



Valley Films



Tourism Abbotsford



Valley Films



Valley Films



Tourism Abbotsford



ABBOTSFORD FOOD CHARTER

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Food Charter Report | 2 |
| Background..... | 2 |
| Advisory Committee: Abbotsford ACCESS Food Security Working Group..... | 3 |
| Method | 4 |
| Foundation of the Food Charter | 5 |
| Limitations | 6 |
| Next Steps | 6 |
| Appendix of Contributing Groups | 7 |
| Abbotsford Food Charter | 10 |
| 1. Health & Wellbeing | 10 |
| 2. Agriculture & Sustainability | 10 |
| 3. Social Equity..... | 11 |
| 4. Education..... | 11 |
| 5. Culture | 12 |
| 6. Community Economic Development | 12 |
| Infographic..... | 13 |

Food Charter Report

Background

A Food Charter is a community-developed statement that outlines a shared vision for a resilient and inclusive food system. It advocates for food that is nutritious, affordable, accessible, and culturally relevant for all members of the community. Food charters emphasize the importance of sustainable food production as a key contributor to community health, economic development, and the agricultural sector. They also celebrate the rich diversity of cultures and culinary traditions that make up our vibrant community.



The **Abbotsford Food Charter** is a community-led initiative focused on creating a sustainable, connected, and equitable local food system, one where everyone has access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally preferable food. Recognizing Abbotsford as the agricultural heart of British Columbia, the Charter affirms the vital role of a resilient local food system in supporting the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of our communities.

The Abbotsford Food Charter highlights the following core values:

- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Social Equity**
- **Agriculture and Sustainability**
- **Education**
- **Culture**
- **Community Economic Development**

The Abbotsford Food Charter respectfully acknowledges that the land on which we live, work, grow, and share food is the traditional and unceded territory of the Semá:th (Sumas), Máthxwi (Matsqui), and Leq'á:mel First Nations. These Nations are part of the broader Stó:lō cultural family and have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial.

We honour their deep and enduring relationships with the land, rivers, and ecosystems that sustain us. Their knowledge, traditions, and care for food-producing lands and waters continue to guide sustainable practices and support community well-being.

We would like to thank Chief Alice McKay of the Máthxwi First Nation for her contributions and insights putting the Food Charter together.

Advisory Committee: Abbotsford ACCESS Food Security Working Group

Discussions around the development of the Abbotsford Food Charter began in late 2023 at the Food Security Working Group of Abbotsford ACCESS, an initiative of the City of Abbotsford. Serving as the advisory committee for this initiative, this group brought together community representatives to collaboratively shape the Charter. Lead and supporting partners in the initiative included:



Archway Community Services, Food Justice Program: served as lead organization for this initiative. Archway is a multi-funded, multiservice non-government and nonprofit organization. Its staff and volunteers provide a wide range of services to children, parents, seniors, newcomers, and individuals with diverse abilities, substance misuse, or mental health challenges. The Food Justice program specifically focuses on strengthening the local food system, identifying gaps, and ensuring access to nutritious food for all community members.



Abbotsford ACCESS: a collaborative initiative that convenes stakeholders from across sectors, including non-profit organizations, municipal government, healthcare, education, law enforcement, and businesses, to enhance community well-being. Within this community, Abbotsford ACCESS acts as a backbone structure, facilitating information sharing, convening working tables, and identifying opportunities for collaboration. It does not function as a direct service provider. (Abbotsford ACCESS, 2025).



Fraser Health: Fraser Health is the largest regional health authority in British Columbia offering a comprehensive range of services including emergency care, hospitals, primary care, home health, mental health, substance use and public health. (Fraser Health, 2025). Fraser Health strives to work with partners to increase food security and support the creation of food systems that are resilient, ecologically sustainable, socially just, and respectful of Indigenous food sovereignty (Fraser Health, 2024).

Other supporting partners from this table include the Abbotsford School District and the University of the Fraser Valley's Food and Agriculture Institute. Throughout the development, this group recognized the importance of collaboration and meaningful engagement. To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, two forms of engagement were selected: in-person community sessions and an online survey.



Photo By Archway Community Services

Method

Community Engagement Sessions

Community engagement sessions were hosted by Archway Community Services' Food Justice program, with support from Fraser Health and staff support from the City of Abbotsford through ACCESS. In 2024, Archway Community Services organized three in-person community engagement sessions on February 14, April 18, and June 19 which collectively welcomed 121 participants. Attendees represented a diverse section of the community including municipal and provincial policymakers, service providers, business owners, university faculty, farmers, and other community members.

For recruitment, the engagement session invitation was shared in multiple forms including:

- Agency social media
- Press release through the local news media
- Business and farmers associations
- Community networks
- In-person outreach
- Posters in public spaces (e.g. food bank, library, recreational centres, businesses, and universities)
- Mailouts
- Program outreach (e.g. Archway South Asian Day program, UFV class)

Each community engagement session began with a brief introductory presentation, followed by facilitated discussions centered on six core values identified to align with food charters developed across B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Discussions were organized into six tables—each representing one core value—with a designated facilitator responsible for audio recording and note-taking.

Participants rotated between tables every 10 minutes, allowing them to provide feedback and engage in dialogue on each value. At the conclusion of each session, facilitators analyzed and collated the notes to identify key themes, which were then shared with participants to ensure transparency and continued engagement.



Photo by Dale Klippenstein Photography

Community Engagement Sessions Continued

To further support accessibility and inclusion, Archway Community Services offered to facilitate focus group discussions for specific programs or community groups, as well as one-on-one interviews.



Photo by Dale Klippenstein Photography

Online Survey Development and Implementation

Building on the insights gathered from the in-person engagement sessions, Archway Community Services developed an online survey to further broaden community input into the Abbotsford Food Charter. The survey was open for 100 days, from February 7 to May 16, 2025, and received 107 anonymous responses (n=107).

The survey was distributed using the same outreach protocol as the engagement sessions, ensuring consistency and accessibility across platforms.

Structured around the six core values identified during earlier discussions, the survey was divided into six sections. Each section presented four to five multiple-choice options, allowing participants to select the one that best reflected their views. These statements were carefully developed based on the themes and priorities that emerged during the in-person engagement sessions, ensuring that the survey reflected community perspectives and values.

Foundation of the Food Charter

Insights from the community engagement sessions and the online survey revealed clear priorities for Abbotsford's local food system surrounding the six core themes and values.

The written six core values and associated themes create the foundation of the Food Charter. Each section offers a full description of each core value as well as associated themes and priorities identified by community members during the engagement process. The infographic on page 12 provides a visual summary of the core values.



Photo by Valley Films

Limitations

Limitations we experienced in this initiative included:

- Limited engagement from the agriculture sector - we were able to engage with the Minister of Agriculture, vendors at the Pacific Agriculture Show, and farming networks but received a lower response rate.
- The survey was anonymous, leading to limited understanding of participant demographics.

Next Steps

With the finalization of the Abbotsford Food Charter, the Food Security Working Group will collaborate with partners and the community to identify existing work and develop initiatives that align with the Charter's values.

Appendix of Contributing Groups

Thank you to the following contributing groups for providing valuable insight throughout the engagement process. This appendix lists the entities represented in our engagement sessions:

A

Abbotsford Downtown Business Association

Abbotsford School District

Abbotsford Tech District

Abbotsford Youth Commission

Agriculture in the Classroom

Archway Community Services:

- Advocacy and Social Equity
- Best for Babies
- Climate Resiliency
- Community Connections
- Diversity Education
- Family Centre
- Food Bank
- Food Justice
- Foundry
- Housing
- Legal Advocacy for Agricultural Workers
- Philanthropy
- Seniors Services
- South Asian Community Resource Office
- South Asian Day Program for Older Adults
- Urban Farm

B

BC Association of Farmer's Markets

- Abbotsford Farm and Country Market
- Farmer's Market Nutrition Coupon Program

C

City of Abbotsford:

- Abbotsford ACCESS
- City Council
- City Planning
- Parks and Recreation

Central Heights Church

- Archway Food Bank Satellite

CEDAR Outreach

Community Futures

- South Fraser

E

Ecolab

F

Food Banks BC

Fraser Health

- Healthier Community Partnership

L

Langley Environmental Partners Society

Langley Meals on Wheels

M

Matsqui First Nation

Member of Parliament

- Abbotsford-Mission-Matsqui

Mennonite Central Committee

Ministry of Agriculture

S

Sagen

Sts'elemeqw Residential School Thrivers Society

Sumas First Nation

T**Tourism Abbotsford****U****United Way British Columbia**

- Hi Neighbour
- Food Security

University of the Fraser Valley

- Community Health and Social Innovation Hub
- Food and Agriculture Institute
- English 390 – Creative Writing
- Planning, Geography, and Environmental Studies

Abbotsford Food Charter

The Abbotsford Food Charter will serve as a community-led policy tool for building a sustainable, interconnected, and equitable local food system. It outlines each core value, the related themes and priorities, and includes a visual summary of these values.

1. Health & Wellbeing

We value **health and wellbeing** because a healthy food system strengthens physical, mental, and social wellbeing. Community members emphasized the importance of reliable access to nutritious, affordable, and safe food as well as increased food literacy.

Priorities:

- Expand access to fresh, nutritious, culturally preferable, and local food through community programs, markets, and local supply chains.
- Support initiatives that build food literacy such as cooking, nutrition, gardening, and budgeting skills.
- Create spaces where nutritious food choices are affordable.
- Reduce stigma within food programs by ensuring dignity, choice, and culturally informed service delivery.
- Encourage partnerships that integrate food into broader health promotion and community wellness efforts.



Photo by Jonny Gios on Unsplash

2. Agriculture & Sustainability

We value **agriculture and sustainability** because as the major agricultural centre of British Columbia, Abbotsford's food future depends on protecting farmland, supporting farmers, and creating sustainable farming practices. Participants identified the importance of supporting local farmers and food producers, promoting sustainable practices, and investing in food system infrastructure.

Priorities:

- Protect food producing land and help farms succeed long-term by investing in infrastructure and markets.
- Buy food from local farmers and connect them with local businesses.
- Promote farming methods that protect soil, water, and nature, and can handle climate challenges.
- Reduce food waste by connecting farmers and stores with community programs.
- Connect residents with local farmers to learn where their food comes from.



Photo by Valley Films

3. Social Equity

We value **social equity** because food access is shaped by income, transportation, housing, culture, and social conditions. Addressing inequitable access and affordability of nutritious and culturally preferable food was a recurring theme and identified priority across all values of the food charter.

Priorities:

- Advocate for policies and programs that reduce structural and economic barriers to nutritious food.
- Ensure food programs respect cultural dietary needs and are inclusive of newcomers, seniors, families, and people with disabilities.
- Increase food access points across the city, especially in underserved neighbourhoods.
- Increase affordability of nutritious and local foods.
- Support collaborative approaches that address poverty, food insecurity, and the social determinants of health.
- Prioritize equity in decision-making, ensuring that lived experience perspectives are represented.



Photo by Archway Food Bank

4. Education

We value **education** because it helps people and communities make informed and sustainable food choices that support health and wellbeing. Participants noted that food education can drive lasting change, especially when it begins from an early age and continues throughout life.

Priorities:

- Integrate food literacy into schools, youth programs, adult learning environments, and community programs.
- Expand opportunities for hands-on learning through community gardens, school gardens, farms, and food skills workshops.
- Support intergenerational approaches that pass down food skills, cultural food knowledge, and sustainable practices.
- Increase public awareness of local food systems, Indigenous food sovereignty, nutrition, agriculture, and sustainable food choices.
- Partner with educators, Elders, farmers, and community leaders to broaden knowledge sharing.



Photo by Archway Food Justice

5. Culture

We value **culture** because food is central to identity, belonging, and community connection. Throughout the engagement, participants expressed a desire to see food culture and traditions celebrated in community.

Priorities:

- Celebrate cultural food traditions through festivals, workshops, storytelling, and shared meals.
- Ensure food programs are inclusive and offer culturally preferable foods.
- Honour Indigenous food sovereignty and support learning related to traditional harvesting, stewardship, and foodways.
- Support food events that promote local foods and businesses.
- Foster intercultural food-sharing opportunities that strengthen relationships and reduce social isolation.
- Promote food as a connector that builds understanding across cultures and generations.



Photo by Dale Klippenstein Photography

6. Community Economic Development

We value **community economic development** because a resilient local food system contributes directly to economic vitality. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening the local food economy and supporting small and emerging food enterprises.

Priorities:

- Support local food businesses, farmers markets, processors, and food-related social enterprises.
- Encourage schools, hospitals, and other institutions to buy food grown and made nearby.
- Promote innovation in growing, processing, and delivering local food so it's easier for everyone to access.
- Build a strong local food system by collaborating and investing in infrastructures for a sustainable local food system.
- Create opportunities for jobs, training, and entrepreneurship within the local food sector.



Photo by Valley Films

ABBOTSFORD FOOD CHARTER

The Abbotsford Food Charter is a community-driven policy tool aimed at building a sustainable, connected, and equitable local food system. One where everyone has access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally preferable food. This Charter highlights the following core values:

Health & Well Being

We value equitable access to affordable, nutritious, safe & culturally preferable food for all Abbotsford residents across their lifespan.



Social Equity

We value everyone's right to access affordable, nutritious, and culturally preferable foods.



CULTURE

We value having opportunities for all community members to connect and celebrate through sharing traditional and cultural foods.



Agriculture & Sustainability

We value supporting local farmers, and processors in sustainable practices by taking care of food producing lands and waters.



EDUCATION

We value making food skills. Like cooking and growing food, healthy eating, and food safety knowledge accessible to all community members.



Local Economic DEVELOPMENT

We value supporting local farmers, restaurants and businesses by choosing to buy local.



We acknowledge that the land on which we live, work, grow, and share food is the traditional and unceded territory of the Semá:th, Máthxwi, Leq'ámel, and Nooksack First Nations, who are part of the broader Stó:lō cultural family and have stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial.