

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For further information, contact:

Pardeep Purewal, Senior Manager
Corporate Communications & Public Engagement
T 604 466 4319 E ppurewal@mapleridge.ca

Draft Budget Invests in Housing, Safety, Economic Development and Infrastructure

MAPLE RIDGE, Feb. 16, 2024... Maple Ridge is kicking off its final public feedback opportunity on a 2024 budget that addresses community priorities and needs such as housing, public safety, economic development and infrastructure while balancing the impact on taxpayers.

At a special Council meeting on Feb. 13, Council selected the service enhancements to be included in the 2024 budget and 2024-2028 Financial Plan, resulting in a \$150 (6.5 per cent) property tax increase this year for the average Maple Ridge home valued at \$985,700. The proposed increase is within the bottom half of reported increases in other cities in the region.

From Feb. 16 to March 22, Maple Ridge residents may go to engage.mapleridge.ca/budget to learn about the budget and complete a feedback form. This is the City's second round of public engagement on the 2024 budget.

"Maple Ridge is growing at a tremendous rate and this proposed budget is making significant investments in public safety, economic diversification and meeting housing needs – priorities our residents told us are important to them," said Mayor Dan Ruimy. "As a Council, we're taking bold steps to deliver on what our community needs to move forward while balancing affordability. I encourage residents to take the time to learn more about what's planned for 2024 and to share your thoughts with us."

What's Included in the 2024 Budget

The City's \$160M operating budget for 2024 is framed around maintaining core municipal services and delivering on key community priorities and needs reflected in the 2023-2026 Council Strategic Plan.

In particular, the City is acting on two issues that are crucial to meeting its obligations to ensure residents and business can thrive: accelerating housing and enhancing public safety. The City's Fire Services planning has identified a critical need for investment in fire services to meet current demands and keep pace with population growth and the evolving needs of the community. Additional

investment in police services is also required as Maple Ridge prepares for the de-integration of the Ridge Meadows RCMP as the City of Pitt Meadows transitions to its own RCMP detachment.

In addition to funding core civic services, some of the key investments in the budget include:

- **To enhance public safety and meet growing demand:** 16 front line firefighters to increase the department's ability to provide core services, emergency response, community safety and prevention services, 12 RCMP officers to increase police services, an additional Victim Services Case Worker, increased downtown overnight security services to support downtown businesses.
- **To address the requirements of new provincial housing legislation:** Additional staff to support housing creation, develop pre-approved site plans, update Official Community Plan, Zoning Bylaw and Density Bonusing Program.
- **To protect City assets and services from online threats:** Additional cybersecurity funding.
- **To address climate change:** A countertop food waste pilot to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, a management strategy to protect the health of the McKenney Creek System and developing an inventory of local biodiversity and updating green infrastructure standards.
- **To enhance community engagement and livability:** A toolkit to increase public engagement, a participatory budget initiative, and multiple live performance activations on the City's mobile stage for Maple Ridge's 150th birthday celebrations.
- **To support local employment, tourism and business growth:** Plans to retain and grow local businesses, attract new businesses, promote employment, attract events focused on tourists and residents, conduct a local labour market analysis and undertake an Albion Industrial lands analysis to help ensure that the City is investment-ready for attracting new industrial businesses to the community.
- **To enhance City services and governance:** Strategies and technology to enhance customer experience and intergovernmental relations, an archeological management plan to meet provincial regulations, and a new continuous improvement program that will continue to enhance operational efficiency and citizen-centric service delivery.

Protecting Taxpayers

Impact on taxpayers was a key consideration for Council as it deliberated the budget Tuesday. The proposed increase is in the lower half of reported increases in the region, which range from 5.58 to 8.92 per cent.

Strategies have also been built into the budget to smooth the tax impact, including spreading out the cost of additional firefighting and policing resources over multiple years, and actively seeking grant funding to offset costs. For example, the City is awaiting approval on its application to the federal Housing Accelerator Fund that would pay for costs related to actions that the City will be undertaking to enable acceleration of new housing.

A variety of factors beyond the City's control affect the development of the budget including:

- Labour agreements such as the RCMP settlement, CUPE (City staff) and IAFF (firefighters).
- Contracted services such as E-Comm 911, Fraser Valley Regional Library and the SPCA.

- New unfunded responsibilities from provincial legislation for housing and accessibility.
- Inflation and continuing economic uncertainty.

Capital Improvements in 2024

Council on Tuesday also approved the 2024 – 2028 capital plan, totaling \$112 million for 2024. Projects are funded through the provincial Growing Communities Grant and other grants, development charges and reserve accounts, and include:

- Widening Abernethy Way to four lanes with a multi-use path between 224 and 230 Streets.
- Continue the process to plan, design and deliver a new recreation facility.
- Rehabilitating 128 Avenue between 232 and 235A Streets.
- Planning a second access to Silver Valley, a 240 Street bridge and multi-use path.
- Increasing capacity of Lower Hammond Drainage Pump Station to improve flood protection.
- Adding multi-use paths on Thorne Avenue.
- Upgrading Port Haney Waterfront Park and Maple Ridge Park.
- Paving 12 kms of two-lane roads.
- Improving technology to enhance efficiency, cybersecurity and service-delivery.

Finalizing the Budget

Bylaws for the financial plan and tax rates are scheduled for adoption in April.

The draft 2024 budget and 2024-2028 Financial Plan are available for feedback Feb. 16 to March 22 at engage.mapleridge.ca/budget. Information is also posted at mapleridge.ca/budget2024.

Comments on the budget or other financial matters may also be provided year-round to budget@mapleridge.ca or 604-467-7484 (voicemail).

Initial Feedback Helped Shape Budget

In the City's first round of budget engagement from Jan. 16 to 28, residents were asked to comment on 2024 budget priorities and proposed actions through a guided survey both online and in print. More than 2,500 people visited the Engage Maple Ridge page where the survey was hosted, about 1,250 took the opportunity to learn more, and 462 people completed the survey.

"The insights we gained from our public engagement in January have been crucial to helping Council understand what is important to the community – they have guided not only our budget deliberations but will inform our decisions throughout the year," Ruimy said. "We thank everyone who provided feedback and encourage all residents to participate as we take the final steps to finalize the budget and 2024-2028 Financial Plan."

Survey insights:

- Nearly 60 per cent of respondents had lived in Maple Ridge more than a decade.

- Community safety, City infrastructure and asset maintenance, and economic development were identified as the top three priorities. For each of these categories, about 80 per cent either supported the City's proposed actions for 2024 or said even more could be done.
- Almost 60 per cent supported proposed actions to support housing acceleration, while 62 per cent supported plans for increased community activation and engagement, including Maple Ridge's 150th birthday celebrations in 2024.
- More than 66 per cent supported the direction for governance and corporate excellence, while just under 60 per cent supported the City's planned climate and environmental actions.
- While 55 per cent supported the proposed actions for active transportation, about half of commenters indicated that other priorities were more important.

A link to the full citizen engagement report can be found at mapleridge.ca/budget2024.