



Downtown Press Backgrounder
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About Downtown Chilliwack

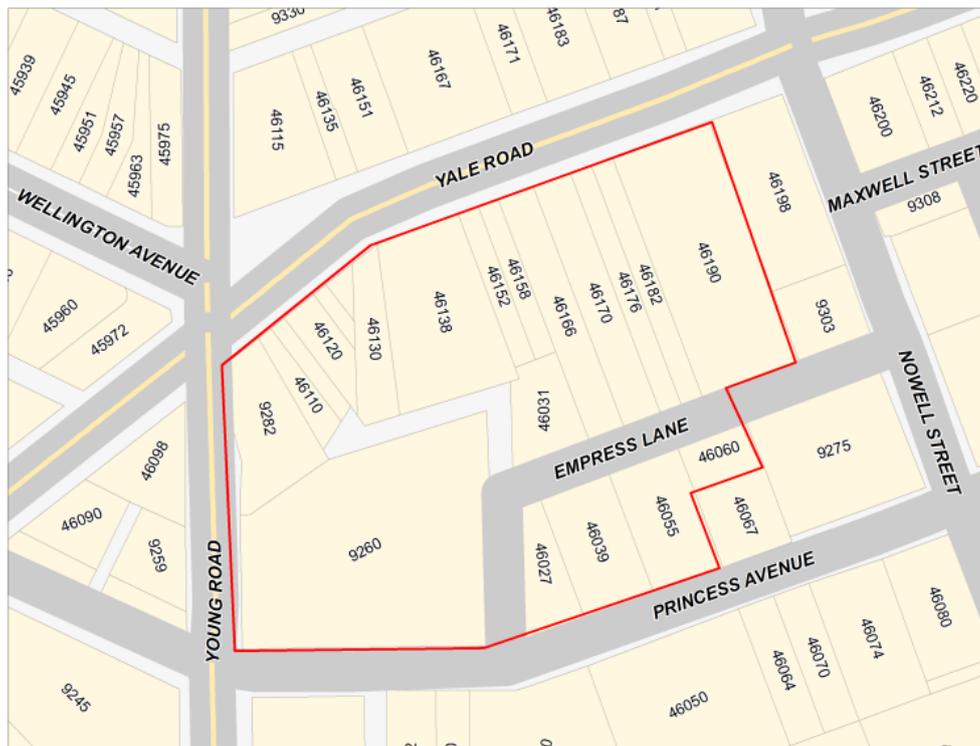
Downtown Chilliwack once served as the hub of the community, with steamboats regularly arriving and departing with goods and passengers. When the banks of the Fraser River became too crowded, the small community expanded to the junction of the New Westminster-Yale Wagon Road, Wellington Avenue and Young Road. The centre came to be called Five Corners and was the busiest place in town.

With the birth of the car and creation of the Trans Canada Highway, growth in Chilliwack moved south, away from downtown Chilliwack. For close to a decade, the City of Chilliwack and Chilliwack Economic Partners Corporation (CEPCO) have been actively working to revitalize downtown Chilliwack, with the goal of reinventing the area to create more energy and excitement, and to attract new residents and businesses.

A new and innovative redevelopment, proposed by Algra Bros. Developments, aims to transform the downtown into a healthy, sustainable and thriving community that promotes social and economic vitality. The redevelopment will have a minimal impact on the natural environment while remembering the area's historical significance.

The Site

The 3.75 acre development site, with properties located on Yale Road, Young Road, Princess Avenue and Empress Lane, offers a unique opportunity for redevelopment. The walkable area, which is already served by public transit, is an ideal location to create a variety of retail, commercial, residential and mixed-use developments.



This multi-phase development will set a benchmark for all subsequent development in the downtown. Through forward thinking urban design, the Algra Bros. hope to create a sustainable, walkable and vibrant city centre with a mix of businesses, cafes and shops that offer an urban experience.



Renderings are subject to change pending the permitting and development process.

The Process

The City of Chilliwack has been investing in the downtown core for over two decades. Since 1997, the City has invested in downtown Chilliwack improvements. New facilities like the Cultural Centre, the Landing Leisure Centre and the Prospera Centre helped establish the area as a hub for activity. Streetscaping, utility upgrades, park development and greening have also been strategically implemented.

In 2010, the City's Downtown Core Task Force started the task of determining the best way to revitalize downtown. After extensive research and community consultation, this group of residents, business owners, City staff members and councillors published the Downtown Core Task Force Final Report in 2011, which captured their discussions and consensus, while focusing on best practices for redevelopment.

The report contained 20 recommendations, including the recommendation that the City assemble land and make it development ready for when market conditions were right.

A Downtown Plan Implementation Committee was formed in 2012 to keep track of the progress and encourage development. City staff completed a brownfield redevelopment guide in 2013. By 2014, Main Street Greening and Mill Street upgrades and road widening were completed, continuing the momentum towards a revitalized downtown.

By 2017, with improved market conditions, the Downtown Plan Implementation Committee was ready to issue an RFP for the redevelopment of the land assembled by the City and CEPCO. Both partners carefully reviewed and evaluated the RFP proposals, selecting Algra Bros. as the winning proponent.

Objectives

The objectives identified in the 2011 Downtown Core Task Force Final Report remain essential to the redevelopment of downtown Chilliwack. The Algra Bros. redevelopment proposal meets the objectives specified in the 2011 report.

Objectives	Proposal
To maintain the downtown as a critical component of the City's urban corridor growth strategy.	✓
To create a complete, compact and walkable downtown that has a balance of jobs and housing.	✓
To create an attractive public realm with a strong sense of place that reflects Downtown Chilliwack's rich history.	✓
To reinforce the downtown as the heart of the city by maintaining a vibrant and safe core with active retail, entertainment and civic functions.	✓
To encourage a diverse and inclusive social mix by ensuring a broad range of services and housing opportunities.	✓
To accommodate anticipated population growth through sensitive infill and densification with associated neighbourhood amenity improvements.	✓
To support a range of mobility options that are convenient, safe and accessible for downtown and other city residents.	✓
To ensure future growth and development contribute positively to the provision of needed amenities.	✓
To minimize impacts from new and existing development on the surrounding natural environment, biodiversity and air and water quality.	✓
To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help the downtown community adjust to climate change.	✓

Why Downtown?

The City of Chilliwack is a rapidly growing municipality. Since its humble beginnings as a settlement along the Fraser River connected to other communities by steam boat, throughout its growth to its current state as home to more than 90,000 people, Chilliwack has maintained a strong balance and connection between its urban and rural sectors.

As a hub in the community, Chilliwack's walkable downtown core is an ideal location to create a variety of retail, commercial, residential and mixed-use developments to support vibrant and safe urban centre that remains easily connected to the rest of the city via public transit.

The properties for redevelopment are located within Downtown Development Permit Area 4 (Downtown Form and Character) as outlined in the 2040 Official Community Plan. This Development Permit Area is intended to support the revitalization of the historic downtown core and preserve its heritage character embodied in the Wellington-Yale East main street.

The downtown core has been at the heart of the city since its beginning. Its strategic, central location and inherent heritage value make it the ideal place for redevelopment and revitalization into a hub for the future while respecting its historic past.

The Vision

The vision for the future of downtown Chilliwack has been carefully scrutinized and detailed in a variety of plans. The 2010 Chilliwack Downtown Land Use and Development Plan, the 2011 Downtown Core Task Force Final Report, and the 2040 Official Community Plan all have the same focus for downtown Chilliwack: a main street building design with development framing the street to support a vibrant and safe core with active retail, entertainment and civic functions.

The Algra Bros. proposal emphasizes an holistic approach that balances urban buildings and streetscape design with community. The redevelopment will aim to retain the downtown's walkability and character. It will be distinctly different from the vehicle-oriented design of shopping centres and big box retail stores.

By retaining some buildings and upgrading their historic facades, the redevelopment will compliment Chilliwack's historic downtown character. By retaining and re-using historical building materials or features, the redevelopment will honour downtown Chilliwack's historical period between the 1890s to the 1940s.

The vision is that Five Corners will once again be recognized by the community as a vibrant, bustling city centre.

Public Engagement

For over a decade, residents, business owners and City committees have been working together to define the vision for Chilliwack's downtown.

In 2010, the City's Downtown Core Task Force started the task of determining the best way to revitalize downtown and asked residents for feedback.

A Downtown Plan Implementation Committee was formed in 2012, which continued to seek feedback from residents while working towards accomplishing the objectives outlined by the task force.

In 2014, the update of the 2040 Official Community Plan provided residents with another opportunity to provide feedback about the downtown. Community cafes, design charrettes and open houses enabled residents to share their thoughts and visions for downtown Chilliwack.

Chilliwack City Council actively encouraged residents to get in touch and received many comments and suggestions via email.