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# THE ABBOTSFORD NEWS

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## \$1 billion plan caters to growth

By **JOE MILLICAN**  
**Abbotsford News**  
Sep 02 2006

An east Abbotsford vision

A property development company has unveiled a \$1 billion vision for eastern Abbotsford to open up an array of opportunities for home buyers, visitors, shoppers and the business community.

The proposal by the Abbotsford-based Columbia National Investments includes millions of square feet of office and residential space, as well as a hotel, conference centre, shopping facilities, commercial opportunities and green areas,

If ultimately approved by the City of Abbotsford, the development will be built on 168 acres bordered by Sumas Mountain Road to the west, Atkinson Road to the south and Eldridge Road and Sumas River to the east.

Columbia National Investments Chief Executive Officer, Steve Dunton, told the Abbotsford News on Thursday that the proposal will cater towards the city's growing population. He hopes to start the first stages of work in the spring of 2007.

"There is no more development land in Abbotsford," said Dunton, adding he is "very close" to pitching firmer plans to the City of Abbotsford and to council.

"This is a perfect development site."

According to Dunton, the proposal incorporates 2.2 million square feet of office commercial space and 650,000 square feet for a hotel, convention centre and motels.

A total of 2,200 homes - including apartments, townhouses and



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single family lots -would be included, as would 450,000 square feet of commercial land for a shopping centre.

There would be a church site, Dunton said, as well as an area for community facilities and 30 acres of greenspace.

A freeway interchange at Atkinson Road would connect Highway 1 to the development, Dunton explained, adding that the development would improve connections to areas such as Auguston and Electoral Area H.

"We are pretty sure we can fill two million square feet of office space for Abbotsford at lower rates. That produces a lot of jobs," said Dunton, describing the development as "pedestrian friendly."

Columbia National Investments project manager, Scott Campbell, said the fact the proposed acreage is not in the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve would "alleviate a lot of pressure" on the demand for development land.

"This would create access into east Abbotsford. The gateway would be right there," he said.

The \$1 billion plan has been pitched to some of the staff at city hall, according to Campbell.

Meanwhile, a study that was commissioned by Columbia National Investments and carried out by the Surrey-based Aplin and Martin Consultants, pointed out that the proposed site is not yet designated for development in the City of Abbotsford's newly-written official community plan (OCP).

"Ultimately, development will require an eastward extension of the city urban development boundary," the report pointed out.

The City of Abbotsford's manager of community sustainability, Peter Andzans, suggested that the Columbia National plan could face problems because the proposed development land is not in the OCP.

"The city's position would have to be based on its official community plan . . . that clearly states where development should be happening," he said.

"For our immediate purpose, that's going to happen on this (the west) side of Sumas Mountain Road. We need to develop that land first."

Andzans said there is already enough land inside the city boundaries, which is covered in the OCP, that can be used for residential development.

"The most detailed land use plan stopped at Sumas Mountain Road because that was the area where change was most likely to occur," said Andzans.

"It was thought to be so far away that planning was not even considered for that area. It is well into the future. We have to fill out the McKee Peak and Auguston areas first."

While the OCP will dictate Abbotsford's land use for the next 20 years, Andzans said it will be reviewed after approximately five years.

"We can only guess population growth, but this (current estimates) should last for a while," he said.

"People can have plans for their property, but their ideas for timing do not necessarily coincide with the city's idea for timing."

While the plan for Atkinson Road may take time to materialize, another significant Columbia National Investments development is apparently much closer to the groundbreaking stage.

The company is planning to build a \$350 million project on Gladwin Road, next to Horn Creek Park, that will provide 943 residential units in seven separate towers.

One of these towers would be four storeys tall, while the others would range from 16 to 19 storeys.

Dunton said a development permit has been approved for the project, and he is now waiting for the building permit from city hall that will allow him to start work.