



Housing Action Plan

FINAL

AUGUST 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report represents the final stage of the development of a Housing Action Plan (HAP) for Maple Ridge. The earlier stages, a Situation Report and Consultation Summary Report, involved background research and community consultation that was intended to assess the local housing market conditions and identify housing challenges and gaps. This HAP report outlines a framework and set of strategies and actions that will guide decision-making related to market and non-market housing in the District of Maple Ridge.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN FRAMEWORK

The following framework outlines a vision, key principles, and goals upon which the Housing Action Plan strategies and actions correspond.

VISION STATEMENT

Access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing that meets the diverse and changing needs of the community is a priority.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. A community priority.
2. Achievable.
3. Incentive-driven.
4. Pragmatic and evidence-based.
5. Aligns with current policy and practice.
6. Housing issues are multi-faceted.
7. Partnerships are key.
8. Community support and understanding.
9. Responsive to change.
10. Relevant and effective.

GOALS

1. To improve housing choice for all current and future households.
2. To encourage the provision of affordable, rental, and special needs housing in Maple Ridge.
3. To increase the opportunity for low income residents and those with unique needs to access appropriate housing and supports.
4. To raise awareness and increase support for initiatives that improve housing choice and affordability.
5. To build the capacity of the community to innovate and improve access and opportunity for affordable housing and housing choice.

STRATEGIES

A set of specific actions have been recommended to assist the District with implementing the following strategies:

Housing Mix & Innovation

1. Support the development of a mix of housing forms.
2. Incentivize medium density development.
3. Introduce an adaptable housing policy.

Market & Non-Market Rental Housing

4. Create new rental housing opportunities.
5. Continue to monitor secondary suites policies and bylaws.
6. Expand the garden suites program.
7. Maintain rental housing standards.
8. Support the non-market housing sector.
9. Minimize the loss of existing rental housing.

Financial Measures

10. Expand the density bonusing practice.
11. Introduce a community amenity policy for affordable housing.
12. Establish a housing reserve fund.
13. Use financial incentives to support housing goals.
14. Continue to review opportunities to lease land.

Information & Advocacy

15. Continue to support local community groups.
16. Continue to advocate to senior levels of government.
17. Continue to educate and create awareness.
18. Expand or enhance the roles of advisory groups to assist with HAP implementation.

1 | INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

APPROACH & PURPOSE

The District of Maple Ridge engaged CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. to prepare a Housing Action Plan. A Housing Action Plan (HAP) assesses the local housing market conditions; identifies housing challenges and gaps along the housing continuum; and outlines tools to address these issues. A Housing Action Plan also provides the framework for the District of Maple Ridge to work with other levels of government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to facilitate the development of housing.

As the role of municipalities is to act as a facilitator, as opposed to a builder, it is further noted that a Housing Action Plan assists municipalities to develop the tools, policies, and regulations that allow them to effectively respond to development applications and to advocate to other levels of government towards the development of affordable, rental, and special needs housing. When endorsed, the HAP will guide decision-making related to market and non-market housing in the District of Maple Ridge.

Maple Ridge's Housing Action Plan consists of three major phases:

1. **THE SITUATION REPORT** – Assessing the housing context in Maple Ridge by identifying and analyzing key housing data and relevant information.
2. **CONSULTATION REPORT** – A series of workshops, a community questionnaire, and additional engagement approaches to identify gaps in the housing continuum and identify issues affecting specific population groups, such as seniors and young families.
3. **HOUSING ACTION PLAN REPORT (Current)** – In response to the issues and gaps identified in earlier stages, a set of policy directions, strategies, and actions are recommended for review and consideration by Council and the Community.

Figure 1.1 outlines the different phases of work in the Housing Action Plan and what stage the project is currently at.

FIGURE 1.1: Housing Action Plan Project Outline



FRAMEWORK FOR HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The following framework outlines the overall vision for the Housing Action Plan, as well as a set of principles and five overarching goals. On the basis of this framework, a proposed set of strategies and actions have been developed to respond to the issues and gaps identified by the background research and community consultation completed in earlier stages.

VISION STATEMENT

The following statement presents the District's vision and commitment towards housing in Maple Ridge:

"Access to safe, affordable, and appropriate housing that meets the diverse and changing needs of the community is a priority."

KEY PRINCIPLES

The Housing Action Plan will be guided by the following 10 principles:

1. A community priority. Housing choice and affordability are social sustainability goals to which the District is committed.
2. Achievable. Strategies and actions will be achievable and within the jurisdiction of the municipality to implement.
3. Incentive-driven. Financial and non-financial incentives are used to encourage innovative approaches and new forms of housing.
4. Pragmatic and evidence-based. Strategies and actions will be guided by local housing need as well as the market realities.
5. Dovetails with current policy and practice. Strategies and actions will build on and dovetail with existing plans, policies, initiatives, and resources.
6. Housing issues are multi-faceted. Multiple approaches and solutions are needed for every neighbourhood and project.
7. Partnerships are key. The District will collaborate with the private sector, senior government, its municipal neighbours, the region, and community agencies in the interests of improving housing choice and affordability.
8. Community support and understanding. Engagement with the community is a pre-requisite to new initiatives; it helps to inform and seek input.
9. Responsive to change. Ongoing research and review of changes in local needs and priorities is important.
10. Relevant and effective. Ongoing monitoring of the Housing Action Plan progress will ensure it continues to be relevant and effective.

GOALS

1. To improve housing choice for all current and future households.
2. To increase and enhance the stock of rental housing in Maple Ridge.
3. To support low income residents and those with unique needs to access appropriate housing and supports.
4. To raise awareness and increase support for initiatives that improve housing choice and affordability.
5. To build the capacity of the community to innovate and improve access and opportunity for affordable housing and housing choice.

KEY DEFINITIONS

In Canada, housing affordability usually refers to housing that does not exceed 30% to 35% of household income. While this is generally a good benchmark to use, the methods and data sources used to estimate the population living in affordable housing can often be challenged. For the purposes of Maple Ridge's Housing Action Plan, it is suggested that two broader definitions of housing be used to inform policy and planning.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING	Affordable housing is housing that is adequate in standard and does not cost so much that individuals and families have trouble paying for other necessities such as food, health, and transportation on an ongoing basis.
HOUSING CHOICE	Housing choice refers to a household's ability to have alternative housing options within their community in terms of the type of housing, location, number of bedrooms, or other factors to meet their current and changing needs as they age through the different stages of their lifecycle.

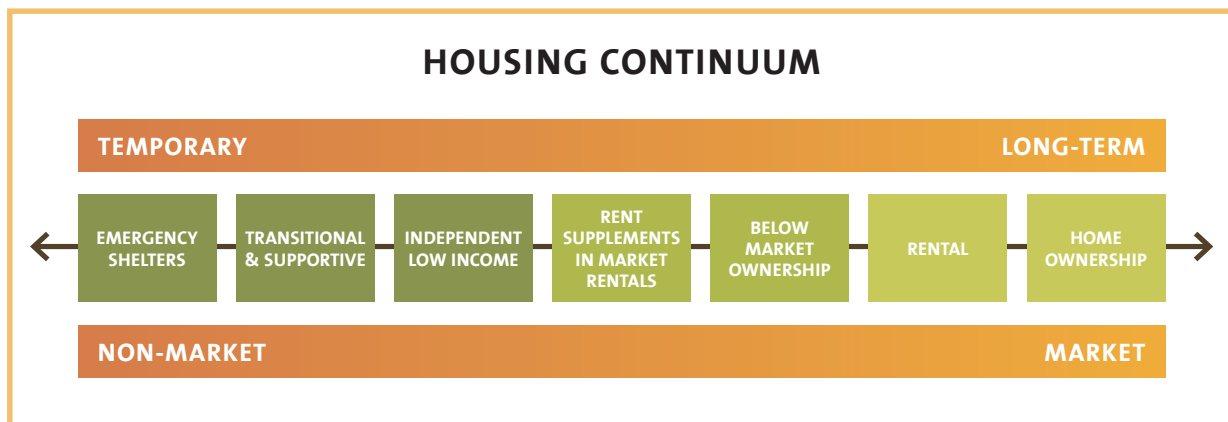
THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

The housing continuum is a visual concept used to describe and categorize different types of housing. On the non-market end of the continuum (the left) are emergency shelters and transitional or supportive housing, which represent a temporary and less stable housing form. These housing forms typically involve various levels of support services and often require the most public funding.

Towards the middle of the continuum is non-market housing for households that do not require support services, both in dedicated buildings or in the private market by way of rent supplements. Below-market ownership bridges between the non-market and market segments and is represented by different options that support low and moderate income households to get into the homeownership market.

Lastly, on the market end of the continuum (the right), are rental and ownership housing available through the private market. Implicitly, the continuum suggests that residents should have the opportunity to move across the housing continuum and find housing that is most appropriate and best suited to their needs and circumstances.

FIGURE 1.2: The Housing Continuum



Maple Ridge's Housing Action Plan will focus on all aspects of the Housing Continuum, with particular emphasis on market rental housing, non-market rental housing (including independent and supportive), and also ensuring there is a mix of housing options across the entire housing continuum.

2 | THE ROLE OF THE DISTRICT

The District of Maple Ridge has made great strides towards addressing issues of housing diversity and choice in the past two decades. The District has also worked with and supported other groups to respond to urgent housing challenges.

The Housing Action Plan provides a framework for future action in the area of housing, building on the policies, regulations, and other practices already implemented. While the District plays an important role in facilitating development and community change, it cannot immediately or independently address every housing need and issue. In order to successfully implement the HAP, there is an implicit assumption that other partners and groups will need to participate. This includes private market developers, non-profit housing providers, senior government, and other agencies. The HAP will also require a high level of awareness and support by Maple Ridge residents.

There are eight major categories of practice or implementation. Some of these areas, and the specific actions outlined in the HAP, will involve considerable time and resources on the part of the District, while others will require much less direct effort. The implementation plan (Section 5) will prioritize and take into consideration the complexity, level of effort, and resourcing requirements on the District. The specific steps involved with implementation, including policy language and resourcing, will be detailed at later stages and on an incremental basis. Figure 2.1 outlines the eight primary areas of implementation.

FIGURE 2.1: Eight Major Areas of Implementation

POLICY	Maintaining a clear and consistent policy that demonstrates a commitment towards affordable housing.
REGULATORY	Establishing a zoning regulation that encourages the development of affordable, rental, or special needs housing.
ADMINISTRATIVE	Applying priority processing of the approvals process to further the development of affordable housing.
FINANCIAL	Identifying funding that can be directed towards affordable housing.
PARTNERSHIPS	Facilitating the development of partnerships with private sector, non-profit agencies, and other institutions towards the creation of affordable housing.
ADVOCACY	Advocating to senior levels of government for additional funding, program support, financial incentives, and other matters that contribute to affordable housing at the local level.
INFORMATION	Staying informed; helping to raise awareness of available programs and resources; and improving the community's understanding of the benefits of affordable housing.
RESEARCH & MONITORING	Researching innovative approaches to affordable housing suitable for local implementation; monitoring and reporting on Housing Action Plan progress.

3 | RECAP OF ISSUES

This section summarizes the top housing issues and gaps as identified by the background research and consultation.

AFFORDABLE HOMEOWNERSHIP

Maple Ridge's housing stock is largely ground-oriented (84%) and predominantly owner-occupied (81%). Compared to other parts of the region, real estate prices are relatively affordable, with a 2012-benchmark price that was \$200,000 less than that of the region. Median incomes are also higher in Maple Ridge than the region as a whole.¹ However, there is a large discrepancy between what couple families earn and the incomes of lone parent families or single person households. For those earning less than the median income, there are fewer options available that are suitable and affordable.

For middle or higher income households, the shortfall is related to housing diversity and choice. Maple Ridge has limited options that are suitable for an aging population; for seniors who wish to downsize, for families who cannot afford to buy a single detached family home, or for those who wish to step up the ownership ladder.

Under homeownership, the primary gap is therefore related to housing diversity and choice. A focus on diversifying the product mix and increasing the supply of medium to high density forms is needed.

MARKET RENTAL HOUSING

The availability of rental housing, and the quality and condition of the existing stock, are two key priorities in Maple Ridge. These two aspects were ranked as high or moderate priority issues among a majority of questionnaire respondents. Consultation participants noted some rental buildings to be in poor condition, with concerns around safety and maintenance standards. In particular, the location, safety, and appropriateness of rental housing for children and seniors was reported. Lower income households, or households with special circumstances, were said to have the least choice in the rental market.

Suites that are within the primary residence or detached in a garden suite are a source of rental income for homeowners, increasing affordability and choice for purchasers and renters alike. Many participants commented on the need to support the development of legal secondary suites and garden suites.

Therefore, the priority issues for the District are the enforcement of safety standards and building conditions among the existing rental housing stock, including the purpose-built rental buildings and the secondary rental market. The other consideration is how to increase the supply of rental units in a variety of locations and forms to best respond to the continued and changing demand for rental housing.

¹ The median income for all families in Maple Ridge was \$83,600 in 2012 and \$26,700 for single person households. By comparison, Metro Vancouver families had a median income of \$70,300 and \$25,600 for single person households.

SENIORS HOUSING

In the coming decade, Maple Ridge's population will age considerably. By 2021, it is estimated there will be an additional 7,600 seniors over the age of 65. Meanwhile, the percentage of children and youth under 25 will decline during those years. To be responsive to these demographic shifts, future housing starts will need to include a range of seniors-friendly housing forms, including single-level apartments or townhouses; seniors-specific independent living buildings; as well as assisted living and residential care options.

Lower income seniors often have few housing options available, with reported waitlists and a mix of quality or standards in existing buildings. Finding housing that is affordable and appropriate to their needs has been reported to be a challenge. More moderate income seniors, and those who own their homes, face different limitations. Many are seeking access to services that allow them to age in place or units that are suitable for downsizing.

Another priority area is the shortage of seniors-specific support services that would assist seniors to maintain their housing and live independently; improve their access to information and resources; advocate to senior levels of government; and coordinate services across agencies.

NON-MARKET & SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

Questionnaire respondents ranked persons on fixed incomes and single parents as the two groups facing the greatest challenge with finding suitable and affordable housing in Maple Ridge. Some individuals and families were also reported to be in particular risk, living one pay cheque away from losing their housing. Similarly, population groups who have mental health issues, challenges with addiction, or other support service needs are often at high risk of homelessness. For these groups, finding rental housing that is stable, affordable, and appropriate is potentially a considerable challenge.

There is also concern about non-market housing developments that were built in the 1960s and 1970s that are facing expiring operating agreements. There is a concern that many of these units are at risk of building condition decline or the loss of these units to market housing.

Overall, the need for a range of non-market housing has been identified as a key priority. This may include facilitating access to rental units through the private market, by way of rent supplements and mobile support services where needed, or the acquisition and construction of new non-market housing units. In this regard, and in a limited funding context, the District's role as advocate, facilitator, and partner was repeatedly acknowledged by the community. Non-market housing and rental housing should be located in areas that are accessible to services and transit.

OTHER ISSUES

With 267 square kilometres in land area (66,000 acres), many Maple Ridge residents live in neighbourhoods that are not within walking distance to services or shopping. The costs of car ownership and use are therefore inextricably linked to housing affordability for many residents. Accessibility to transit, services and shopping was identified by consultation participants to be a high priority. Similarly, the availability of local employment options is a consideration, with many residents needing to travel to other communities for work. These issues have been noted, although they may not be addressed directly as part of the Housing Action Plan.

Working in partnership with the development community in a positive and collaborative environment will help to facilitate a broader mix of housing options in the community. This includes having an understanding of the market realities; the opportunities to exchange ideas; clear and consistent policy and regulations; and the availability of incentives.

4 | PROPOSED STRATEGIES

Chapter 3 - Neighbourhoods and Housing of the Official Community Plan (OCP) contains principles, objectives, and policies for residential land use in Maple Ridge. This framework articulates policies for land use and supply; infill and compatibility criteria; and support for the provision of affordable, rental, and special needs housing. The intent of the proposed strategies in this section is to build upon and further enhance this robust framework. For reference, Appendix A includes a summary of key housing policies from Maple Ridge's OCP.

This section summarizes a set of strategies and specific actions that respond to the goals of the Housing Action Plan. For each of the suggested strategies, a set of specific actions are described, as well as the implications on policy or practice at the District. Where relevant, examples of similar practices (how they were implemented, and what they achieved), are included for reference.

The list of proposed strategies have been organized into broad categories to simplify the review process. Please note that there are situations where a strategy and set of actions can be used in one or more categories, and that the proposed strategies are not presented in any particular order of priority.

HOUSING MIX & INNOVATION

STRATEGY #1: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MIX OF HOUSING FORMS

At the heart of any strategic effort to facilitate housing affordability, is a focus on increased housing diversity and choice. This is underscored in the District's Official Community Plan (OCP) under Principles 29 and 37, which outlines the importance of housing choice in meeting the needs of a diversifying community. Housing choice can present seniors with more opportunities to age in place, potentially increase the supply of rental market housing in the District, and facilitate more affordable homeownership.

As a key action towards achieving those Principles, the District also encourages sensitive infill and intensification in existing low and medium density neighbourhoods towards creating a broader mix of housing options, revitalizing older neighbourhoods, achieving high quality design, and enhancing laneways and streetscapes. The District has taken a lead in this area by introducing policies for Housing and Land Requirements (3-1), Neighbourhood Residential Infill (3-19) and Major Corridor Residential Infill (3-20). Such policies focus on a select variety of housing forms.

Municipalities throughout the region are exploring and addressing similar issues, drawing upon a variety of approaches, prototypes or housing forms. While the District has expressed an interest in exploring forms of a similar scale and massing as a single detached dwelling (front-back duplexes; triplexes, four-plexes, etc.), based on the success of other municipalities, it may wish to consider additional housing type such as: zero-lot line housing; courtyard, cottage, or pocket housing; modular or pre-fabricated homes; container housing; family-oriented condominium apartments; and stacked townhouses or other seniors-friendly products.

EXAMPLES FROM VANCOUVER AND SEATTLE

Container Housing	Cottage/Courtyard Housing	Pre-Fab/Modular Housing
		

Photo Credit: CitySpaces Consulting

Alternative forms of tenure and ownership are also increasing and the District can support or encourage the development sector to pursue these models. For example, fee simple rowhousing, life lease housing for seniors, co-housing, co-operative housing, and community land trusts.

Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Continue to encourage the development of a mix of housing forms by considering new zones or new permitted uses to existing zones; as well as subdivision regulations relating to the minimum lot size or configuration. This would facilitate a wider array of dwelling types throughout the District.
- ◆ Consider expanding the District's infill policies to include a wider range of housing types (e.g. courtyard housing) and this type of development could be most directly facilitated by the above-noted policy and regulatory initiatives for those areas.
- ◆ Establish design guidelines for new infill housing that help to maintain the character of existing neighbourhoods, while enabling flexibility and innovation in terms of siting, layout, and design.
- ◆ Continue to support medium to higher density housing and expand provisions in zones that are applied to transition areas, walkable centres, and in the Downtown core.
- ◆ Encourage the development of alternative ownership models such as fee simple row housing, life leases, community land trusts, or other forms of tenure arrangements.
- ◆ Investigate the opportunity to introduce secondary suites in duplexes.
- ◆ Prepare information guides that present examples of these housing types, while demonstrating their benefits.
- ◆ To further support the introduction of wider and innovative housing options, the District could put out a call for builders, developers and landowners interested in working on innovative housing pilot projects. The District could work with selected developers to facilitate such demonstration projects through expedited processing or other incentives. Such pilot initiatives would result in lessons learned for the District that would then be used to inform zoning bylaw amendments and further streamline the approval process for such projects.

EXAMPLE: COQUITLAM HOUSING CHOICES PROGRAM

The City of Coquitlam adopted the initial Housing Choices program in 2011. This was introduced to facilitate sensitive infill and intensification in low density neighbourhoods. Prior to adoption, a study was undertaken that involved the development of prototypes; financial analysis; community consultation; neighbourhood tours with staff and Council; zoning bylaw review; and the development of area plan policies, checklists, and design guidelines. The Housing Choices program was intended to facilitate new, innovative, small-scale, ground-oriented housing types that are added in low-density residential areas of Southwest Coquitlam. It includes carriage homes, garden cottages, narrow-lot one family, attached and detached triplexes and quadruplexes.



Credit: Prototypes (above) prepared by Ramsay Worden Architects for City of Coquitlam

STRATEGY #2: INCENTIVIZE MEDIUM DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

While this strategy is consistent with current District policy (OCP 3.20 and 3.27) as well as the objectives of the Town Centre Area Plan, there is an opportunity to further respond to several housing goals by supporting the development of apartments and multi-unit housing in transit-accessible areas and areas with a core of services and amenities such as in the Town Centre. This involves drawing upon the already successful Town Centre Investment Incentive Program. In this context, and given the background research of the HAP which identified a particular need for rental housing, housing options for older residents to downsize into, as well as the demographic projections that support the need for more apartments and single-level units suitable for an aging population, recommended actions include:

- ◆ Consider re-introducing elements of the Town Centre Investment Incentive Program to specifically target apartment construction in selected areas of the District. This may include density bonusing, parking relaxations, fast-tracking approvals, and other aspects.
- ◆ Work with the local development community to identify the medium-to-high density product mix that would be in highest demand by future investors and owner-occupiers.

STRATEGY #3: INTRODUCE AN ADAPTABLE HOUSING POLICY

In 2009, the Province of BC approved new adaptable housing standards as part of the BC Building Code. Adaptable housing includes accessibility, design and construction features that can be modified over time with minimal cost to accommodate individuals who develop mobility limitations. Including these features at the design stage is inexpensive and reduces the cost of renovation at a future time. These features may include basic accessibility characteristics such as: wider doorways and corridors; features to support future installation of grab bars in bathrooms; wiring for visual alarms; continuous counter tops; and accessible positioning of electrical outlets and switches. Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Consult with the development industry and other key stakeholders on the elements for an adaptable housing policy.
- ◆ Prepare a policy that encourages or requires developers to provide a percentage of units in new subdivisions or multi-family developments as adaptable units (e.g. 10% or 15%).
- ◆ Support the policy with incentives such as density bonusing, parking relaxations, or permit fee reductions.
- ◆ Promote adaptable design standards that are consistent with the provincial standards for adaptable housing.
- ◆ Prepare fact sheets that outline benefits, options, and considerations regarding the development of adaptable housing.

EXAMPLES: TOWNSHIP OF LANGLEY ADAPTABLE HOUSING POLICY

The Township of Langley approved a policy in 2010, implemented in the Yorkson Neighbourhood Plan and Willoughby Community Plan, that provides adaptable housing guidelines for new developments. If developers choose to build to the “planned” densities in the new neighbourhood plans, as opposed to the current zoning densities, then the need for basic adaptable housing requirements is triggered. At the time of rezoning, the Township would thereby require a minimum of 5% of single family and townhouse units and 10% of apartment units in any development to meet the standards of the adaptable housing requirements.

In 2014, this policy had resulted in 106 completed units (39 single detached, 18 apartments, and 49 townhouses). An additional 34 townhouses were under construction. The adaptable homes have been noted to be very marketable.



MARKET & NON-MARKET RENTAL HOUSING

STRATEGY #4: CREATE NEW RENTAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

Municipalities can support the development of new rental housing through a set of incentives, such as a reduction in parking requirements or waiving permitting fees. The units could be “secured” as market rental housing, with a covenant on title. Another type of rental housing that may warrant consideration is a secondary suite in a duplex, which would increase the stock of rental units as well as improve affordability for homeowners.² Lastly, investor-owned condominiums help to contribute to the secondary rental market, but are often limited over time by rental restrictions introduced by strata councils. As a result of changes to the Strata Act in 2009, developers have the opportunity to prohibit or limit rental restrictions.

Specific recommended actions include:

- ◆ Facilitate the development of new rental units above commercial developments or as other forms of secured market rental housing. The widening of the District’s residential-over-commercial zoning regulations to more zones, especially for zones that apply to areas of density transition, along with the use of density bonusing, reduction in permit fees, or parking relaxations can be used to encourage this type of investment. The units can be restricted for the purposes of market rental use by way of a housing agreement and covenant on title.
- ◆ Ensure developers are aware of rental disclosure statement provisions under the Strata Property Act that prevents future owners from restricting strata units from being rented.
- ◆ Investigate the opportunity to introduce suites in duplexes.
- ◆ Review the definitions and regulations associated with shared living arrangements, such as home-sharing, boarding use, and others; and consider their relevance in the Maple Ridge context. Future amendments to local policies and bylaws may be considered if relevant.

² Additional suites in residential buildings can be created if they conform to the suite provisions of the Building Code and local bylaws. BC Information Bulletin. March 19, 2013. Suites and Secondary Suites. Building and Safety Standards Branch. No.B13-02.

EXAMPLES: NEW WESTMINSTER SECURED MARKET RENTAL HOUSING POLICY

New Westminster's Secured Market Rental Housing Policy seeks to increase the supply of rental housing in order to address the shortage of rental housing and ongoing affordability pressures. New Westminster's policy includes a number of financial incentives and bylaw relaxations that are targeted towards the retention and renewal of the existing stock and the creation of new rental housing. A guiding principle for the policy is that the most generous incentives and bylaw relaxations are reserved for proposals with a higher degree of rental housing security of tenure. For example, rental housing that is secured for 60 years or the life of the building versus housing secured for 30 to 59 years or short term rental that is secured for a minimum of 10 years. The incentives include:

- ◆ Relaxation of parking requirements
- ◆ Density bonus without paying for the additional density
- ◆ 50% reduction in building permit fees
- ◆ Relaxations to the City's servicing requirements
- ◆ Concurrent processing of rezoning and development permit applications
- ◆ Payment of legal fees for the preparation of housing agreements and related documents



Photo Credit: City of New Westminster

STRATEGY #5: CONTINUE TO MONITOR SECONDARY SUITES POLICIES & BYLAWS

Secondary suites have been allowed in the District since 1999 and, according to the consultation with local developers, there continues to be a strong market for houses with suites throughout the District. A number of suggestions are made to further enhance secondary suites policies and process. In fact, a recent review of secondary suites by District staff has resulted in a number of recommendations, several of which are noted here as they directly support the goals of the HAP. Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Work with the community to identify the reasons for low take-up of registered secondary suites and introduce bylaw amendments to encourage registration.
- ◆ Consider monitoring the requirement for owner-occupancy for homes with secondary suites.
- ◆ Consider the introduction of additional utility charges to all houses with unauthorized suites and a reduced charge or no charge for authorized suites. Owners for homes without active suites would need to submit a declaration or use other means to confirm the suite is not rented.
- ◆ Prepare a policy that outlines alternative health and safety standards for secondary suites in structures built before 2004. By identifying equivalencies to the Building Code, the District would reduce the difficulty associated with retrofitting suites into older structures.
- ◆ Encourage all newly constructed single detached homes, in zoning districts where suites are permitted, to be built as “suite ready”. This means that fire separation requirements, as well as rough-ins for the basement plumbing and electrical systems, would be included in the structure and notation made to this effect in the final occupancy permit.

EXAMPLE: WEST VANCOUVER SECONDARY SUITES PROGRAM

Under West Vancouver’s Secondary Suites Program, in effect since 2010, property owners are able to legalize an existing suite or construct a new suite. A secondary suite is a separate residential unit within a house, with a maximum size that is less than 968 sq.ft. (90 sq.m.) or 40% of the floor area of the house. In 2011, the program was expanded to allow suites in non-owner occupied homes and the District encouraged registration by not charging permit fees for a short period of time. As of 2012, 724 suites had been approved. While legalization of existing suites does not increase the rental housing supply, the legalization process provides assurance of quality and safety of these units.



Photo Credit: CitySpaces Consulting Ltd.

STRATEGY #6: EXPAND THE GARDEN SUITES PROGRAM

The District of Maple Ridge was one of the first municipalities to introduce a policy on garden suites, also known as coach houses, carriage homes, or laneway housing (when located adjacent to a lane). An increasing number of municipalities, such as Coquitlam, West Vancouver, Vancouver, North Vancouver, Port Moody, and Surrey, have garden suites policies with varied levels of success and take up. Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Identify barriers to implementation of garden suites and revisit the policy and bylaws to encourage the development of new garden suites.
- ◆ Expand the garden suites program to permit suites above garages.

EXAMPLES FROM WEST VANCOUVER AND VANCOUVER



Photo Credit: CitySpaces Consulting Ltd.

STRATEGY #7: MAINTAIN RENTAL HOUSING STANDARDS

Many municipalities have adopted measures that seek to maintain basic standards of health, safety, and well-being in rental buildings and secondary suites. The District, for example, adopted a standard of maintenance bylaw in 2008 that requires owners to maintain their rental premises according to a set of basic standards. Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Review the bylaw enforcement practices of the District with respect to rental housing and ensure they are effective and practical.
- ◆ Continue to use standards of maintenance regulations to facilitate basic repairs and urge upgrading, and if necessary closure, of blatantly substandard premises.
- ◆ In the case of secondary suites, require owners to purchase an annual license for each residential unit that is rented. This recommendation was also made as part of the 2013 comprehensive review of policies and bylaws related to secondary suites.
- ◆ Support the RCMP in the implementation of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program in Maple Ridge and actively encourage property managers to participate in the program.

STRATEGY #8: MINIMIZE THE LOSS OF EXISTING RENTAL HOUSING

There is concern regarding the potential loss of units in the existing rental stock. This includes units in older buildings that have historically been rented to lower income households at relatively affordable rents and also homes located in manufactured home parks in the District. In both cases, the potential redevelopment or conversion of such units could displace tenants, reduce the supply of affordable rental units, and, in some cases, result in the loss of a supportive community environment. The District currently has a number of policies in place that support and protect rental housing. The recommended actions, therefore, include:

- ◆ Review the District's Modular Home Park Redevelopment Tenant Assistance Policy and identify opportunities to further strengthen the policy as needed.
- ◆ Continue to limit the demolition or strata conversion of existing rental units and identify opportunities to further strengthen this policy as needed.

STRATEGY #9: SUPPORT THE NON-MARKET HOUSING SECTOR

There are limited funding options for capital construction or acquisition of units for non-market housing. Non-market housing providers increasingly have to identify capital funding from a variety of sources as well as identifying ways to increase revenues through mixed projects. The municipality can support the non-market housing sector and help to build its capacity to deliver affordable housing.

Many of the recent successful development projects have involved partnerships between several different agencies. The municipality itself can act as a key partner by providing land, discounted lease rates, permit fee reductions, or other incentives. In addition, the private sector can act as a major player that contributes a number of discounted units or cash towards the development of non-market housing. Similarly, other agencies can contribute by providing health and support services. The municipality can play an additional effective role by bringing together and/or supporting organizations in forming partnerships that lead to the creation of new affordable and non-market housing. Recommended actions include:

- ◆ Work with non-profit organizations seeking acquisition and renovation or redevelopment of their land and building assets that would lead to the addition of new affordable housing. The District can help identify creative solutions and support them with the design, planning, and approval process.
- ◆ Identify a staff person to support and help to expedite the processing of applications for rental, non-market, or seniors housing.
- ◆ Expand the District policy on special needs or supportive housing to allow this type of use to be distributed in all neighbourhoods and amend the zoning bylaws to permit this use in the majority of zoning districts.
- ◆ Encourage private market and non-profit partnerships that result in non-market units being built on- or off-site. This may involve connecting non-profit organizations with private sector developers that would be amenable to the addition of non-market units as part of a density bonus arrangement.
- ◆ Work with Fraser Health, BC Housing, or other government institutions to address the shortage of seniors housing, supportive housing, or other services for at-risk population groups, such as a hospital discharge program or transitional housing for at-risk youth.
- ◆ Expand the permissive property tax exemptions to non-market housing providers.

FINANCIAL MEASURES

The District has taken initiative in the area of housing, investigating and implementing various practices that address housing choice, affordability, and housing for special needs groups. The following strategies and actions propose new ideas, offer additional validation of current policy, or suggest adjustments to existing practices that would further the goals of the Housing Action Plan.

STRATEGY #10: EXPAND THE DENSITY BONUSING PRACTICE

In BC, through Section 904 of the *Local Government Act* municipalities have the authority to establish a stepped series of density options, as well as the conditions required of an applicant in order to achieve the various levels of density. These can include requiring an in-kind, cash, or other types of amenity contributions valued by the community. It is important to recognize that each project's potential for an amenity contribution will vary depending on the scale of the project, the characteristics of the site, and the current market context. The District of Maple Ridge recently completed amendments to its Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw to facilitate a density bonus scheme in the Albion Area Plan. Specific actions include:

- ◆ Support the development of various types of housing, such as rental housing, non-market housing, seniors housing, or innovative housing forms, through a widening of the District's existing density bonusing policy language to identify preferred areas where such products and housing types would be desirable.
- ◆ Revise the appropriate zoning districts with a density bonusing scheme and estimate the potential amenity contribution value that is equivalent to the steps of density set out density bonus regulations.

STRATEGY #11: INTRODUCE A COMMUNITY AMENITY POLICY FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In the earlier noted Albion Area Plan context, affordable housing was not identified as a possible community amenity.³ Many municipalities identify affordable housing as a community amenity alongside other benefits, such as parks, community centres, public art, or other features, structures, and assets. Recommended actions would include:

- ◆ Consider amending the District's Official Community Plan, and potentially other Area Plans, to insert clear policy language that identifies the range of amenities, including affordable housing, that are should be targeted through amenity zoning.

³ Section 904 of the Local Government Act empowers municipalities to identify areas in their zoning bylaw, where increased density would be allowed if certain conditions and/or amenities for a community are provided. Affordable and special needs housing may be included as one of these conditions or amenities.

STRATEGY #12: ESTABLISH A HOUSING RESERVE FUND

A housing reserve fund is an account set up by the municipality to receive funds that are then spent on the delivery of affordable housing, providing capital to acquire land or fund the construction of affordable housing projects, or to contribute to grants to enable local non-profit agencies to facilitate the provision of affordable housing. Funds can come from any sources that the municipality identifies, including property taxes or a community amenity program. A Housing Reserve Fund can be used to leverage or support opportunities to create affordable housing that help to achieve the District's housing goals. Once a housing fund is large enough to be able to make grants, municipalities typically set up an application process for providers to be able to apply for a grant. The recommended actions are:

- ◆ Establish a Housing Reserve Fund to assist with the development of non-market housing for special needs groups or other housing priorities.
- ◆ Once the fund is well established, the District could establish a process to determine eligibility criteria, review applications, and provide grants.

EXAMPLE: COQUITLAM RESERVE FUND

Coquitlam's Affordable Housing Reserve Fund was a key strategic action in the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, which was originally adopted in 2007. The Fund, which has now reached \$1.7 million, could be used to support the development of new affordable housing by acquiring and leasing land; reducing development fees and charges; or other types of financial support. Contributions to the fund have come primarily from cash-in-lieu contributions from major developments. No allocations have been made yet from this fund.

STRATEGY #13: USE FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO SUPPORT HOUSING GOALS

There are a number of additional financial tools that can be implemented by municipalities to help reduce the capital or ongoing operating costs associated with residential development. The District may wish to consider the development or refinement of such a basket of financial tools that can be selectively used to support housing projects. It is suggested that the package of incentives that is provided reflect the level of contribution to the District's housing goals that is being proposed by the development. The following financial tools are presented for consideration.

WAIVING OR REDUCING FEES

Waiving or reducing fees related to permits and approvals is a common tool for supporting affordable housing projects. The District may wish to support developers, market or non-market, who build affordable housing through reductions in the costs associated with fees and permits. The following approach is suggested:

- ◆ Undertake a review of all current fees and costs associated with development permits and approvals, and identify a list of possible fee reductions where a project supports the District's housing goals.
- ◆ Prepare a policy that identifies different tiers of cost savings, depending on the extent of the contribution towards affordability or other housing goals. For example, when a project contributes 10% of total units or cash equivalent towards affordable housing it would receive one level of fee reductions versus when it contributes 20% of total units or cash equivalent when it would receive a more substantial cost reduction. This may be most effective when combined with a density bonus policy as well.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

Municipalities can also assist with long-term financial assistance approaches such as property tax exemptions or reductions for eligible projects for a period of time. For three years, the District implemented a Town Centre Investment Incentive Program that used property tax exemptions as one of a host of benefits to facilitate private sector investment in the town centre. There is an opportunity to apply tax exemptions to non-profit organizations that provide services seen to contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

- ◆ Consider offering municipal property tax exemptions for a fixed period of time, and as part of a package of incentives. Given the reliance on property taxes as a revenue source, this particular tool should be resigned to those projects that offer the most generous affordable housing contributions.
- ◆ Consider expanding the practice of offering permissive tax exemptions to non-profit housing providers and other related service providers such as emergency shelters, safe houses, or transition homes for women and children fleeing violence.

PRIORITY PROCESSING

- ◆ Fast track development applications that help to achieve the District's housing goals. This may involve assigning a staff person to shepherd selected projects through the review and approval process as well as expediting the application.

RELAXATION OF PARKING REQUIREMENTS

The reduction in parking requirements is often a considerable financial incentive for new developments. This approach should be restricted to those areas where transit and services are more readily accessible. Maple Ridge's Town Centre Area Plan include policies that may support reduced residential parking requirements in frequent transit development areas and as a means to facilitate affordable housing. The following action is recommended:

- ◆ The District may consider reductions in parking requirements in the Downtown or other areas near transit and services as part of a package of incentives to encourage the inclusion of affordable, rental housing, or other innovative housing forms that meet the District's housing goals.

STRATEGY #14: CONTINUE TO REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES TO LEASE LAND

The District has a history of land banking and continues to lease the properties it owns to various agencies, including youth and family emergency housing and supportive housing for people with mental health issues. The District could continue to identify opportunities to purchase land that can be used to support housing projects. The land could be given as a gift or leased at a discount to non-profit housing providers. The following actions are recommended:

- ◆ Continue to review opportunities for strategic land banking and the acquisition of property for housing purposes.
- ◆ Continue to lease District property to non-profits that provide emergency services, community services, or non-market housing.

EXAMPLE: ALOUETTE HEIGHTS IN MAPLE RIDGE

The Alouette Heights supportive housing project was completed in 2012 in Maple Ridge. The 46-unit development, which is operated by the Alouette Home Start Society, was constructed on land that is leased from the District, with capital and operating funds from BC Housing. The development provides affordable housing and support services to individuals who are from Maple Ridge or those with connections to the community.



Photos Credit: CitySpaces Consulting Ltd.

INFORMATION AND ADVOCACY

Information, outreach, and advocacy are often undervalued, but highly effective areas of practice. By making information available, a municipality can help to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing; encourage other levels of government to increase their support levels or change legislation; and ensure tenants, landlords, builders, and residents are aware of the resources and opportunities that are available and their rights and responsibilities towards achieving livable communities.

STRATEGY #15: CONTINUE TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS

The District's Social Planning Advisory Committee continues to work on housing and homelessness. It includes senior staff and Council representation and continues to provide direction in the area of housing priorities. In addition, the District participates in regional housing and planning advisory committees. Recommend actions are:

- ◆ Continue to participate in local, regional, and provincial housing tables and initiatives.
- ◆ Continue to develop community-based strategies for responding to homelessness and the needs of at-risk populations.

STRATEGY #16: ADVOCATE TO SENIOR GOVERNMENT

The District can work in partnership with community networks to raise awareness about critical issues that impact housing choice and affordability. Recommended actions to include:

- ◆ Use municipal networks and opportunities to continue to advocate to senior government for changes to funding, legislation, and taxation improvements.
 - ◆ Advocate through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other groups for changes to taxation and the introduction of incentives to support the development of market and non-market rental housing.
 - ◆ Seek increased funding for non-market housing, rent supplements, and related programs that facilitate access to housing for low-income households.
 - ◆ Seek increased funding for support services for at-risk seniors and other special needs groups.

STRATEGY #17: MAKE INFORMATION AVAILABLE

The municipality can communicate housing and related information through its website, information sheets, through mail-outs, and at local events.

- ◆ Use the District website to provide housing information and to promote community resources, government programs, and other initiatives. For example, rental assistance programs (Shelter Assistance for Elderly Renters and Rental Assistance Program for families) or home renovation funds for persons with disabilities (Home Adaptation For Independence program).
- ◆ Prepare a guide or partner with others to prepare a guide for landlords and tenants regarding their rights and responsibilities, including information regarding basic standards of maintenance as well as fire, health and safety requirements.
- ◆ Prepare information sheets on innovative housing forms, alternative ownership models, and other practices to help showcase and encourage innovative approaches.

STRATEGY #18: ESTABLISH LOCAL ADVISORY GROUPS

The Social Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) advises Council on social planning issues, including housing, in the District. Two additional committees are suggested to help provide advisory services to the District throughout the various stages of HAP implementation. The following actions are recommended:

- ◆ Establish a local builders and developers advisory group to provide input and insight on new policy and regulatory changes and suggest solutions for regulatory roadblocks. It is suggested that the Development Advisory Committee have senior planning staff person at the table.
- ◆ Establish an affordable housing committee to establish eligibility criteria, application process details, and review applications for grant funding from a future housing reserve fund.

SUMMARY OF TOOLS & ACTIONS

The following table summarizes the role of the District in relation to each of the strategies and the implications on policy, regulation, and other action areas.

FIGURE 4.1: Summary of Strategies and Actions

ACTIONS	POLICY & PLANNING	REGULATORY & ADMINISTRATIVE	FINANCIAL MEASURES	PARTNERSHIPS	INFORMATION & ADVOCACY
1. Support development of a mix of housing forms	✓	✓	✓		✓
2. Incentivize medium density development	✓	✓	✓		
3. Introduce an adaptable housing policy	✓	✓	✓		✓
4. Create new rental housing opportunities	✓	✓	✓		✓
5. Continue to update secondary suites policies	✓	✓	✓		✓
6. Expand the garden suites program	✓	✓			
7. Maintain rental housing standards	✓	✓			✓
8. Minimize the loss of existing rental housing	✓				
9. Support the non-market housing sector	✓	✓		✓	✓
10. Develop a density bonusing approach	✓	✓	✓		
11. Introduce a community amenity policy	✓				
12. Establish a housing reserve fund	✓		✓		
13. Use financial incentives to support housing goals	✓	✓	✓		
14. Continue to review opportunities to lease land			✓		
15. Continue to support local community groups				✓	✓
16. Advocate to senior government					✓
17. Make information available					✓
18. Establish local advisory groups					✓

5 | IMPLEMENTATION

The draft Housing Action Plan is the outcome of community consultation, background research and analysis, as well as research into the policy and practice of benchmark communities. The draft HAP outlines five main goals, 18 strategies, and over 50 specific action items. The detailed steps associated with implementation will be finalized by District staff with direction from Council. A high level implementation approach and timeline is suggested here.

PROGRESS UPDATES

It is suggested that an annual report to Council be prepared which outlines achievements to date and progress on the actions associated with the HAP. As the data comes available, progress reports should also provide updates on a set of key housing indicators.

ACTIONABLE TIMELINE

A general timeline is proposed for implementing the HAP. This takes into consideration the complexity of various action items as well as the limited staff or financial resources that are available. The following table sets out recommended time frames for the implementation of the 18 strategies. Short term priorities, considered immediate items, are either urgent or relatively simple to achieve within the coming one or two years. Medium term items will be prioritized in the coming three to five years, while longer terms items will be the focus in the 6 to 8 year time frame. Within each of these strategies, there will be elements that are prioritized in the short, medium, or long terms. These details will be determined by the District over time.

Figure 5.1 Suggested Timeline

Strategies	SHORT TERM 1-2 years	MEDIUM TERM 3-5 years	LONG TERM 6-8 years
1. Support development of a mix of housing forms	✓		
2. Incentivize medium density development			✓
3. Introduce an adaptable housing policy	✓		
4. Create new rental housing opportunities	✓		
5. Continue to update secondary suites policies + bylaws	✓		
6. Expand the garden suites program	✓		
7. Maintain rental housing standards	✓		
8. Minimize the loss of existing rental housing	✓		
9. Support the non-market housing sector		✓	✓
10. Develop a density bonusing approach		✓	

Strategies	SHORT TERM 1-2 years	MEDIUM TERM 3-5 years	LONG TERM 6-8 years
11. Introduce a community amenity policy	✓		
12. Establish a housing reserve fund	✓		
13. Use financial incentives to support housing goals		✓	✓
14. Continue to review opportunities to lease land		✓	✓
15. Continue to support local community groups	✓	✓	
16. Advocate to senior government	✓	✓	✓
17. Make information available	✓		
18. Establish local advisory groups	✓		

APPENDIX A

Summary of Selected Housing Policies - Maple Ridge Official Community Plan

3-1	<p>Maple Ridge will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) designate an adequate supply of residential land to accommodate future residents; b) accommodate growth through infill by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Promoting a mix of housing types and tenures to support diverse needs (e.g. income and abilities) lifestyles (e.g. age and values), and preferences. Examples include housing for older residents; housing for persons with disabilities; rental and ownership housing; new homeowners and empty nester housing; and ecologically sensitive design; and</i> ii. <i>Developing other strategies as appropriate for meeting the future housing needs of residents.</i>
3-5	<p>Maple Ridge will support Healthy Community Land Use Strategies and community wellness principles by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) recognizing the link between the provision of a range of housing options and social sustainability; b) promoting affordable housing developments that incorporate access to services through interconnecting roadways, bicycle paths, and pedestrian links; c) promoting activities that contribute to the needs, health, development, and well-being of individuals within the community, as well as the overall community; d) encouraging the provision of an appropriate scale of services at the neighbourhood level; e) promoting diverse, safe and secure neighbourhoods that facilitates neighbourly support, resulting in a healthier, more resilient community; f) encouraging public spaces that offer opportunities for community interaction; and g) promoting affordable housing developments that meet diverse housing needs.
3-8	<p>Maple Ridge will continue to support garden suites as a form of infill in Rural Residential areas. See Zoning Bylaw for more details</p>
3-12	<p>Maple Ridge will continue to support garden suites as a form of infill in Suburban Residential areas. See Zoning Bylaw for more details</p>
3-17	<p>Maple Ridge will continue to support garden suites as a form of infill in Estate Suburban Residential areas. See Zoning Bylaw for more details</p>

3-18	<p>Maple Ridge will support a range of densities within the Urban Area Boundary. Urban Residential consists of two residential categories with the following characteristics:</p> <p>1) Neighbourhood Residential – General Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A maximum of one principal dwelling unit per lot and an additional dwelling unit such as a secondary suite or garden suite; b) Density that is based on the current zoning of the property, or surrounding neighbourhood context; c) Single detached dwellings will remain the predominant housing form within neighbourhoods. Other housing forms are possible, subject to compliance with the Neighbourhood Residential Infill policies; d) Is not within a neighbourhood with an Area Plan, a Community Commercial Node, or located on a Major Corridor as illustrated on Figure 4. <p>2) Major Corridor Residential – General Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Major Corridor Residential is characterized by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Has frontage on an existing Major Road Corridor as identified on Figure 4 Proposed Major Corridor Network Plan, or has frontage on a road built in whole or part to a collector, arterial, TransLink Major Road, or Provincial Highway standard;</i> ii. <i>May be adjacent to Community Commercial Node, or designated commercial centre.</i> b) Includes ground oriented housing forms such as single detached dwellings, garden suites, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, apartments, or small lot intensive residential, subject to compliance with Major Corridor Residential Infill policies.
3-19	<p>Neighbourhood Residential Infill is permitted subject to compliance with the following criteria:</p> <p>1) Infill development on a property that is larger than the prevailing lot size of the surrounding neighbourhood or existing zoning of the lot may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A possible change in lot size and configuration providing that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>The proposed lot area and widths should be not less than 80% of the lot area and width prescribed under the predominate or adjacent zoning in the surrounding neighbourhood;</i> ii. <i>The proposed lot configuration is similar to the prevailing lot pattern that exists within the neighbourhood; and</i> iii. <i>The proposed housing form is consistent in scale and massing to that of the surrounding neighbourhood.</i> b) A change in unit type - unit types such as single detached dwellings, secondary suites, garden suites, duplexes and triplexes that resemble a single detached dwelling, with an emphasis on orientation to the street. <p>2) Neighbourhood Residential infill must be designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood and will be evaluated against Policy 3-21.</p>
3-20	<p>Major Corridor Residential Infill developments must be designed to be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood and will be evaluated against the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Building forms such as single detached dwellings, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, apartments, and small lot intensive residential developments subject to Policy 3-21; b) A maximum height of two and one-half storeys with an emphasis on ground oriented units for all developments except for apartments; c) A maximum height of four storeys for apartments; and d) Adherence to Development Permit Guidelines for multi-family and intensive residential developments as outlined in Chapter 8 of the Official Community Plan.

3-27	Maple Ridge will regularly update its affordable housing strategy to identify specific targets, objectives, opportunities and municipal incentives for affordable, rental, and special needs housing. The affordable housing strategy will be initiated at the discretion of Council and in consultation with the Social Planning Advisory Committee.
3-28	Maple Ridge will encourage partnerships with government and non-government agencies to support the creation of affordable, rental and special needs housing in the community.
3-29	Maple Ridge recognizes that secondary suites and other detached dwelling units in residential neighbourhoods can provide affordable and/or rental housing in the community. Maple Ridge is committed to ensuring that bylaws and regulations are current, and responsive to community issues and needs
3-30	Maple Ridge will consider density bonus as a means of encouraging the provision of affordable, rental and special needs housing, and amenities
3-31	Maple Ridge supports the provision of rental accommodation and encourages the construction of rental units that vary in size and number of bedrooms. Maple Ridge may also limit the demolition or strata conversion of existing rental units, unless District-wide vacancy rates are within a healthy range as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
3-32	Maple Ridge supports the provision of affordable, rental and special needs housing throughout the District. Where appropriate, the provision of affordable, rental, and special needs housing will be a component of area plans.
3-33	Maple Ridge will encourage housing that incorporates “age-in-place” concepts and seniors housing designed to accommodate special needs

APPENDIX B

BENCHMARK MUNICIPALITIES - Overview of Housing Policies & Initiatives

POLICY / PRACTICE	MAPLE RIDGE	PITT MEADOWS	SURREY	COQUITLAM	LANGLEY TOWNSHIP	ABBOTSFORD
POLICY						
Housing Action Plan or equivalent	✓	✓	Pending	✓	✓	✓
OCP Policies to create a mix of housing types	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
REGULATORY						
Zoning to increased density for rental or affordable housing		✓				
Zoning to facilitate infill and intensification	✓	✓		✓		
Secured market rental practices, e.g. above commercial	✓	✓				
Adaptable housing requirements		✓	✓	Negotiated	✓	✓
Secondary suites - modified standards		✓		✓		
Suites in non-owner occupied housing						
Garden suites policy				✓		
Rental housing standards/enforcement		✓		✓		
ADMINISTRATIVE						
Providing approval assistance				✓		
Expedited approvals				✓		

POLICY / PRACTICE	MAPLE RIDGE	PITT MEADOWS	SURREY	COQUITLAM	LANGLEY TOWNSHIP	ABBOTSFORD
FINANCIAL MEASURES						
Housing reserve fund		✓	✓	✓		
Density bonus policy			✓	✓	✓	
Affordable housing as a community amenity		✓		✓		
Waiving or reducing fees		✓	✓	✓		
Parking relaxations		✓	✓	✓		
Property tax exemptions	✓	✓				
Land banking/leasing municipal land			✓	✓		
Grants	✓				✓	
INFORMATION & ADVOCACY						
Affordable housing committee or similar	✓			✓		
Development/builders advisory group						
Information guides and how-tos, etc.				✓		
Regular monitoring and reporting		✓		✓		