



Chapter 2

Growth Management

Growth Management
Land Use Designations
Financial Sustainability

2.1 Growth Management

The Official Community Plan policies reflect the principles established by the Community during Community Visioning sessions. Maple Ridge residents value this community and have said very clearly that the District must protect and foster the characteristics that make Maple Ridge unique.

In Maple Ridge, the majority of the growth in population, jobs and housing will be accommodated within the Urban Area Boundary where services are readily available or the infrastructure is already in place for their provision. By concentrating growth and density within the Urban Area Boundary, development patterns will emerge that facilitate transit, cycling, and walking as viable and attractive transportation alternatives. Within the Urban Area Boundary, growth is directed to the Town Centre, Community Commercial Nodes, and neighbourhoods with Area Plans. The Official Community Plan policies reflect the District's commitment to an Area Planning process that engages neighbourhood residents, and provides a greater level of policy detail than found within an Official Community Plan.

This approach of contained growth reinforces broader community objectives of preserving the agricultural land base, protecting the District's natural features and environmental resources, and maintaining the community's cherished character and community lifestyle. Residents of Maple Ridge appreciate the character of this community. It is rooted in diversity: a diversity of landscapes, from natural and rural to suburban and urban. Its uniqueness includes its physical make-up and its social characteristics, and citizens have stated that Maple Ridge's character must be protected and enhanced, to avoid becoming like "everywhere else".

Generally speaking the Official Community Plan policies:

- support the agricultural land base;
- manage growth within the Urban Area Boundary with the highest density occurring in the Town Centre, and directed to Community Commercial Nodes and neighbourhoods with Area Plans;
- are committed to an Area Planning framework;
- strive to foster the community's strong sense of place and unique identity;
- increase economic and employment opportunities by enhancing and promoting our agricultural, commercial, institutional, and industrial sectors;

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- adopt an environmental management model to protect and manage our natural features and resources; and
 - foster a healthy, socially sustainable, safe, connected and inclusive community through activities relating to the needs, well-being, and development of individuals within the District.

2.1.2 A Compact and Unique Community

POLICIES

- 2 - 1 Maple Ridge will designate an adequate supply of land to accommodate future growth for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and recreation uses.
- 2 - 2 Maple Ridge is a unique community and Maple Ridge is committed to maintaining and fostering this strong sense of community by:
- a) supporting the Principles contained within the Official Community Plan;
 - b) assessing all applications to amend the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw against the policies contained in the Official Community Plan;
 - c) maintaining the integrity of the Urban Area Boundary and promoting residential development within the Urban Area Boundary; and
 - d) the preparation of Area Plans.
- 2 - 3 Within the Urban Area Boundary, growth will be directed to the Town Centre, Community Commercial Nodes, areas with Area Plans, and to other locations where Official Community Plan policies are satisfied.
- 2 - 4 Outside the Urban Area Boundary, commercial growth will be directed to rural commercial and historic commercial centres.
- 2 - 5 Maple Ridge will limit urban scale development to areas where:
- a) the best use of existing physical, community and social infrastructure can be made;
 - b) neighbourhood compatibility criteria are met;
 - c) the infrastructure can be provided in a manner that is efficient and cost effective for the municipality; and
 - d) the development is consistent with Regional policies and plans such as the GVRD Green Zone and Liquid Waste Management Plan.

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- 2 - 6 Maple Ridge supports and maintains the Urban Area Boundary recognizing the role that it has on limiting urban expansion, preserving community character, reducing land speculation within the Agricultural Land Reserve and protecting the agricultural land base, and in providing for the efficient delivery of services. Adjustments to the Urban Area Boundary:
- a) will only be supported if the District has an adopted Agricultural Plan;
 - b) will be considered in cooperation with the Agricultural Land Commission and the Greater Vancouver Regional District; and
 - c) will only be conducted during a Comprehensive Official Community Plan review, or Council directed Comprehensive Urban Area Boundary review, and applications considered outside of either review are considered premature.

2.1.3 A Summary of Policies

The Official Community Plan policies are summarized according to the 10 theme areas identified by the Community during Community Visioning Sessions. The summaries are as follows:

Community Character and Sense of Place

Residents of Maple Ridge appreciate the character of the community, noting that it is rooted in diversity. The diversity ranges from natural and rural to suburban and urban, and includes the physical make-up, infrastructure, and social characteristics.

The Official Community Plan policies reflect that Maple Ridge is a unique community and that residents want to ensure that it does not become like “everywhere” else. The Growth Management Policies identify that Maple Ridge is a unique community and that Council is committed to maintaining and fostering this uniqueness. The Heritage policies acknowledge that built, natural and cultural lands of Maple Ridge have resulted in the community’s strong sense of place, and are committed to preserving community character.

The Housing policies recognize the need to stabilize and preserve the identity and character of neighbourhoods, and have established compatibility criteria to guide development. The Natural Features and Agricultural policies identify that that natural features and agricultural lands strongly contribute to the character of this community.

Community Engagement and Governance

Maple Ridge residents want to be involved at both the neighbourhood and community level. They would like the District to have a clear vision of the future, an opportunity to participate in planning processes, and they recognize the need to work with other agencies and authorities to meet municipal objectives.

Chapter 1 of the Official Community Plan contains the Vision Statement for the future and the 45 principles that will guide decision making. The Implementation Chapter identifies the list of actions required to implement the Community's Vision and the need to address key issues in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

The Community Services Chapter of the Official Community Plan contains a number of policies that support community engagement and the use of Council Advisory Committees to assist Council in decision making. The Area Planning chapter identifies a commitment to an Area Planning process that is based on a consultative approach with Regional and Provincial agencies, community groups, and residents.

Many chapters, such as the Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, Natural Features and Transportation Chapters have policies that identify and support working in cooperation with Provincial and Regional authorities to advance community goals and objectives.

Culture/Recreation/Education

Maple Ridge residents value the diversity of culture and recreation in the Community, and acknowledge that trails and recreational opportunities; history and heritage preservation; and cultural activities such as arts, crafts and festivals, are all components of a healthy community.

The Residential policies of the Official Community Plan contain Community Character and sense of place policies that recognize the link between community wellness and activities. The Community Services policies provide policy direction to support a range of cultural and leisure services and facilities. The Official Community Plan policies also identify the need to work in cooperation with the School District to strategically plan for educational facilities, and that the District should pursue the establishment of a post-secondary institution in the community.

Downtown

Maple Ridge residents overwhelmingly support developing the downtown to enhance its role in the community.

The Neighbourhoods and Housing section of the Official Community Plan identifies that Maple Ridge places a priority on residential development in the Town Centre. The Commercial policies support the downtown, and focus on developing it as a commercial district and place a priority on developing within the area. The Transportation policies support development in the Town Centre and encourage the development of an efficient transportation and transit system to link the Town Centre with other areas in the community.

Growth and Development

Residents of Maple Ridge are very interested in the future growth and development of the community. They support neighbourhood planning and have identified that neighbourhoods should be strengthened, and that heritage values must be preserved.

Housing choice is very important, noting there is a need to provide a mix of housing types and uses, and affordable, rental and special needs housing. Area residents want to pursue “Smart Growth” and support contained and densified urban development.

The Official Community Plan policies support maintaining the integrity of the Urban Area Boundary, and note that the development of the Urban Reserve will not happen until specific triggers and milestones have been attained. The Neighbourhoods and Housing policies identify the need for affordable, rental and special needs housing and that residential growth should occur within the Urban Area Boundary, with a focus on the Town Centre, neighbourhoods with area plans, and compatible infill.

The Official Community Plan identifies the need for future industrial and commercial lands, but recognizes the need to work cooperatively with other agencies and the community to ensure that community goals and objectives are met.

The Agricultural, Heritage and Natural Features policies identify that these resources are key to preserving the character of Maple Ridge and speak to protecting resources. Official Community Plan policies also identify that growth needs to be integrated with services, infrastructure and schools.



Services

The community has identified that growth should be integrated with services, infrastructure and schools. There is a recognition that social services are key to the health and wellness of the community.

Chapter 9, Municipal Services, has policies that support maintenance of the Urban Area Boundary to provide services in an efficient manner, and require that fiscal impact analysis be conducted on major development proposals, as a component of area planning, and when considering adjustments to the Urban Area Boundary.

Chapter 4, Community Services, contains a number of policies relating to the provision of “soft” services in the community. These policies note that the District will work in cooperation with agencies and the Social Planning Advisory Committee to prepare a Social Plan. Other policies in this section support the provision of services and facilities such as the library, schools, parks and leisure facilities.

Transportation

Maple Ridge residents want to increase transportation choices in the community through a well-planned transportation network for people and vehicles. Residents have identified a need to improve east-west connectivity, transit, West Coast Express service, and to plan for an efficient and multi-modal transportation network that supports development.

The Official Community Plan policies identify the need to provide an integrated transportation system that balances all modes of transportation, with an emphasis on non-automobile transportation modes. There is recognition of the need to work cooperatively with agencies and other levels of government to address the east-west capacity issue and expand transit service in the community.

Agriculture

Maple Ridge residents have identified that agriculture is a vital component of the community’s rural character and of the local economy. Maple Ridge agriculture is also highly diverse, in the range of products and also in the size of farming operations. Agricultural land is a key component of the Green Zone of the Greater Vancouver Regional District’s Livable Region Strategic Plan and provides many benefits of local and Regional significance. As an economic generator, it contributes to a more complete community.



The value of agriculture is consistently recognized and supported within the community. Agriculture is not only valued for its role in protecting a land resource, but is recognized for its intrinsic value to the community. Maple Ridge will strive to protect the agricultural land base by maintaining the integrity of the Urban Area Boundary, encouraging sustainable agricultural practices and promoting agriculture as a viable contributor to the local and Regional economy.

The Natural Features policies of the Official Community Plan also identify that agricultural land makes a significant contribution to the natural environment in the community. Agricultural fields and crops provide habitat, a source of food for wildlife, and often function as wildlife corridors. The removal of lands from agricultural production will often have an impact on the environment. The Official Community Plan also recognizes that agricultural lands have heritage value and reflect the history of Maple Ridge and maintain community character.

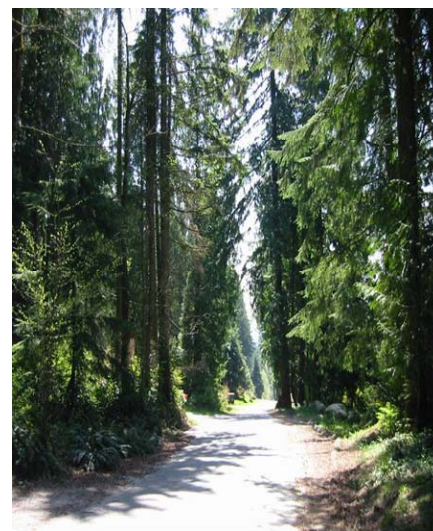
Economic Development

Residents have identified a strong need for economic development, in preferred locations (i.e. the Lougheed corridor), and in preferred sectors (i.e. clean, high paying, low environmental impact, manufacturing and high tech jobs). There is strong support for a “balanced community”, but there is also a recognition that economic development must “fit” with the environmental context and community character.

The Employment section of the Official Community Plan identifies that there is a need to diversify the tax assessment and employment base in the community, and contains policies regarding agricultural, commercial and industrial employment as economic generators. The policies identify that there is a need to identify long-term commercial and industrial land in the community, but that this must be done in conjunction with a comprehensive review of the Urban Area Boundary.

Environment

Maple Ridge residents place a high value on the natural environment. They note that the mountains, lakes, rivers and parks contribute to the community’s character and make it a “place to call home”. Residents want to protect water (creeks, rivers, lakes, bogs and headwaters) areas of natural beauty, and forests, and recognize the role that heritage and agriculture have on the protection and preservation of the environment. Maple Ridge residents also have identified a need to integrate natural features into the planning process and support a “smart growth” approach to development.





The Natural Features policies in the Official Community Plan support an environmental management model that combines watershed management with a land-based planning approach and incorporates natural features and systems into a comprehensive planning model. The policies also recognize the environmental importance of agriculture and that sustainable agriculture is part of an environmental management strategy.

The Transportation policies of the Official Community Plan encourage and promote alternative modes of transportation including pedestrian, transit, multi - purpose trails, and cycling, and recognize that parks and green space enhance community.

2.2 Land Use Designations

This section describes the land use designations in the Official Community Plan.

A “designation” of land on a schedule of the Official Community Plan characterizes what land uses could be supported in the future. Municipal Council “designates” the types of land use activities that are appropriate for different areas throughout the municipality. The designations are general in nature, and specific form, character, or density details are contained in Area Plans and accompanying Zones.

A Public Hearing is required to adopt or change a land use designation. The land use designations are mapped on Schedule B of the Official Community Plan and are summarized below.

1. Agriculture

The Agriculture designation generally applies to land within the Agricultural Land Reserve. While the majority of this land is intended for farm use, non-farm uses approved by the District and the Agricultural Land Commission will retain this designation.

2. Park

The Park designation permits open space, recreation and park use, and may be under either Federal, Provincial, Regional, or Municipal jurisdiction.

3. Forest

The Forest designation is for the protection and maintenance of the ecological diversity and integrity of forested lands within the District. The majority of the lands designated Forest are under Provincial jurisdiction. Some lands under this designation are economic generators and provide opportunities for research and development.

4. Conservation

The Conservation designation is for the protection of ecologically sensitive lands and significant natural features that are essential to maintain the ecological diversity within the District.

5. Rural Residential

The Rural Residential designation permits agricultural uses and single detached or duplex housing on acreage located outside the Urban Area Boundary where municipal services do not exist.

6. Suburban Residential

The Suburban Residential designation permits single detached or duplex housing in areas located outside of the Urban Area Boundary that may have water service but which are not connected to the municipal sanitary sewer system.

7. Estate Suburban Residential

The Estate Suburban Residential designation permits single detached or duplex housing in areas outside the Urban Area Boundary. The properties are within the Fraser Sewer Area or on property where sewer services have already been connected.

8. Urban Residential

The Urban Residential designation permits a range of housing types, densities and infill opportunities within the Urban Area Boundary. Within the Urban Residential Designation, the following two residential categories are included:

- a) Neighbourhood Residential;
- b) Major Corridor Residential

The general characteristics of each of the above residential categories are outlined in Chapter 3 of the Official Community Plan.

9. Commercial

The Commercial designation permits a range of commercial activities throughout the District. Within the Commercial designation, the following five categories exist:

- a) General Commercial;
- b) Community Commercial Nodes;
- c) Neighbourhood Commercial Centres;
- d) Historic Commercial Centres; and
- e) Rural Commercial.

The characteristics of each of the above five commercial categories are outlined in Chapter 6 of the Official Community Plan.

10. Industrial

The Industrial designation permits industrial and business park use on lands identified for industrial development.

11. Institutional

The Institutional designation includes diverse uses that meet specific community needs and that serve the local population, such as schools, parks, community halls, recreational facilities, museums, places of worship, firehalls, daycare facilities, healing and wellness centres, correctional and rehabilitation facilities, public services uses, hospitals, and congregate care facilities.

12. Rural Resource

The Rural Resource designation identifies lands that are potentially suitable for gravel extraction, in compliance with Official Community Plan and Council policies.

13. Park in the ALR

Park in the ALR identifies existing or proposed parks that are in the Agricultural Land Reserve. The identification indicates that it is the District's intention to establish or maintain a park on certain properties, but acknowledges that approvals from the Agricultural Land Commission will be required for future park use.

14. Urban Reserve

The Urban Reserve designation identifies lands identified by the District for long term future urban level services and housing, subject to compliance with Section 3.1.5 of the Official Community Plan.

2.3 Financial Sustainability

Taxation rates are reviewed annually by Council to maintain an established level of service to the community. They are not designed to provide for new services or for major upgrades to existing services.

Population growth involves challenges in maintaining established service levels. Although population growth brings increased tax revenues, it also increases the demand for services, often beyond accepted levels.

However, the District does not have the resources to meet all of the demands generated with growth. Demand must be managed to make sure that expectations reflect fiscal realities and the need to contain expenditures.

A significant portion of services costs involves infrastructure for new developments. Although the initial costs are generally paid for by the development community, these investments are usually turned over to the municipality to operate and maintain. As the community grows, this investment increases.

The continuous search for efficiencies in service delivery is a sound business practice that can be accomplished through a variety of means, including:

- establishing priority considerations;
- providing full cost analysis of a capital project, including ongoing maintenance, before giving it approval;
- determining where existing services could be delivered more efficiently;
- identifying potential sources of non-traditional revenues to diversify the tax base;
- amortizing financing arrangements over the life cycle of infrastructure improvements, to provide more equitable and affordable taxation rates;
- maintaining reserve funds in order to respond to unexpected events or opportunities.

A proactive strategy is required that will position the Municipality to meet financial obligations and take advantage of opportunities that arise; it will also mean that residents can look forward to equitable and affordable taxation.

To address these issues, the District of Maple Ridge has established Council Policy 5.52 to lay the groundwork for the continuance of high quality services that guide, support and respect the direction of the community.