**Website Category: GIS Microsite Selector Tool**

**PURPOSE -** Our goal at the City of Abbotsford Economic Development (CAED) was to offer a GIS (Geographic Information System) Microsite Selection tool, so that new or existing businesses could have as much current, credible information and data available to them as possible for FREE. GIS is a system that enables users to capture, store, analyse, and manage spatially referenced data. In doing so, we were the first Canadian Economic Development Organization to integrate this within their website and the first Economic Development organization in British Columbia to have an interactive GIS site selector tool. We felt that if we weren’t offering up-to-date information about demographics, workforce, infrastructure, housing, business and industry, we could be losing leads without ever knowing we were in the running. The GIS microsite is fully integrated into our website, the look and feel are seamless when you are directed from our homepage. We also ensured the microsite is compatible for mobile devices, making it easier for people to explore and source information while they’re on the go. Communities are competing with one another to attract and sustain businesses, so as Economic Developers we wanted to be able to assist with the site selection process and provide as much community related information as possible. The new microsite had to be somewhat simply, so that any questions a client might have about a location, potential competition or even labour requirements could be provided to them instantly, 24/7, in a way that was easily understood along with a visual interpretation. There’s a link to our site for your review: [www.abbotsfordsitefinder.ca](http://www.abbotsfordsitefinder.ca)

**EFFECTIVENESS** – The GIS Site Selector tool pulls information from a wide variety of sources such as MLS listings, Space List, Environics, and Statistics Canada to name a few. To ensure the data presented is the most current, GIS Planning automatically updates twice annually. MLS listings are directly connected to the system, they update daily, automatically, overnight. Our site even has the ability for realtors to update their own listings at our discretion. Our GIS site allows us to pull analytical information on search history or most sought-after information which provides new leads and helps us understand what our clients are looking for. Integrated Google Maps provides turn-by-turn driving directions to available sites on mobile devices. Our site has inspired other organizations, such as the new Invest in Canada and the Province of Quebec to adopt the same system and have it developed in their own style, for their own operations. Saskatoon has just informed GIS Planning that they want a system exactly like ours! We love it when we can be trailblazers and then share our experience with others ☺ All our local financial institutions have requested demonstrations to their teams.

The capabilities of our microsite far exceed that of typical mapping GIS. Each tab on the site provides a unique type of data analyzing service, allowing for the user to control how targeted and relevant the information is. The “*SITE*” tab generates Property Database Reports where you can locate available properties based on user-defined criteria with the ability to then create presentation-quality reports for these available properties. For each property, you can view demographics, consumer expenditures, and wages. The “*DEMOGRAPHICS*” tab can create a radius analysis for complete market overview of the area or more specifically of the areas around defined properties; and labour force reports can be saved and shared. The “*BUSINESSES*” tab displays and filters businesses by industry using a completely interactive map interface. Also, pre-define your community’s target industries or clusters by NAICS code for enhanced local business analysis. You can search businesses by name, type, employees and revenue. The user can then analyze the businesses within their defined radius of the location of interest to view potential suppliers, customers and competitors. The “*MAPPING*” tab allows the user to visual their data using heat maps – which is a unique way to display demographic data by geography. This allows the users to identify optimal business locations. Our mapping tool goes deeper with a recently incorporated layering technique. This is where users can add interactive layers of community assets such as land use, railroads, schools, colleges, hospitals, airports etc. and these are then easily displayed on their existing search criteria. The “*COMPARE*” tab allows the users to compare Abbotsford with up to 4 other communities located anywhere across Canada. The side-by-side comparison of locations or communities uses a wide range of demographic variables and data on consumer expenditure and labour force, enabling location seekers to make informed decisions on a where to call ‘home’. The “*COMMUNITY*” tab provides an infographic illustration of key Abbotsford data points, rendered graphically for quick access by users. Population, labour force, educational attainment and employment information data are quickly generated in a poster-like infographic style; keeping your community profile infographic always current!

All the above-mentioned property, demographic, business, mapping and community reports can be saved in location for further analysis. The reports all have social media compatibility and can exported instantly or can also be produced in pdf or excel form. To demonstrate the functionality of this powerful microsite and to support this award submission we decided to prepare a short fun demonstration video completed by one of our CAED team in her iPhone. To view: <https://youtu.be/D7Q1q5-WPZc>

**CHALLENGES -** The first challenges we experienced, occurred during the creation process of the microsite ensuring that the CAED brand was consistently represented. We didn’t want the transition to the microsite to seem disjointed, or like the visitor was “leaving” our website, we wanted it to be seamless. Secondly, negotiating with the Real Estate Board for direct access to MLS data was also a challenge. And finally, there is so much information available on the microsite that we needed to ensure that the tool was completely user-friendly. We worked hard with creators GIS Planning Inc. to make the site navigation as intuitive, effective and efficient as possible.

**TARGET AUDIENCE –** All demographics; businesses that are new, expanding or are looking to relocate. Any residents seeking comprehensive information and data to help them find the optimal success within the City of Abbotsford; all community stakeholders can benefit from the free access to the robust, analyzable and exportable data.

**SUSTAINABILITY –** The GIS site selector is based completely online and pulls all its associated information from online data sources. It also continues to evolve and grow in its functionality. It requires very little in-house supporting resources, providing a cost-effective solution that is virtually maintenance-free for staff. The site information sources are updated twice annually (four times for business data) and daily for MLS Listings in order to ensure accuracy. As such, the life span of the microsite is expanded due to its consistent relevance. For Economic Developers this is the NEXT WAVE in connecting our audiences to the desired data and information.