



## COMMITTEE REPORT

### AGRICULTURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Committee Report No. PDS 065-2025

Date: April 3, 2025

File No. 3100-05/PRJ25-12

To: Agriculture Advisory Committee  
From: Nick Crosman, Senior Planner and Bronwen Verigan, Planner  
Subject: ALC Subdivision and Non-Farm Use application (34252 King Road)

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#### AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

As outlined within the Agriculture Advisory Committee's (AAC) Terms of Reference, the Committee's mandate is to "...make recommendations on agriculture matters, more specifically:

- a) *provide recommendations to Council on the development of strategies, policies, plans and regulations dealing with agricultural issues, enhancing agriculture and agricultural areas of the City, such as farm 'edge' policies, farm bylaws, and environment, etc.;*
- b) *review and provide recommendations to Council on development applications, referred by staff or Council, on the effect of the proposal to agriculture;*
- c) *provide recommendations to Council on the operation and maintenance of the City's dyking, drainage and irrigation programs to address the needs of the agriculture industry; and*
- d) *provide input on the development on the City's Agriculture Strategy."*

Staff is looking for input from the AAC regarding this application and any comments, concerns or recommendations will be included in staff's report to Council.

#### PURPOSE

The City received an ALC application for Subdivision and a Non-Farm Use at 34252 King Road (the property) to accommodate a new 16,500 m<sup>2</sup> Plant and Animal Health Centre (PAH Centre) with a crematorium.

#### BACKGROUND

Owner: Athiana Acres Abbotsford Holdings Ltd.

Applicant: Pacific Land Group Inc.

OCP Designation: Agriculture 1 - Uplands

Existing Zoning: Rural Residential Zone (RR)

Airport Flightpath  
Zoning: Approach Surface

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Site Area:	35.96 Hectares (88.85 Acres)
Legal Description:	Parcel "A" (reference Plan 5411) North East Quarter Section 10 Township 16 Except: Part Dedicated Road on Plan 44724, New Westminster District.
Current Uses:	Agriculture (grain and forage) and residential (single detached dwelling)
Surrounding Uses:	N: King Road and residential uses beyond; E: City owned greenway and industrial uses beyond; S: Active aggregate facilities; and W: McKenzie Road and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) beyond.
Soil Capability:	Mostly 9. – Till with some 8 – Gravel & Sand in northeast and southeast corners.

### Plant and Animal Health Centre (PAH Centre) Overview

The PAH Centre is a British Columbia Provincial Government full service laboratory consisting of the Animal Health Centre (AHC) and the Plant Health Laboratory (PHL). The PAH Centre is an essential service conducting critical plant and animal testing.

- The AHC is the leading accredited full-service veterinary laboratory in western Canada which offers more than 400 laboratory diagnostic tests for agents that may be found in wild and domestic birds, mammals, fish, reptiles and amphibians. These diagnostic tests serve multi-purposes and are also vital for plans to ensure that local produce farms remain free of diseases and monitor the threats of zoonosis (diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans).
- The PHL is an accredited diagnostic facility that provides diagnosis for plant health problems affecting crops and plants grown in B.C. including plant disease, assessment for non-pathogenic disorders, insect pests and coordination of minor use of pesticides and fungicides.

Another component of the PAH Centre is a crematorium, which is used to safely dispose of postmortem animal carcasses that have undergone diagnostic testing and includes the destroying of prions, in addition to disposing of other biological material from the PHL. The existing Abbotsford PHC facility at 1767 Angus Campbell Road contains a crematorium.

The PAH Centre was established more than 50 years ago and has been providing diagnostic testing services to detect and prevent the spread of plant and animal diseases for over 25 years at the current facility.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Site Context**

1. The property is located south of Highway 1 and east of the railway tracks running parallel to Sumas Way. As shown in Figure 2, the property is surrounded by the University of the Fraser Valley (west), townhome development (north), forested parkland adjacent to industrial/commercial sites (east), and an active aggregate facility (south).

2. Most of the property is currently used for pumpkin farming with one existing residential dwelling located at the northeast corner of the property.
3. A portion of the parcel has historically been used for aggregate extraction and has since been reclaimed. Land leveling also likely occurred during aggregate extraction reclamation, minimizing topographic changes on the property.
4. The Agricultural Capability Assessment (the Assessment) prepared by McTavish Resource & Management Consultants Ltd. found:
  - a. The agricultural capability of the site was not fully consistent with mapping – this finding prompted revisions relating to the limitation subclasses within the Assessment. These revisions were largely due to historical gravel mining on the property which altered local topography, soil chemical and physical properties.
  - b. The published unimproved agricultural capability within the site ranges from Class 2 to Class 7 with limitations due to topography and aridity; however, the results of the detailed soil survey found the site is comprised of mineral soils ranging from Class 3 to Class 6 that are limited due to aridity issues, coarse fragment content, root restricting layers, wetness and topography.
  - c. Potential management practices to improve agricultural capability based on the determined site limitations include the installation of irrigation, rock picking, deep ripping and land leveling.

## Proposal

5. As shown in Figures 6 – 8, the City received an ALC application for a proposed new 16,500 m<sup>2</sup> Plant and Animal Health Centre with a crematorium.

The applicants applied:

  - a. to subdivide the property from one 34.96 ha (85.6 acre) lot into two lots: one 16.2 ha (40.0 acre) lot and one 18.5 ha (45.8 acre) lot; and
  - b. for an approximately 6.0 ha (15 acre) non-farm use area on the proposed 16.2 ha (40 acre) subdivided lot. The remaining 10 ha is proposed to be retained as farm fields with opportunities for agriculture and future research and development.
6. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food have an agreement in place with the property owners of 34252 King Road to purchase the 16.2 ha (40 acre) lot.
7. Subdivision in the ALR and authorization for uses that do not comply with ALR Use Regulations must be approved by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC). The proposed subdivision and 6.0 ha non-farm use area requests permission to operate the proposed Plant and Animal Health Centre and is expected to accommodate all buildings, parking, loading, and landscape areas.
8. As highlighted in greater detail within the Letter of Intent (Attachment A), the applicants' rationale for the proposal is summarized below:

- a. Due to climate change events, much of the infrastructure at the existing facility has been water-damaged, creating a need for a new space. Additionally, as climate change events become more prevalent, the workload and level of operations are outgrowing the existing building and there is now a need for a bigger space to ensure the continued success of the organization and to support the agricultural community.
- b. The unique characteristics of the PAH Centre's operations and the need to continue providing agriculture clients with accessible services significantly limit viable locations for this infrastructure.
- c. A comprehensive multi-year land search identified the property as the ideal location; and preliminary technical work (e.g., geotechnical, environmental, site servicing, etc.) support advancing this application on the property.
- d. The property's location provides unrivaled opportunities for research and collaboration between farmers, scientists technicians, and academics.
- e. The proposed non-farm use area is strategically located adjacent to a parcel used as an aggregate facility ensuring no interface between the proposed non-farm use area and any parcels being farmed.
- f. Locating the PAH Centre on ALR lands:
  - supports the operations of the facility as farmland is required to undertake research.
  - enables the PAH Centre to become a direct resource for the local agricultural community, fostering innovation, creating partnerships with local farms, businesses, and research institutions.
  - provides significant advantages that align with the PAH Centre's purpose and the province's agricultural priorities.
  - offers more long-term viability for the facility opposed to Non-ALR lands that may face more competing priorities such as residential, commercial, or industrial development.
  - provides an optimal site for a facility focused on plant and animal diagnostics, monitoring, surveillance, and testing as the ALR is designated to protect land for agricultural production. These services would contribute to maintaining the ecological health and long-term viability of ALR lands, integrating with local farming ecosystems and serving as a demonstration site for sustainable agricultural practices.
- g. A new PAH Centre would improve testing capacity and reduce delays by eliminating the need to redirect samples to out-of-province labs, enabling farmers and community members to make immediate, informed decisions to protect their crops, livestock, and pets.

## **Official Community Plan**

### *Agriculture 1 - Uplands*

9. The property is designated Agriculture 1 – Uplands in the OCP which envisions a minimum lot size of 8 ha for subdivision.

*Enhance Agricultural Integrity*

## 10. Policies

- 6.3 Capacity of Existing Agricultural Lands: Preserve viable agricultural land within the context of the Official Community Plan growth vision and support steps to increase the productive capacity of existing farmland. Explore and support opportunities to encourage the use of fallow or underutilized properties.
- 6.6 Support Agricultural Innovation and Agri-tech: Foster agricultural innovation by exploring strategic land use opportunities for agri-industrial within the Agricultural Land Reserve to develop, demonstrate and deploy emerging agri-technologies, facilitate advanced agri-education and research, increase farm commodity processing capacity, and effectively manage agricultural by-products. Advance this policy in collaboration and coordination with the senior government agencies to identify strategic opportunities and locations for this use in Abbotsford.
- 6.8 Holistic Food Systems Support: a thriving food system throughout the city, including local production, processing, distribution, celebration, consumption, nutrient recovery, and waste to energy.
- 6.9 Environment: Ensure agricultural activities support and respect human health, natural environments and groundwater resources in farming areas, particularly in relation to agricultural waste management, composting, anaerobic digestion, and incineration on farms.

*Special Study Area C*

11. The property is also within Special Study Area C (Area C) which has been highlighted for future:
- Large format, city wide active park space.
  - Agricultural related uses that are more accessible to the public, community groups, and students.
  - Agricultural exhibition, research and development, and education.
12. Lands within Area C were highlighted because of their lot configurations, ideal topography, and proximity to existing neighbourhoods, growth areas, existing parks, and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV). The OCP notes the ultimate plan for Study Area C is to be considered through a comprehensive planning process led by the City, taking into account existing park inventory and future needs.

*Protection of Agriculture Development Permit*

13. The City of Abbotsford's Protection of Agriculture Development Permit Guidelines established by the OCP require installation of landscape buffering along the ALR / Urban Development boundary to minimize conflicts between urban and agricultural activities.

*OCP Compliance*

14. The applicants' proposal:

- a. will result in two lots greater than 8.0 ha;
  - b. is within OCP Special Study Area C which supports agricultural related uses that are more accessible to the public, community groups, and students as well research and development, and education uses; and,
  - c. aligns with OCP Enhance Agricultural Integrity policies.
15. The applicant has proactively proposed to include a 10 m landscape buffer around the 6.0 ha (15 acre) non-farm use area, while agriculture will also continue to occur on the surrounding lands, which is expected to minimize impacts to the residential, institutional (UFV) and Industrial lands near the subject property.

## Zoning

16. The property is zoned Rural Residential Zone (RR) which is intended to accommodate single detached dwellings and agricultural uses on large lots in a rural setting.
17. If the proposed subdivision and non-farm use is approved by the ALC, the south portion of the proposed subdivided lot will require a rezoning application to permit the ALC approved non-farm use on the property. While the exact future zoning approach is still under discussion, staff anticipate a rezoning of the Southern 16.2 ha (40.0 acre) lot to the Agricultural One Zone (A1), with site specific text amendment for the Plant and Animal Health Centre (including the crematorium).
18. Rezoning to the standard A1 Zone (with text amendment for the PAH Centre) will bring the zoning further into alignment with the 'Agriculture 1 – Uplands' land use designation of the OCP, and is the appropriate zoning to regulate Agriculture on the lands outside the proposed ~6.0 ha non-farm use area. Further, the A1 Zone has a maximum 15.0 m building height for buildings accessory to an agricultural use, and a 35% maximum building lot coverage.
19. As the subject property is located within the Approach Surface from the Abbotsford International Airport, it contains a notation on Title regarding maximum building heights. Preliminary feedback received from NAV Canada indicates no initial concerns with the proposal, and suggests a maximum 18.0 m building height. While architectural details are still being finalized, the applicant will work within these parameters, and will work with NAV Canada for their approval in conjunction with a future Building Permit should approvals be granted. If ALC approvals are granted, the exact building height will be reviewed in greater detail in conjunction with the future rezoning application, to ensure compliance with the A1 Zone, and or present any deviations/variances to Council for consideration at that time.

## ALC Act and ALR Regulations

### *Subdivision*

20. An owner of agricultural land may apply to the Commission for permission under section 25 of the ALC Act to subdivide land in the ALR.
21. ALC Information Bulletin 9 identifies the likely factors the Commission will consider on a subdivision application. These considerations are summarized below:

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- a. The property's:
    - agricultural capability;
    - attempted agricultural improvements; and
    - suitability for agriculture; and
  - b. The types of land uses surrounding the property; and
  - c. Whether the proposal will:
    - encourage or enhance agriculture or agri-business in the short or long-term;
    - encourage farm use in the ALR while preserving the land base;
    - impact the size, continuity, or integrity of the ALR land base; and
    - narrow the range of agricultural options on the property, or to otherwise negatively impact the use of the property for farm use; and
  - d. Whether the proposal could be accommodated on lands outside of the ALR, or on an alternative site within the ALR that is less capable or suitable for agriculture.
22. The applicants' rationale (see Attachment A, and 'Proposal' section of this report) includes reasoning for locating the PAH Centre in the ALR, the anticipated impact on land uses surrounding the property, and how the proposal will encourage and enhance agriculture or agri-business in the short and long-term.
  23. The Agricultural Capability Assessment found the site is comprised of mineral soils ranging from Class 3 to Class 6 that are limited due to aridity issues, coarse fragment content, root restricting layers, wetness and topography. Potential management practices to improve agricultural capability based on the determined site limitations include the installation of irrigation, rock picking, deep ripping and land leveling.
  24. Further, through a long-range planning exercise, the property was included in Special Area C in the City of Abbotsford's OCP which supports this type of use in this location.

#### *Non-farm Use Application*

25. The ALR Use Regulation allows (as a permitted non-farm use) the use of agricultural land for education and conducting research respecting a farm use or a permitted non-farm use if all of the following conditions are met:
  - a. The area occupied by any structures necessary for conducting education or research does not exceed 100 m<sup>2</sup> for each parcel.
  - b. The agricultural land is not used for a school within the meaning of the *School Act*.
26. The 16,500 m<sup>2</sup> proposed building for the non-farm use facility exceeds the 100 m<sup>2</sup> threshold. In addition, the proposed crematorium is not listed as a permitted farm use or non-farm use. Therefore, a non-farm use application is required.
27. The ALC Act and ALR Use Regulation does not specifically address farm-related 'institutional' uses other than what is noted above for education and conducting research; however, ALC Policy L-24 does identify the key consideration for the development of farm structures for farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses in the ALR which

provides key considerations and recommended lot coverage limit for similar farm-related uses, both of which are summarized below.

#### Key Considerations

- a. Ensure the use is appropriate for the available rural services.
- b. The proposed use does not require the level of road access, water and wastewater servicing, utilities, fire protection, and other public services typically found in urban areas.
- c. Locate high water use/effluent generating operations in urban areas where municipal services are available whenever possible.
- d. Comply with the Ministry of Agriculture's Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Area's (the Minister's Bylaw Standard):
  - o Parking and loading areas should be permeable in nature, whenever possible, to reduce impervious cover and minimize the impacts of stormwater discharge on surrounding agricultural land; and,
  - o Stormwater and agricultural liquid waste management plans should be required where the total impervious area of buildings and structures exceeds 3,700 m<sup>2</sup> (approximately 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup>).

#### Recommended Lot Coverage Limit

- a. The recommended lot coverage limit for farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses in the ALR on parcels greater than 4 hectares (10 acres) is 5% of the lot (parcel).
  - b. The lot coverage limit should be calculated based on the size of the individual lot (parcel) of land where the farm-related commercial and farm-related industrial uses are located, not the total area of a farm operation which may include several lots (parcels); however, the Commission may consider increasing the lot coverage on a single parcel where the farm operation is made up of several lots (parcels) that are actively being farmed as a single operation provided there are restrictions placed on the development of similar uses on the remaining parcels making up the farm operation.
28. The proposed non-farm use area is approximately 37% (6 ha / 16.2 ha) of the proposed 16.2 ha subdivided lot, which includes all buildings, parking, loading and landscape areas. The remaining 10 ha is proposed to be retained as farm fields with opportunities for future research and development.
  29. While the proposed non-farm use area exceeds the recommended lot coverage limit of 5%, the proposed PAH Centre will become a direct resource for the local agricultural community, fostering innovation, creating partnerships with local farms, businesses, and research institutions as noted in the applicants' rationale.
  30. The property is located within OCP Special Study Area C, adjacent to the Urban Growth Boundary where more urban level of servicing is available/feasible for connection. Staff are preparing Advanced Subdivision and Rezoning Works and Services requirements which will be included in staff's report to Council for this application. No initial servicing



limitations are anticipated, however the exact details including potential road dedications from the subject property will be addressed when the proposal advances to Council.

#### *Placement of Fill or Removal of Soil*

31. A Notice of Intent (NOI) for the placement of fill or removal of soil will need to be submitted to the ALC at least 60 days before engaging in the intended use.
32. In addition, the applicants will be required to apply for Soil Removal and Deposit Permit with the City of Abbotsford.

#### **FINANCIAL PLAN IMPLICATION**

No financial plan implications are anticipated.

#### **IMPACTS ON COUNCIL POLICIES, STRATEGIC PLAN AND/OR COUNCIL DIRECTION**

The proposal aligns with the goals and objectives identified in the 2016 Official Community Plan including Special Study Area C which identifies these lands for future uses such as agricultural research and education due to their lot configurations, ideal topography, and proximity to existing neighbourhoods, growth areas, existing parks, and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV). The proposal also aligns with Council's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, specifically Council's Strategic Plan Principle 3 which envisions the City as a regional hub of creativity, innovation where talent, investment and business thrive and sets a goal to recognize the value of innovation in our local economy, especially agriculture.

#### **REOLUTION OPTIONS**

That the Agricultural Advisory Committee recommend to Council that Council (choose one):

1. Forward the application to the ALC with support, as presented; or
2. Forward the application to the ALC with support, with changes, or
3. Forward the application to the ALC with no comments; or
4. Deny and not forward the application to the ALC.

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#### **APPROVALS**

Mark Neill, General Manager of Planning and Development Services  
Komal Basatia, Chief Financial Officer

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#### **ATTACHMENTS**

AAC Figures 0-8  
Appendix A – Letter of Intent  
Appendix B – Agriculture Capability Report