possible, ecosystems were estimated and mapped for the site, however, all of the Mill Lake Park lands exhibited some level of notable disturbance either through land clearing and development, or through significant non-native plant invasion. The vegetated portions of the property that do exist are far-removed from the climax plant communities/ecosystems the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (BCCDC) seeks to conserve.

BCCDC mapping was used to identify previously recorded known occurrences of species and ecosystems at risk on or within 1km of Mill Lake Park. Occurrences of Red-listed Western Painted Turtle have been documented in and around Mill Lake. Additionally, most of Mill Lake Park is identified as Western Painted Turtle critical habitat. Historical occurrences of Red-listed Oregon Forest Snail (*Allogona Townsendiana*) were documented southwest of Abbotsford in 1954. The occurrence is mapped directly southeast of Mill Lake Park. Occurrence of Red-listed Roell's Brotherella (*Brotherella Roellii*) – a species of moss were identified near the edge of Willband Creek in Ravine Park, east of Mill Lake Park and in a swampy area of Boa Brook, north of the Park.

Avifauna

Over 100 bird species have been recorded at Mill Lake Park including a pair of resident Bald Eagles. The Bald Eagles have a nest northwest of the lake and are often observed perched in the large Black Cottonwoods along the western shoreline (PGL – Overview Environmental Assessment 2021)

Canada Geese are protected under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 (MBCA). Canada Geese may remain throughout the nesting season, and in some areas, throughout the winter. Canada Geese are pro-actively managed in the Park for population control.

Fish

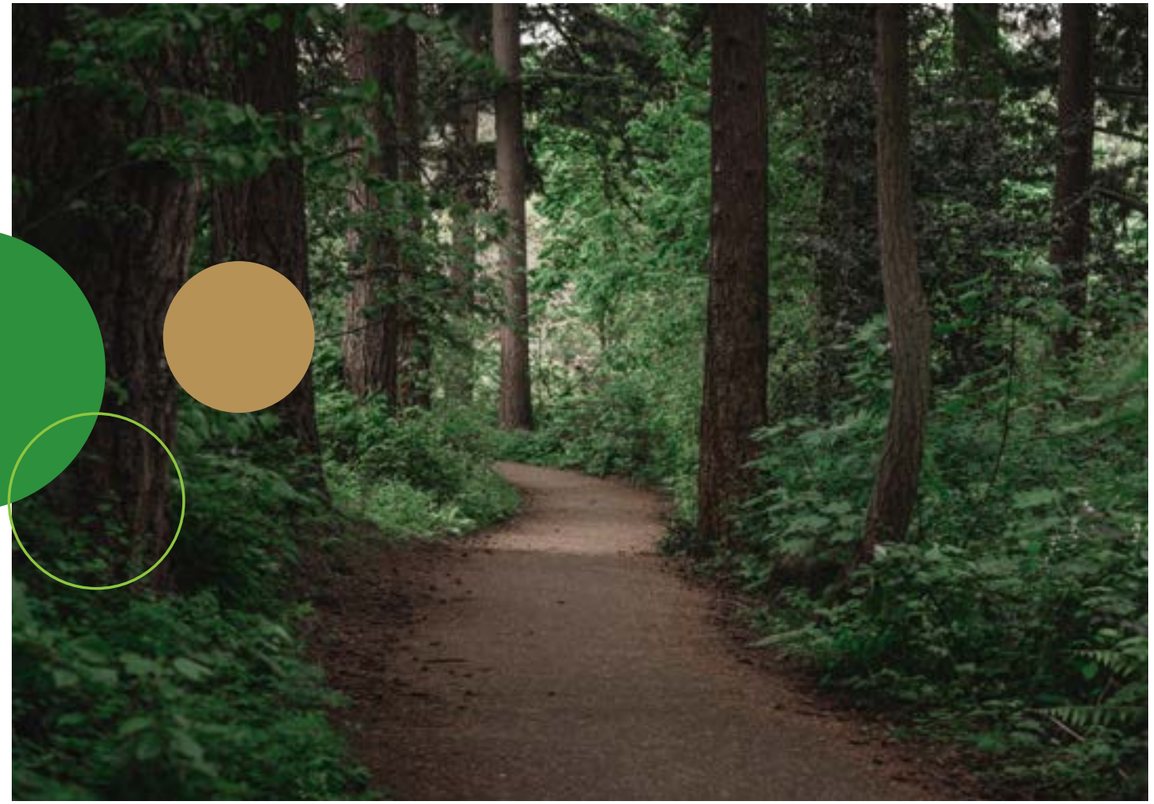
Little Brown Myotis is a species at risk. Combinations of adjacent habitat types such as forest, meadow, wetland, can exponentially improve habitat values compared to more homogeneous or cultured landscapes.

Other

There are limited occurrences of American Bullfrog in the Park. This species can multiply quickly and decimate native amphibian populations.

Eastern Grey Squirrel have displaced the native Douglas-Squirrels and chipmunks. These squirrels are omnivorous and kill young songbirds and other native wildlife in considerable numbers.

BCCDC mapping was used to identify previously recorded known occurrences of species and ecosystems at risk on or within 1km of Mill Lake Park.



3.5 Safety & Security

Compared with other Abbotsford Parks, Mill Lake Park has a relatively high number of calls to City Bylaw enforcement. There was a total of 80 files generated in 2023. In 2024 there were 58 files generated.

The Park has a number of areas that are hidden from view from adjoining streets or houses, by landform or vegetation. Some structures in the Park, such as shelters, provide attractive locations for illegitimate Park behaviors to occur.

Calls to City Bylaw Enforcement:

80 Files Generated in 2023

In 2024 There Were 58 Files Generated

Regular Events & Festivals are Held in the Park

3.6 Events & Seasonal Programming

3.6.1 Events in the Park

Within the Park there are a number of events. Some key examples are as follows:

- Run for Water
- Symphony in the Park
- Abbotsford Police Department Movie in the Park
- Indiginous Arts and Culture Day

3.6.2 Go Play Outside Program

The City's Go Play Outside program utilizes the power of play to connect community through accessible arts, heritage, culture, and recreation programming. The program provides free drop-in activities in Parks throughout Abbotsford, encouraging participation from all ages and abilities. Go Play Outside also hosts community organizations, artists, and recreational partners. Mill Lake Park is often used for this program.

3.7 Key Park Projects

3.7.1 Aquatics Strategy

The City of Abbotsford is conducting a review and analysis of the aquatics services and infrastructure in Abbotsford.

The outcome of the study is a strategy containing recommended actions for effective aquatic services as well as an implementation plan to guide future work and ensure alignment with City priorities.

The Strategy may further influence the future of Centennial Pool.

3.7.2 Tree & Vegetation Inventory

A tree and vegetation inventory of the Park was completed by City staff in 2021 and informed the Key Findings Report for the project.

3.7.3 Lake Fountain Including Power Service Upgrade to Park

In 2019, the City established a Mill Lake Park Reserve Fund and received a notable donation for improvements to the Park. The first capital improvement using these funds was authorized by Council to be an aeration fountain to improve the water quality of Mill Lake, and in turn the surrounding ecosystem, and to provide a beautiful aesthetic addition to the City's premier Park.

The fountain, installed in 2022, sprays lake water 30 metres into the air and has LED lighting to allow colours to be changed as desired.

3.7.4 Reconstruction of Dock

A nature observation and fishing dock was constructed and installed in 2022. The floating dock is rectangular and measures 22 metres long x 5 metres wide with twin 2.5 metre wide pedestrian access walkways. The floating dock features lightweight, environmentally friendly, aluminum construction, an accessible design and guardrails to help ensure a safe and enjoyable visit for all.

3.7.5 Bike Lanes Around the Edge of the Park

The City is planning to enhance the existing bike lanes along Bevan Avenue. A future amenity station in the Park including a bench with tools and a water bottle filling station could be considered.

Engagement Process & Outcomes

4

MILL LAKE
PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

Engagement was conducted with the general public and stakeholders. Input was also obtained from various City departments through the DART review process.

4 Engagement Process & Outcomes

4.1 Engagement Process

The first round of public and stakeholder engagement for Stage 1 of the project occurred in summer 2021. This included an online stakeholder workshop, a virtual public open house, a survey, and four in-person pop-up events at Mill Lake Park and Abbotsford Farmer's Market.

The second round of public and stakeholder engagement for Stage 2 of the project occurred in the summer and fall of 2023.

Stage 3 in process and will be updated.

4.2 Who We Engaged With

Engagement was conducted with the general public and stakeholders. Input was also obtained from various City departments through the Development Application Review Team (DART) review process.

4.3 Engagement Opportunities

Opportunities for public and stakeholder engagement were provided in Stages 1 through 3 of the project to initially confirm opinions about the existing physical condition of the park and recreation activities that people wanted to conduct in the Park and then to obtain opinions regarding the alternative concept design options for the Park.

4.3.1 Engagement Stage 1

The purpose of the first stage of engagement was to gather feedback on the draft vision and guiding principles as well as local knowledge, concerns, needs, land use history and significance. As part of the first stage of engagement, the following tools were used:

- The Let's Talk Abbotsford website;
- Online Amenities Map allowing geolocated comments;
- An online survey;
- An online stakeholder engagement event (via Zoom and MURAL);
- An online public open house (via Zoom); and
- In-person pop up events in Mill Lake Park and at the Abbotsford Farmer's Market.

The strong message from the community is that the Park is a vital urban amenity.

4.3.2 Engagement Stage 2

There were multiple opportunities for stakeholders and the general public to submit feedback on the three concept options for Mill Lake Park. These opportunities included:

- Stakeholder Sessions – staff in-person meetings and a virtual engagement event;
- Let's Talk Abbotsford virtual Q&A;
- Online survey;
- In-person "Open House" events at Mill Lake Park;
- Direct e-mail or mail-in comments to Abbotsford Parks, Recreation, and Culture staff.

Engagement Conclusions

The volume of responses to the Mill Lake Park Master Plan Stage 2 public engagement, with over 1,000 survey responses and hundreds of attendees at the open houses in the Park in fall of 2023 indicate that the future of the Park is near and dear to Abbotsford residents. The Park is used throughout the year by locals to fulfill daily outdoor walks, and attracts visitors from across the City and region.

The strong message from the community is that the Park is a vital urban amenity, that helps keep Abbotsford residents of all ages and abilities active. It serves many needs, and will continue to do so as Abbotsford's dynamic and diverse population grows, urbanizes, and broadens. The Park has a legacy as a gathering place for generations that offers unique events that are integral to Abbotsford's civic identity.

Key Takeaways

The top five most discussed topics and corresponding takeaways from the Stage 2 engagement are:

1. Boardwalk: there is strong community support to maintain and improve the boardwalk
2. Pool: there is a strong desire to keep the pool or improve it (covered/indoors)
3. Parking & Access: parking solutions must consider a variety of factors (ability, safety, alignment with programming demands)
4. Ball Parks: ball diamonds are a priority in Abbotsford, and there is a desire for better facilities
5. Paths & Trails: Safety and maintenance are prominent concerns, and widening the path may address conflicts between various users

Related detail regarding the takeaways from the engagement are listed below.

Central Location Makes Mill Lake a Hub

Mill Lake Park is located at the heart of Abbotsford's City Centre, next to a large commercial property, and conveniently close to many neighbourhoods. This makes it the default Park for many residents, as well as an accessible location for families, seniors, and individuals to access recreation services. There is a need for gathering places of different types, from large community events to small get-togethers with families and friends.

A Variety of Different Users Require Balance

Park users of different ages and abilities, who move at different paces and are attracted by various activities all use the Park. Allocation of Park space should have a wide variety of different users in mind, and make sure that their competing needs do not conflict or impede on one another's.

Sports and Recreation

Abbotsford has a high demand for sports and recreation facilities, and Mill Lake Park helps meet this need. Losing vital sports and recreation facilities would create a negative impact on community members, particularly youth and seniors. The community wants to see sports and recreation infrastructure well maintained, improved, and expanded. In instances where Mill Lake Park is not the best long-term solution for locating sports facilities or equipment, there should be a seamless, timely transition that is well communicated to residents and user groups that offer better amenities and room to accommodate the growing needs in Abbotsford.

Connection to The Water and Ecosystem

Mill Lake is a unique attraction in the Park. From its history as an industrial site to the important role it will play in the future with stormwater management and ecosystem enhancement, Mill Lake itself provides a valuable view and experience for people of all ages. The community wants to see the health of Mill Lake and surrounding ecosystem maintained for the long-term and ensure that it remains a usable place for urban boating, wildlife watching, and access to nature in the city centre. Mill Lake Park is home to fish, turtles, eagles, and a variety of tree and plant species that offer access to nature in its urban setting.

Getting Around The Lake

The lake loop is vital to many users of the Park. Walking around Mill Lake is a draw for many people, and the boardwalk offers an engaging perspective over the water from which fish and turtles can be seen. However, the boardwalk poses accessibility and connectivity issues as it ages. Upgrades to the Park's pedestrian and bike paths should include a fully accessible lake loop with elements that allow people to continue to walk out over the water, maintaining the special character of the boardwalk while promoting inclusivity for all. Any changes to the boardwalk should be clearly communicated, and should secure the long-term function of the lake loop and its role in providing locals with access to nature and seamlessly circling Mill Lake.

Multi-Generational User Needs

Mill Lake Park is a popular destination for seniors' outdoor activities, as well as families with young children. The variety of playgrounds and low-impact sports cater to those needs, as well as passive activities including nature trails. Spaces where inter-generational families can enjoy together, such as the pool, picnic shelters, a café patio, or open spaces are highly valued here and have helped make Mill Lake Park an integral part of Abbotsford's community spaces, and residents want to see that continued for the long term.

Safety & Accessibility

Improvements to the Park design, lighting, and pathways can significantly improve access to the Park, and extend the usable time of the Park throughout the winter. Lighting near amenities, pathways, and entrances will make the Park safer.

Overall, the provision of high-quality urban recreation activities and the unique aspects of Mill Lake Park are priorities for the community. As the social fabric of Abbotsford changes, Mill Lake Park will need improvements and changes to meet the needs of the community over the next 20 years. Many residents voiced the vision and concerns they see for Mill Lake Park as the Master Plan is updated.

4.3.3 Engagement Stage 3

Stage 3 engagement began with focusing on clarifying the community's perspective on items which arose during Stage 2 - Exploring Options community consultation. City staff held discussions with key stakeholders, presented at Council advisory committees and developed an online questionnaire which sought clarification from the community about unifying elements of the Stage 2 Preferred Concept Plan. Over 1,700 responses were recieved.

The final round of engagement focused on engaging stakeholders and the public through an online questionnaire hosted through the City's Let's Talk Abbotsford platform. Respondents were asked if they supported the vision and direction for Mill Lake Park presented in the Draft Master Plan. The results were positive and in general the Draft Master Plan received a majority of support.

The Draft Master Plan was also presented to the Community, Culture and Environment Advisory Committee (CCEAC) in June of 2025. The committee was encouraged to participate in the questionnaire, and CCEAC supported the direction of the Draft Mill Lake Park Master Plan, as presented.

Vision, Guiding Principles & Big Moves

5

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

5 Vision, Guiding Principles & Big Moves

5.1 Vision

In Stage 1 of the master plan preparation, the following vision statement was prepared and endorsed.

Mill Lake Park is the "heart" of the City of Abbotsford's parks system connecting our diverse population with nature and each other in a Park where ecological integrity is prioritized, play and exploration are fostered, and where culture is celebrated.

5.2 Guiding Principles

Themes & Guiding Principles

The following themes and guiding principles were identified to support the vision, and also align with related City policies and strategies. They have been used as a guide for the preparation of design options for the Park.

1. Environment & Landscape: Protect and enhance environmental qualities including lake water quality, riparian zone, tree canopy, flora and fauna. Reinforce a distinct identity for the Park including its natural landscape character and viewscapes.
2. Amenities: Enhance Park amenities to support diverse and inclusive recreation and culture activities.
3. Safety & Accessibility: Provide safe and accessible Park spaces for all users that facilitate and encourage active movement throughout the Park. Provide key connections to other priority Parks, trails and places.
4. Culture: Embrace our diverse heritage and let our shared histories and evolving cultural identity inform decisions on heritage conservation and cultural activities in the Park.

5.3 The Big Moves

Based on the desired activities and amenities reported by engagement participants, seven "Big Moves" were developed and communicated in the concept options developed in Stage 2:

7 Big Moves

1. Create space for community and culture
2. Prioritize broad public use
3. Reallocate parking
4. Enhance amenities
5. Environmental enhancements
6. Upgrade the lake loop
7. Improve park entrances and edges

Mill Lake Park is the "heart" of the City of Abbotsford's parks system connecting our diverse population with nature and each other in a Park where ecological integrity is prioritized, play and exploration are fostered, and where culture is celebrated.

Master Plan Concept

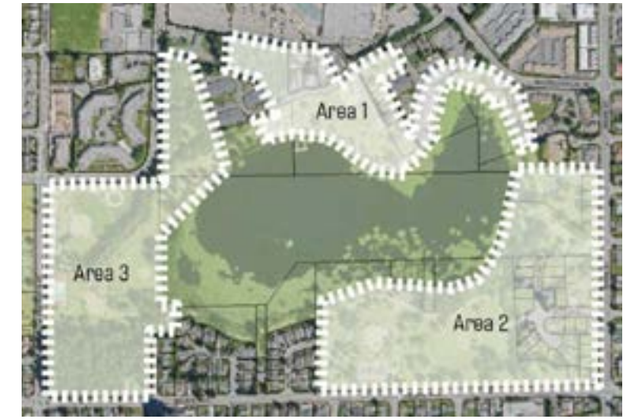
6

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

6 Master Plan Concept



Temp image to graphically explain location of the 3 areas.

6.1 Park Zones (Key Areas)

During the site analysis and planning for the Park, 3 key areas, or zones, were identified to help organize the Master Plan Concept.

Area 1

Area 1 is essentially the northern area of the Park that is currently accessed by vehicle from Mill Lake Road. Pedestrian and bicycle access is also obtained from Bourquin Crescent to the east, the commercial property to the north or from adjoining areas of the Park. This area includes the proposed land acquisition areas between Mill Lake Road and the shopping mall parking areas, identified in the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.

The intent for this area is to be a focal point for the enjoyment of views to Mill Lake and nearby mountains while also being a hub for the trails within the Park and a venue for outdoor events.

Area 2

Area 2 encompasses the southeast corner of the Park. It is bounded to the east by Ware Street and to the south by Bevan Avenue. Portions of this area such as the areas adjoining Kariton House and Trethewey House (access from Ware Street) and the southern area of the Park accessed from Bevan Avenue have established Park facilities, however, the southeast corner of this area adjoining Alta Avenue and Adanac Avenue were until recently privately-owned residences. All the private lots on these streets have been purchased by the City and there is an opportunity to redevelop this area as parkland and create a primary entry into the Park for pedestrians and cyclists at the corner of Ware Street and Bevan Avenue.

Considering this area includes 2 significant cultural features of the Park, Kariton House and Trethewey House, the intent for this area is for it to be an arts and culture hub. To support this, a new Multi-Purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building is proposed. This building could be used by the numerous community groups who currently use this part of the Park.

Area 3

This area of the Park is the west portion that adjoins Emerson Street, Peardonville Road and Gladwin Road. The MSA arena is located across from this area of the Park. The main existing features of this area of the Park include:

- Forested areas in the north and south portions
- An outdoor pool and substantial play and picnic area between Emerson Street and the lake
- 2 ball diamonds at the corner of Emerson Street and Peardonville Road

The intent for this area of the Park is to protect the existing forest areas and add an off-leash dog area to the southern forest area and retain the existing pool and ball diamonds while enhancing the integration of these facilities for general Park users.

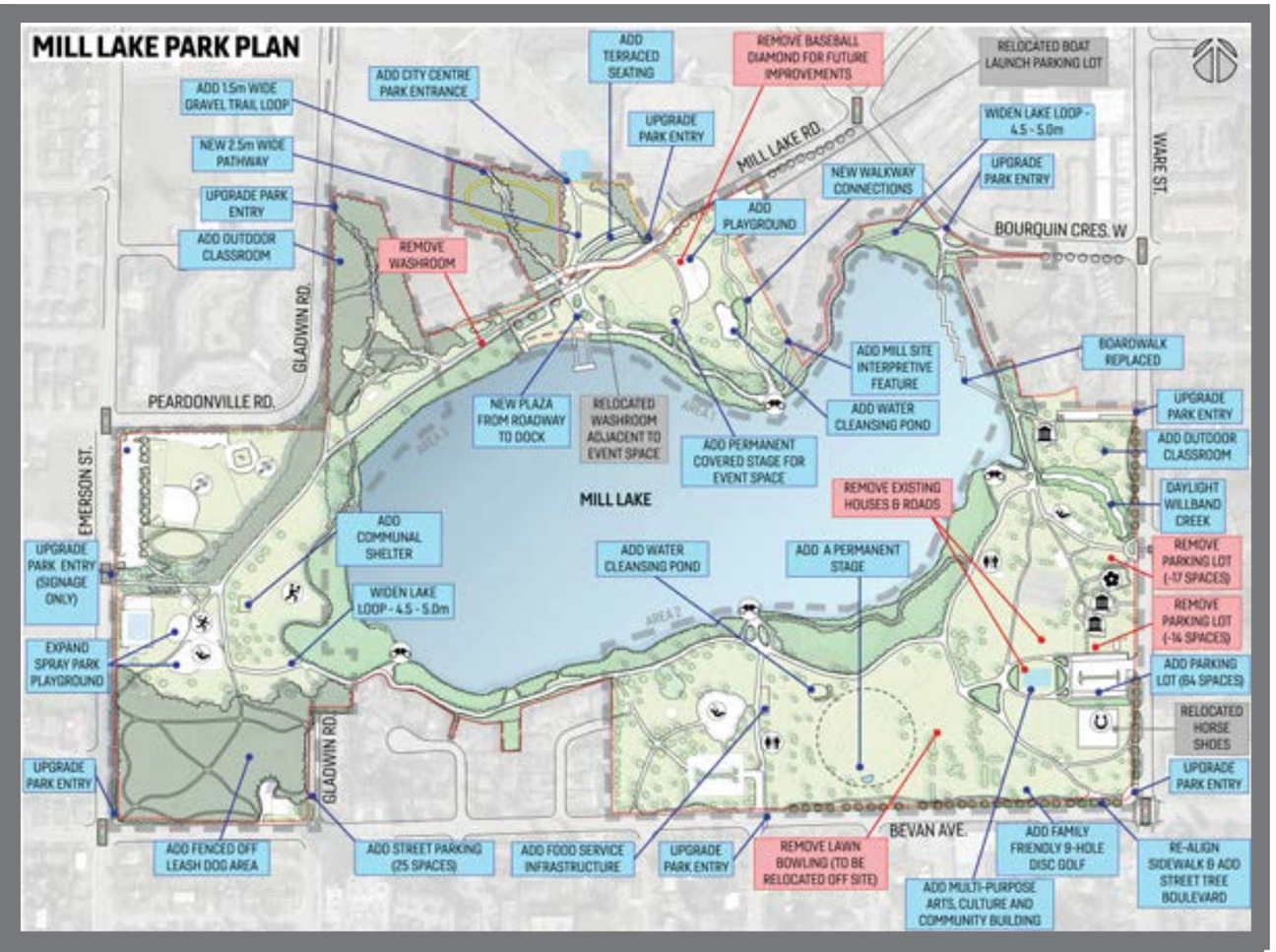
6.2 Mill Lake Park Plan

The proposed plan aims to protect the Park's existing environmental assets (MIll Lake, forest groves, etc.), retain and enhance the infrastructure for existing suitable activities and add infrastructure for some new activities that the public has requested that are suitable for the Park.

The main elements of the plan have been broken down into:

- general Park enhancements that apply to the Park as a whole;
- major improvements or amendments based on their location within the 3 main areas of the Park outlined in section 6.1 above

The plan also identifies the relocation of some infrastructure within the Park as well as the removal of some infrastructure from the Park.



6.2.1 General Park enhancements

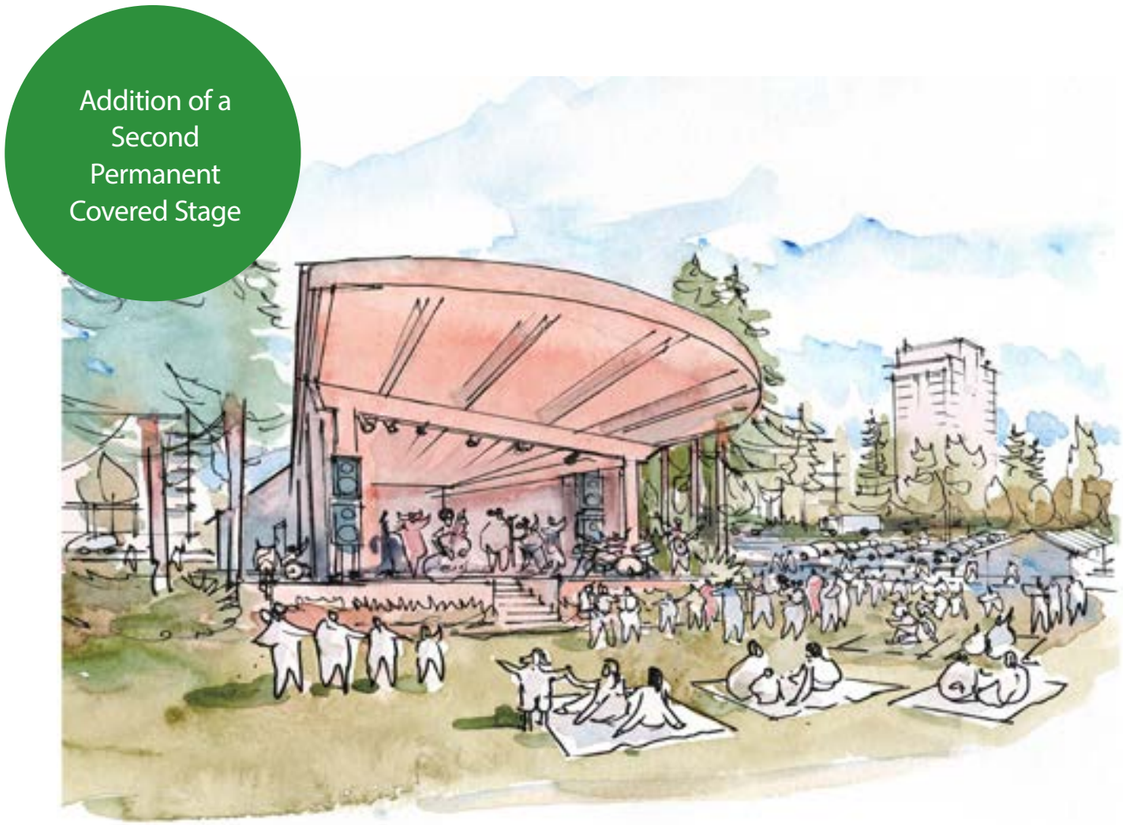
The major general Park enhancements include:

- Widen the lake loop to 4.5 -5.0m for all users and relocate outside SPEA but retain connection to water
- Restore the SPEA but balance with other priority amenities, views and lookouts
- Redevelop Park frontages to include pedestrian buffered road edges
- Establish a park entrance hierarchy and enhance entrances
- Expand the forest canopy but balance with other priority amenities, view and lookouts
- Develop water cleansing ponds and channels

6.2.2 Enhancements or amendments to Area 1

The major enhancements or amendments to Area 1 include the addition of:

- Add a City Centre Park entrance with Mill Lake viewing plaza; partial Mill Lake Road closure
- Add terraced seating
- Add permanent covered stage
- Widen the lake loop pathway
- Add water cleansing pond
- Add a new playground
- Relocate the boat launch parking lot while retaining access to the ramp. Landscape the former parking area so it can be used for passive recreation adjoining Mill Lake
- Replace the boardwalk for pedestrians and add a pathway on shore for shared use
- Relocate washroom facilities to adjacent event space
- Remove the ball diamond



6.2.3 Enhancements or amendments to Area 2

The major enhancements or amendments to Area 2 include:

- Add a water cleansing pond
- Add a second permanent covered stage
- Retain the playground
- Retain Kariton House parking
- Add an outdoor classroom
- Daylight Willband Creek
- Widen the lake pathway loop
- Add parking spaces south of Trethewey House
- Add a park entry at southeast corner
- Re-align sidewalk on the north side of Bevan Avenue and create a street tree boulevard
- Add Multi-Purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building
- Add a nine-hole disc golf course
- Add food service infrastructure
- Retain the parking lot accessed from Bevan Avenue
- Relocate adult fitness, table tennis & chess
- Remove Ware Street parking lots
- Relocate horseshoe pits to Ware Street frontage close to new parking lot
- Relocate lawn bowling elsewhere in the City

6.2.4 Enhancements or amendments to Area 3

The major enhancements or amendments to Area 3 include:

- Add a new townhouse site entrance from Gladwin Road so Mill Lake Road can be closed at times for events
- Add an outdoor classroom in Gladwin forest area
- Add interpretive signage for the former trestle bridge
- Add a communal picnic shelter
- Widen the lake pathway loop
- Add 25 parking spaces
- Add a dogs off-leash area and trail in the southern forest area
- Expand the spray park & playground
- Retain the ball diamonds (pending further review)
- Reconfigure ball diamonds and expand parking
- Retain the pool

6.3 Responding to the Vision, Guiding Principles & Big Moves

The proposed enhancements or amendments to Mill Lake Park reflect the endorsed vision for the Park and the associated themes and guiding principles established in Stage 1 of the project as well as the 7 big moves identified in Stage 2 of the project. The following table identifies how the major amendments or enhancements proposed for the park relate to the 7 Big Moves below:

1. Create space for community and culture
2. Prioritize broad public use
3. Reallocate parking
4. Enhance amenities
5. Environmental enhancements
6. Upgrade the lake loop
7. Improve Park entrances & edges

The table below is an assessment of alignment of major initiatives for the Park and how they reflect the Big Moves.

ITEM #	ITEM	DESCRIPTION	PURPOSE / ALIGNMENT WITH 7 BIG MOVES
1	Parking	Relocate parking area adjoining north end of Mil Lake. Review configuration of other parking areas. Consider offsite parking.	#3 - Reallocate Parking
2	Sportsfield redeployment	Relocate Mill Lake Road ball diamond -find another site.	#1 - Create space for community and culture
3	Greening / reforestation	Identify areas of the Park for substantial additional tree planting potential in southeast corner	#5 - Environmental enhancements
4	Protection of riparian zone	Restrict development adjoining Mill Lake. Rehabilitate disturbed riparian areas. Acquire private land within 30m riparian setback from Mill Lake.	#5 - Environmental enhancements
5	Create an elevated lookout area for viewing of Mill Lake and mountains	North of Mill Lake - locate in existing elevated area.	#2 - Prioritize broad public use
6	Daylight and cleanse piped stormwater entering Mill Lake	There are a few locations in the Park where this could be achieved. Has been previously recommended.	#5 - Environmental enhancements
7	Daylight and cleanse piped water exiting Mill Lake	Locate east of Mill Lake at existing outlet near Kariton House.	#5 - Environmental enhancements
8	Convert southeast corner of the Park into usable Park space	The existing houses will need to be removed early in the life of the plan to accomodate for planned Park ammenites.	#2 - Prioritize broad public use
9	Restructure / enhance the major roadway edges to the Park	Will likely be constrained by existing right of way widths - there is typically little space between existing curb and Park boundary.	#7 - Improve Park entrances & edges
10	Create an event area with a permanent stage	Two permanent stages are planned to be placed on both the north and south sides of Mill Lake The south side stage would be for larger events, while the north side stage would be for smaller to mid size events.	#2 - Prioritize broad public use
11	Expand the grounds associated with Trethewey House to reflect its historical setting.	Would involve expansion of the grounds/gardens and removal of some existing infrastructure.	#1 - Create space for community and culture
12	Create a new dog park - dogs off leash area	The south west corner of the Park has conditions that create a great space for an off leash dog park with the accompanying supporting infrastructure.	#2 - Prioritize broad public use
13	Connection to the Commercial Property to the north through future acquisition lots	Create a prominent Park entrance and connection with plaza at south edge of commercial property and planned street through the commercial property.	#7 - Improve park entrances & edges
14	Widen the Lake Loop to 4.5 to 5.0 m for all users	The Lake Loop will be widened and the boardwalk retained/ replaced and lane markings and signage added.	#6 - Improve the Lake Loop

Design Program

7

MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

7 Design Program

The design program is summarized below in alignment with the four main guiding principles themes for the Park.

Themes of Guiding Principles

1. Environment & Landscape
2. Amenities
3. Safety & Accessibility
4. Culture

The major components of the proposed plan for the Park include the following items listed according to the 4 themes & guiding principles.

Environment & Landscape

Amenities

Safety & Accessibility

Culture

7.1.1 Environment & Landscape

Improve Water quality in Mill Lake

Modifications to the storm meter outlets that currently flow directly into Mill Lake are proposed to reduce sediment and nutrients.

Daylighting of the outlets into small stormwater ponds adjoining Mill Lake will allow for the water from minor storm events to be partially cleansed before it enters Mill Lake.

Daylighting of the outlet of the lake into Willband Creek will be an interpretive and educational feature while also helping to cleanse the run-off from Mill Lake.

Nature Interpretation

The Parks considerable natural assets are proposed to be interpreted with signage and other media. Online environmental information could be provided to support this initiative.

Landscape Beautification

Enhanced planting, including a focus on trees, is proposed for some open areas of the Park to increase tree canopy coverage. The edges of the Park provide opportunities to create treed streetscapes that would be more appealing for pedestrians. Ornamental planting could be provided at the main Park entry points. The overall intent for the landscape of the Park is to reinforce its natural character.

Feature Gardens in the Park

The plan proposes the ongoing retention of the Sylvia Pincott gardens with support from community groups for its maintenance.

Tree Protection and Enhancement

Existing native tree stands are proposed to be retained and enhanced through management of invasive species and measures to reduce the risk of fire.

Protection and Expansion of Riparian Zone

Mill Lake's riparian zone vegetation is important for lake water quality and as habitat for numerous species. Based on the existing and potential vegetation and fish presence, a 30m wide Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area (SPEA) is anticipated for Mill Lake.

7.1.2 Amenities

Public Washrooms

The washroom buildings (seasonal or year-round) in the park are planned to be either replaced or upgraded to ensure they are safe, accessible and architecturally align with the form and character of the Park.

Multi-Purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building

A new Multi-Purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building is proposed for the southeast corner of the Park. This building could cater for small community gathering events and displays. The building would include accessible washrooms.

Picnic Sites and Shelters

The 3 shelters in the Park will be retained and enhanced where necessary to support picnic activities. A new shelter is proposed for the west portion of the Park.

Dock - Fishing and Other Uses

The recently constructed dock on the north edge of Mill Lake will be retained to cater for lake viewing, fishing and launching of minor watercraft.

Play Areas

The existing playgrounds in the Park will be retained and upgraded where necessary. A new playground is proposed for the northern area of the Park to cater to existing and expected residents who will enjoy this area of the Park.

Viewpoints / Lookout Plazas

To provide better opportunities for viewing of Mill Lake and mountains to the southeast, seating areas are planned to be provided in the north end of the Park.

Swimming

Swimming in the lake will remain restricted for the forseeable future. However, future plans for swimming in the Cenntenial Pool will be informed by the Aquatic Services and Facilities Strategy.

Dog Park

Dog Park

A fenced dog off leash area is proposed for a portion of the forested area in the south west corner of the Park.

Food Services

Power supply is proposed for an area adjoining the Bevan Avenue parking area and playground to provide temporary food services.

Sport and Recreation Facilities

The plan proposes a reduction in active recreation facilities in the Park, such as the existing ball diamond in the north end of the Park to provide more space for other recreation activities, including events. The existing horseshoe pits are proposed to be relocated within the Park and lawn bowling relocated. An area for disc golf is proposed in the southeast corner of the Park.

Sport & Recreation

Amphitheatre/ Permanent Stage

Amphitheatre / Permanent Stage

The Park currently hosts numerous events and with the expected increase in the residential population in the downtown area, permanent stage infrastructure is proposed – one in the north of the Park and one in the south. The northern stage area will be complemented with a seating terrace on the planned expanded Park area adjoining the commercial development.

Additional or Upgraded Site Furnishings

General enhancement of site furnishings throughout the Park is proposed with a focus on accessibility and consistency and durability of materials.

Boat Ramp

The existing boat ramp is proposed to be retained to facilitate existing allowed watercraft use on Mill Lake, however, the adjoining parking area is proposed to be modified to allow watercraft launching and retrieval but not parking. Parking for cars and trailers will be provided in a new parking area adjoining Mill Lake Road. This change is proposed to reduce the amount of hard surfacing and related run-off into Mill Lake.

Utilities in and around the Park

Utilities, including power supply, will be upgraded where necessary to support enhanced or new amenities in the Park.

Boardwalk to be Retained & Replaced

7.1.3 Safety & Accessibility

Enhanced Park Entries (pedestrians and cyclists)

The major (primary) entries into the Park and secondary entries will be enhanced with Park identification and directional signage to make the Park more identifiable, accessible and safer. Lighting upgrades will be included. A new primary Park entry is proposed in the southeast corner of the Park at the intersection of Bevan Avenue and Ware Street. Another new primary Park entry is planned at the north end of the Park as contemplated in the City Centre Neighbourhood Plan.

Multi-use Trails – including Lake Loop

The multi-use trails in the Park, with a focus on the 'lake loop', are proposed to be upgraded and widened to allow for safer shared use of the trails and to promote multi-use accessibility. Signage may also be required to clearly identify locations which are shared (with bicycles) and locations that are pedestrian only.

The existing boardwalk along the east edge of Mill Lake is planned to be retained and replaced.

Nature Trails

Existing nature trails through the forested areas and along the edge of Mill Lake will generally be retained but not widened. A new nature trail is planned for the forested area at the north end of the park adjoining the commercial development.

Walkways

Paved walkways primarily for pedestrian use are proposed to be added to the southeast area of the Park which is currently occupied by houses that the City has acquired. New walkway links are also proposed for the planned expansion area at the north end of the Park to connect to the commercial development.

Park Lighting

Lighting in the Park is planned to generally be upgraded where Park use in the evening is encouraged. The lighting will focus on park entries, paved multi-use trails or walkways, play areas and buildings.

Parking Areas

Parking spaces will be increased; however, parking locations are to be reconfigured in the northern and eastern portions of the Park. Consideration will be given to providing opportunities for 'passenger' drop off or pick-up and access for transit vehicles for every day and event access.

Accessibility into Buildings Including Washrooms

Accessibility into buildings will be assessed and enhanced where necessary.

Wayfinding / Directional Signage

Signage will be improved or added to the Park to facilitate better wayfinding.

Regulatory Signage

Consistent regulatory signage will identify appropriate park uses and hours for Park use to allow better Park management.

7.1.4 Culture

Additional Public Art

Mill Lake Park presents an opportunity to incorporate a public art program. Art could be located at major Park entries, into functional elements like park shelters or into site furnishings or interpretive features.

Trethewey House

Trethewey House and its associated gardens are planned to be protected as a heritage resource for Abbotsford. Planned modifications to the area between the House and Mill Lake will reinstate its former grounds and emphasize its importance in the Park.

Kariton House

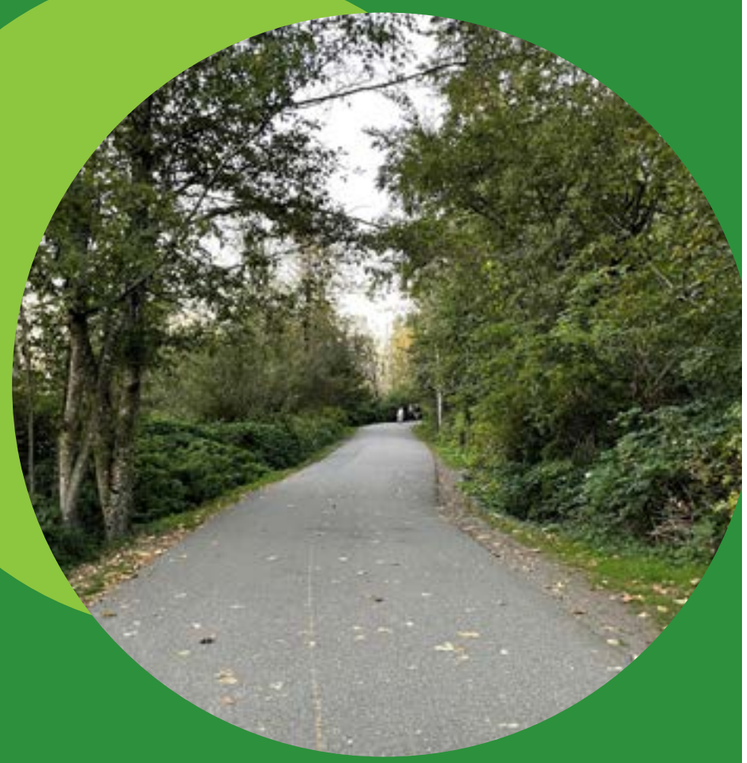
Kariton House is planned to be retained as an ongoing focus for cultural activities including minor events.

Heritage (Interpretive) Signage

The Parks considerable heritage assets and history, including First Nations history, could be interpreted with signage and other media. Online history and heritage information could be made available to support this initiative. Activities associated with both Trethewey House and Kariton House could be aligned with this interpretation.

8

Implementation Plan



MILL LAKE PARK

City of Abbotsford
Mill Lake Park Master Plan
2025

ABBOTSFORD

8 Implementation Plan

8.1 Phasing

The project will be implemented in four phases over approximately 20 years. Each phase will be aligned with the City's five year capital works program. Items within the phasing plan are prioritized, but some lower priority items may be implemented ahead of some higher priority items due to synergies with implementation.

The main proposed Park amendments or enhancements for each of the four phases of the implementation plan is outlined in the table below:

U PRIORITY/URGENT ITEMS

1 PHASE 1 ITEMS

2 PHASE 2 ITEMS

3 PHASE 3 ITEMS

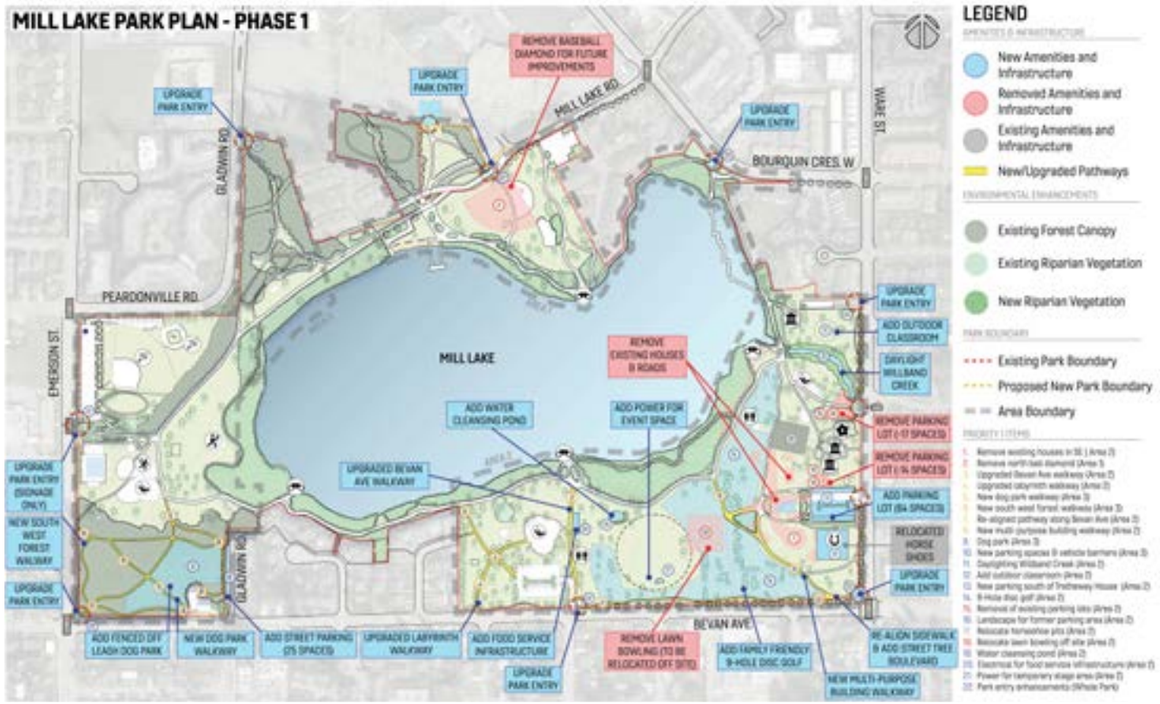
4 PHASE 4 ITEMS

PRIORITY/URGENT ITEMS

#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
U	PRIORITY / URGENT - ITEMS	
U.1	Lake Loop Section 1	Area 2
U.2	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 1	Area 2
U.3	Lake loop Section 2	Area 3
U.4	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 2	Area 3
U.5	Lake Loop Section 4	Area 1
U.6	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 4	Area 1
U.7	Lake Loop Section 5	Area 3
U.7	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 5	Area 3

Four phases over approximately 20 years. Each phase will be aligned with the City's five year capital works program.

1 PHASE 1 ITEMS



#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
1	PHASE 1 - ITEMS	
1.1	Remove existing houses in southeast area	Area 2
1.2	Remove north ball diamond	Area 1
1.3	Upgraded Bevan Avenue walkway	Area 2
1.4	Upgraded labyrinth walkway	Area 2
1.5	New dog park walkway	Areas 3
1.6	New south west forest walkway	Areas 3
1.7	Re-aligned pathway along Bevan Avenue	Area 2
1.8	New Multi-Purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building walkway	Area 2
1.9	New dog park	Area 3
1.10	New parking spaces and vehicle barriers	Area 3
1.11	Daylighting Willband Creek	Area 2
1.12	Add outdoor classroom	Area 2
1.13	New parking south of Trethewey House	Area 2
1.14	9-hole disc golf course	Area 2
1.15	Removal of existing parking lots	Area 2
1.16	Landscape for former parking area	Area 2
1.17	Relocate horseshoe pits	Area 2
1.18	Relocate lawn bowling off site	Area 2
1.19	Water cleansing pond	Area 2
1.20	Electrical for food service infrastructure	Area 2
1.21	Power for temporary stage area	Area 2
1.22	Park entry enhancements	Whole Park

2 PHASE 2 ITEMS

#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
2	PHASE 2 - ITEMS	
2.1	Lake Loop Section 6	Area 2 + 3
2.2	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 6	Area 2 + 3
2.3	Lake Loop Section 3/Boardwalk and Lighting	Area 1
2.4	Ball diamond upgrades	Area 3
2.5	North permanent stage	Area 1
2.6	New 6.5 m width vehicular access	Area 1
2.7	New parking area	Area 1
2.8	New playground	Area 1
2.9	Water cleansing pond	Area 1
2.10	New plaza from roadway to dock	Area 1
2.11	Landscape for former parking area	Area 1
2.12	Relocate washroom facilities	Area 1
2.13	Mill site interpretive feature	Area 1
2.14	New walkway connections	Area 1
2.15	Lake Loop Section 7	Area 1
2.16	Lighting for Lake Loop Section 7	Area 1

3 PHASE 3 ITEMS

#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
3	PHASE 3 - ITEMS	
3.1	Retain Centennial Pool pending Aquatic Services and Facilities Strategy	Area 3
3.2	New communal shelter	Area 3
3.3	South permanent stage	Area 2
3.4	Earthworks for the terraced landscape	Area 1
3.5	New 2.5 m width path	Area 1
3.6	Plaza area at north end of Park	Area 1
3.7	Landscape for new Park space	Area 1
3.8	Terraced seating	Area 1
3.9	New spray park	Area 3
3.10	New playground	Area 3

4 PHASE 4 ITEMS

#	ITEM DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
4	PHASE 4 - ITEMS	
4.1	New outdoor classroom	Area 2
4.2	New gravel trail	Area 1
4.3	Single storey Multi-purpose Arts, Culture and Community Building	Area 2

8.2 Financial Strategy

The Mill Lake Master Plan financial strategy is intended to assist in the orderly, predictable, and equitable development of the Park. The City has three potential mechanisms for paying for upgrades in the Park. These mechanisms are capital reserves, grants and development cost charges.

Capital Reserves

The City will upgrade much of the infrastructure within or around the Park over the life of the plan as there is a benefit to the broad community, and not development related. For example, the City may decide to fund a specific project such as building the new parking lot in the south east corner of the Park. The infrastructure that will be funded through capital reserves will be identified through future five year financial plans. Of note, the City has funds for improvements to City-wide parks, which includes the Park, from past developments to support upgrades or enhancements associated with recent community growth.

Grants

Senior government grant programs are constantly changing and there may be future opportunities for some infrastructure to be funded through these programs. Generally, these programs do not fund growth related projects but are available for more broad and strategic initiatives such as green infrastructure to reduce the community impact on the environment. The City may determine the need for a project within the Park that aligns with an available grant program at any time during the life of this plan, and proceed with applying for and implementing that project.

Development Cost Charges and Amenity Cost Charges

The City has Development Cost Charge (DCC) and Amenity Cost Charge (ACC) Bylaws to set fees that are collected from development to offset some of the infrastructure costs incurred as a result of new development. The rates of fees are updated from time to time based on the need for projects to meet the demands of growth across the City.

Much of the infrastructure works identified in the Mill Lake Master Plan will be included in future DCC and ACC Bylaw updates. Infrastructure planned in later phases of the Park which will occur years from now may also be included in future DCC and ACC Bylaws and is unknown at this time.

The following recommendations are provided to enable the implementation of the Master Plan for Mill Lake Park

8.3 Future investigations, Studies & Assessments

The following recommendations are provided to enable the implementation of the Master Plan for Mill Lake Park:

1. Assess the potential environmental impacts of the planned boardwalk reconstruction and conduct a preliminary engineering assessment.
2. Assess the potential environmental impacts a cantilevered lake edge pathway widening as well as associated construction costs.
3. Undertake a preliminary engineering assessment of the proposed daylighting of Willband Creek.
4. Undertake a preliminary engineering assessment of the proposed stormwater filtering ponds on the north and south areas of the Park.
5. Undertake an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan for the Park.
6. Develop a Water Quality Assessment program.
7. Investigate the history, including the location of the former mill on the north side of Mill Lake to inform potential interpretation of the history of this structure.
8. Conduct a survey and condition assessment of the remnants of the trestle bridge in consideration of its current heritage status.
9. Investigate a new site within the City for a ball diamond that is proposed to be removed from Area 1.
10. Investigate a new site within the City for the lawn bowling area that is proposed to be removed from Area 2.
11. Undertake a condition assessment of the buildings in the Park to determine required scope and cost of upgrades including accessibility.
12. Conduct an assessment of Centennial Pool.
13. Undertake the creation of a standards manual for the park which will establish a form and character for built infrastructure throughout the Park.
14. Conduct a wildlife assessment that would assess habitat for species that reside within the Park and specifically species at risk (Western Painted Turtle).
15. Develop management plans and programs to preserve and maintain native vegetation.
16. Prepare a Site-specific Invasive Plant Management Plan.
17. Conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed development identified in the Master Plan may be required to assess potential project effects and identify mitigation measures.

ABBOTSFORD