

# RIDGE BUSINESS BUZZ

Department of Economic Development



**Winter Edition - January 26, 2021**

## Message from Wendy Dupley, Director, Economic Development, City of Maple Ridge

Welcome to 2021. A new year brings new hope, and like many of you, I'm looking forward to putting 2020 in the rear-view mirror.

This year promises to be a much better year as new vaccines and treatments are rolled out, allowing us to slowly "return to normal". In the short-term, though, it's important that we continue to follow public health orders as COVID-19 continues to impact the lives of people across Canada and throughout the world. While countries such as New Zealand and Australia appear to have controlled the spread of the pandemic, rapid increases in infections and deaths in the UK, much of Europe and the United States remind us of the need for continued vigilance and discipline.

The Canadian economy has proven to be remarkably resilient in the face of these unprecedented challenges. Although we saw an uptick in unemployment in December, there was some positive news as job losses were mostly concentrated in industries directly affected by shutdowns, showing some resiliency in industries that remained open. The Conference Board of Canada reported goods-producing industries saw employment rise in December, led by strong growth in manufacturing, demonstrating the strength in the broader economy. The same report noted strong employment gains in December in financial services and professional services, with both segments reporting higher levels of employment than pre-pandemic.

The BC economy has weathered the pandemic much better than many anticipated. Central 1 Economics noted that BC was the only province to see an employment gain in December, driven by an increase of 24,000 full-time jobs. The same report notes the province's real estate market has continued to show unexpected strength with record sales and prices in December and no slow down in sight. This bodes well for the construction, manufacturing and home retail sectors as well.

It's interesting to note that over 25% of Canadians are currently working from home, down from a high of just over 40% in the spring of 2020. As "high touch" industries such as hospitality, tourism and entertainment begin to re-open, we should see more people returning to their previous workplaces. That being said, I expect that the work-from-home phenomena will remain a significant feature of the "new normal" economy. On a related note, I expect the rapid adoption and expansion of e-commerce will continue in the retail and services industries going forward.

Stay safe and best wishes for a happy, prosperous and "normal" 2021!

Sincerely,

Wendy



### Community Leaders Forum

On December 10, the City of Maple Ridge hosted its 3rd annual Community Leaders Forum. This virtual event featured a keynote presentation from the University of Waterloo Entrepreneur-in-Residence Brock Dickinson, who also moderated a panel discussion with Mayor Mike Morden, MP Marc Dalton, Minister Lisa Beare, and MLA Bob D'Eith. Videos of Brock Dickinson's presentation and the Panel discussion can be viewed at [www.mapleridge.ca/157](http://www.mapleridge.ca/157)



### Smart21 Announcement Event

This February 22-24, the City of Maple Ridge and the Township of Langley are co-hosting the **2021 Smart21 Announcement** event where the **Intelligent Community Forum (ICF)** names the world's most intelligent communities. This virtual event features experts from around the world showcasing how new technology and innovative practices can improve communities for both residents and businesses. The event has confirmed speakers representing nine countries including Canada, the USA, Netherlands, Estonia, Spain, Taiwan, Australia, Finland and the United Kingdom. ICF event attendees include business and technology industry leaders, development industry professionals, elected officials, government employees, academics, and non-profit/NGO leaders from around the world.

Please visit *Intelligent Community Forum* for more information on the 2021 Smart21 Announcement event.



### Smart21 Hackathon attracts over 500 participants

As part of the **2021 Smart21 Announcement** event, the City of Maple Ridge has partnered with hackerearth.com to host a virtual hackathon to cultivate new, innovative solutions to keep citizens and businesses connected to their community. The theme of the hackathon is "Connecting our Community through Technology" and some of the early submissions have included a garbage and vandalism reporting platform, an app to link seniors to social activities during the pandemic and beyond, a Maple Ridge-focused interactive trail map and an online farmers market.

To date, over 500 participants have registered for the hackathon. For more information, visit [www.hackerearth.com/challenges/hackathon/connecting-our-community-with-technology/](http://www.hackerearth.com/challenges/hackathon/connecting-our-community-with-technology/).

## BUSINESS



### Maple Ridge selected as host for Digital Main Street's ShopHERE pilot program

The City of Maple Ridge, in partnership with the Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association and the Chamber of Commerce Serving Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, have been selected by Digital Main Street to host their ShopHERE program. This e-commerce training program is offered free of charge to local businesses who want to create their own online stores.

So far, 11 businesses in Maple Ridge have signed up for the ShopHERE pilot program. This is the first time this program has been offered to businesses in British Columbia. For more information on how to apply to this program, please contact Bruce Livingstone at [blivingstone@mapleridge.ca](mailto:blivingstone@mapleridge.ca).



### 2020 Q4 Vicinity Hiring Demand Report

Recently released labour market data shows British Columbia's hiring demand recovered through the summer with August reaching levels comparable to those from immediately before COVID-19 hit (January / February levels), and employment is stated to be back at pre-pandemic levels. In December 2020, BC was the only province to post positive job growth in Canada.

The most recent Vicinity Hiring Demand Report for Maple Ridge identified 646 positions advertised between October 1 and December 31,

2020. The majority (56.7%) were full-time positions with the top three occupational categories being "Sales and Services", "Trades, Transport and Equipment Operators, and Related Occupations", and "Business, Finance and Administration". Not unexpectedly, the hospitality, food and beverage services, and retail sectors showed slight declines in new job postings.



### **Request for Proposals (RFP) for new Economic Development Strategy ready**

The Economic Development Department has released an RFP seeking consultants to make recommendations for a new economic development strategy for the City of Maple Ridge. Major elements of this project include: a comprehensive situational analysis and review of the local economy; a review of strategic opportunities and considerations; and the development of an implementation plan including recommendations for investment attraction, business retention and expansion strategies, workforce development, and the development of a marketing communications plans identified 646 positions advertised between October 1 and December 31, 2020 .



### **Glow Maple Ridge Spreads Holiday Spirit**

Glow Maple Ridge wrapped up another successful season, bringing a much needed bit of holiday spirit to the community in a challenging environment. This year, Glow Maple Ridge was purposefully scaled back to comply with COVID-19 public health orders by limiting its marketing to local residents, increasing the distance between installations, and eliminating onsite live entertainment and food options. Despite these limitations, Glow Maple Ridge received overwhelmingly positive reviews on social media from the community and was regularly featured on Global TV news. We're looking forward to hosting an even bigger and better post-pandemic event next year.

## **TOURISM**

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### **Tourism Maple Ridge creates new programs and initiatives to help local tourism industry**

The Covid-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on the tourism and hospitality industry around the world. Tourism Maple Ridge is working with local tourism and hospitality businesses, non-profits and government agencies to help our local tourism operators adapt and survive in this challenging environment. Over the past year, Tourism Maple Ridge has worked with industry partners on easing local regulations, creating new marketing programs, and researching new and emerging trends in the tourism sector. Examples include the expedited patio permitting process, creating new Maple Ridge tourism videos and marketing programs such as the BC Ale Trail, and the highly successful Glow Maple Ridge event.



### **Pup Patio Pilot Project**

Dog-friendly restaurants are a growing trend in the hospitality business, as more and more businesses are allowing customers to bring their dogs to their establishments.

Tourism Maple Ridge has received government funding to run a pilot program this spring encouraging Maple Ridge residents to bring their dogs to outdoor patios at participating restaurants, cafes, breweries, coffee shops and other casual eateries.

For restaurants, having a dog-friendly patio can also attract a broader market of outdoor recreation enthusiasts who enjoy bringing their dog

along while walking in local parks, hiking trails, camping, fishing or boating at Alouette and want to include an end of the day dining experience. Industry research shows that pet related spending has remained strong throughout the pandemic. "Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic fallout, nearly half of Canadian dog or cat owners report that they are spending more on pet products than they used to, and another third report no change in spending levels. At the same time, the increasing role of technology in our lives, accelerated by the stay-at-home coronavirus pandemic period, has transformed pet product shopping patterns." (Canadian Pet Market Survey 2020)

Visit [www.mapleridge.ca/1908](http://www.mapleridge.ca/1908) for more information coming soon on the Pup Patio Pilot Project.

## FILM



### Film Industry Comes Roaring Back in Maple Ridge

After the pandemic shut down filming for the first half of 2020, the film industry came roaring back to life in the second half of the year. "Once the industry was able to safely re-start in July, filming in Maple Ridge just took off," says Marg Johnson, the City's Film Liaison. "In the final six months of the year 58 productions shot in Maple Ridge, and from what I'm already seeing, 2021 is going to be another super busy year." So far we've had 15 productions scouting locations for filming within the next few months, and five productions have started the application process, including feature films 'Movies of the Week' and TV series. The downtown core continues to be a very popular location, with many of our local businesses benefitting from the economic boost that film production brings into the community.

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