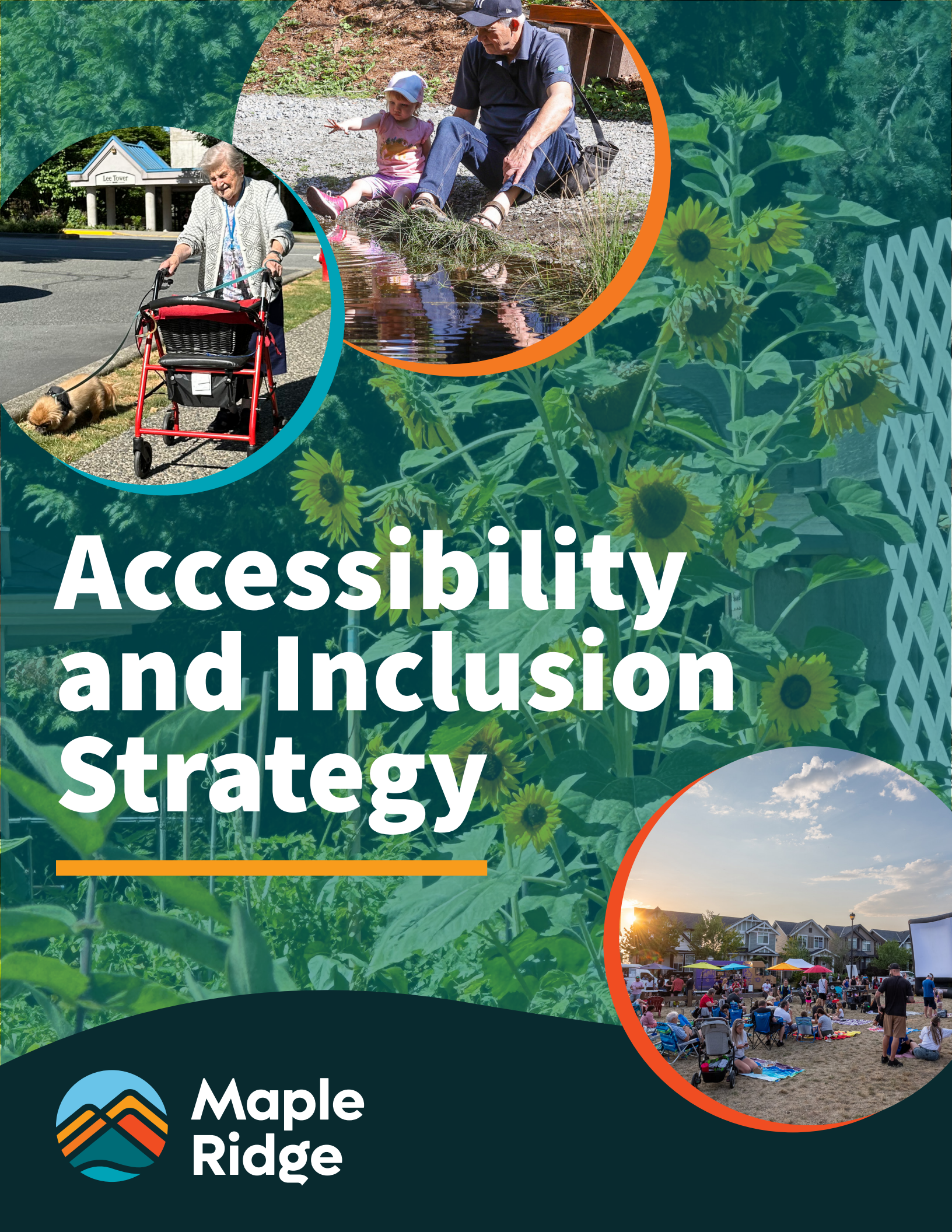




Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy



**Maple
Ridge**

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***The City of Maple Ridge respectfully acknowledges
that we are on the traditional territories of the Katzie
(q̓ícəy̓) and Kwantlen (q'w̓a:ḥ̓λ'əḥ̓) First Nations.***

Executive summary

In line and with direction from the Accessible British Columbia Act (provincial legislation passed in June 2021), the City of Maple Ridge and the Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness facilitated a yearlong engagement process, inviting feedback from residents regarding the City's accessibility. The findings served as a guide to identify decisions, policies and planning practices in the delivery of Municipal services, social support, and community design, to ensure equitable access.

The City of Maple Ridge is dedicated to the vision of an accessible and inclusive community by:

- Removing physical barriers for individuals at risk of exclusion due to access issues that impede community participation.
- Removing social barriers to create environments where individuals can share experiences, seek support, and discover opportunities for personal growth and wellness.

The City of Maple Ridge Council Strategic plan¹ highlights the importance of a community that provides accessible and inclusive opportunities, builds and celebrations community pride, and builds connections that fosters a sense of belonging among our residents.

The City recognizes the importance of equitable participation and is dedicated to the removal of barriers, to ensure accessibility wherever possible; in public infrastructure, city programs and services, communications, and policies; demonstrating positive leadership, advocacy, and community partnership.

Acknowledgment

The City of Maple Ridge extends appreciation to all who have contributed to the Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy. Approximately 500 individuals shared feedback on their lived experiences, providing recommendations to this strategy. Thank you to all our stakeholders, residents, community support staff, committees of Council and staff who contributed to this process.

¹ City of Maple Ridge, BC., Council's Strategic Plan, (2023-2026) [Council Strategic Plan | Maple Ridge, BC](#)

About Maple Ridge

On the traditional lands of Katzie First Nations and Kwantlen First Nations, Maple Ridge is located in the northeastern section of Metro Vancouver, between the Fraser River and the Golden Ears Mountains. Maple Ridge is surrounded by the beauty of nature, offering both urban and rural living opportunities, which lends reason why many residents call Maple Ridge home.

With an estimated population of 111,000 (2026), Maple Ridge is one of the fastest growing municipalities in the region, and it is estimated that by 2033 the population will be nearing 118,250 people. It is projected that between 2021 to 2033 the city population will grow by 26%.

Accessibility and Inclusion in Maple Ridge

The City of Maple Ridge strives to ensure that all residents and visitors are welcome and endeavors to build a community that is accessible, and inclusive. The City is committed to exploring, identifying and removing barriers that may prevent people from participating to help ensure people are valued and involved in all aspects of community life. We recognize individual differences and strive to create a community where everyone feels welcomed, supported, and accepted.

Key Principles

The City of Maple Ridge Accessibility and Inclusiveness strategy is built on the following key principles:

Disability	The term Disability embraces the uniqueness and potential in every human being, disabled or non-disabled. Disability refers to physical, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or neurological differences, or diversity, in ability levels.
Inclusion	All people have the right to engage and be included in all aspects of community life, regardless of their abilities, diverse-abilities, or health care needs. Furthermore, customers have the right to access services and programs and be respected, appreciated, and treated as valuable and participating members of the community.

Accessibility	Refers to the absence of barriers that prevent individuals and/or groups from fully participating.
Diversity	Recognizing and respecting the individual differences of people with disabilities.
Collaboration	All stakeholders are involved and committed to the single goal of ‘creating an inclusive and welcoming community’.
Equity	Ensures that everyone gets the supports they need. This is the concept of ‘affirmative action’, thus producing equity.
Justice	Removing the structural and systemic cause of inequalities, so everyone can come as they are.
Universal Design	Refers to the design of products, programs, services and/or the built environment that is usable by all people without the need for adaptation or modification to ensure inclusion and accessibility. (see pg.10 for more detail)

Guiding the work

The purpose of the Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy is to identify, remove and prevent barriers that affect individuals’ interacting with City services and employment. As we continue to build an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming Maple Ridge, staff will review and consider the current City of Maple Ridge Council Strategic Plan, and City endorsed community strategies and policies, along with the following existing, federal and provincial legislations.

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Canadian Human Rights Act;
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;
- Government of Canada Bill C-81 – Barrier-free Canada;
- BC Human Rights Code;
- Accessible Canada Act;
- Accessible BC Act.

Accessible Canada Act²

The Accessible Canada Act (ACA) is a federal law that aims to make Canada Barrier-free by 2040. The ACA was passed in 2019 and requires the federal government and regulated entities to identify, remove and prevent barriers facing people with disabilities. The legislation focuses on seven priority areas:

1. All person must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;
2. All person must have the same opportunities to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disability;
3. All person must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;
4. All person must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regarding of their disabilities;
5. Laws, policies, programs, services and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting form of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;
6. Persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
7. The development and revision of accessibility standards and the marking of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

Accessible British Columbia Act³

The Accessible British Columbia Act became law in June 2021, working towards improving opportunities for persons with disabilities and to ensure their involvement in identification, removal, and prevention of barriers to ensure their full participation in all aspects of life in BC.

The Accessible British Columbia Act requires government and prescribed organizations to meet the following three (3) requirements:

² Government of Canada: Accessible Canada Act IS. C. 2019 c. 10 [Accessible Canada Act \(justice.gc.ca\)](https://www.justice.gc.ca/accessible-canada-act)

³ Accessible British Columbia Act, SBC 2021, C19 [Accessible British Columbia Act \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://www.gov.bc.ca/accessible-bc)

1. Establish an accessible advisory Committee;
2. Develop an accessibility plan; and
3. Create a public feedback mechanism.

Included in the Accessible BC Act are six principles that must be considered in the development of the accessibility plan. These same principles were also used in the initial development of the legislation.

1. **Inclusion:** ensuring that everyone is included and has equal opportunities.
2. **Adaptability:** Ensuring that services and facilities are adaptable to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
3. **Diversity:** Recognizing and respecting the diversity of people with disabilities.
4. **Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration between the government, businesses, and the public to promote accessibility.
5. **Self-determination:** Empowering people with disabilities to make their own decisions and live independently.
6. **Universal design:** Ensuring that services and facilities are designed to be accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities.

Council Strategic Plan

The City of Maple Ridge Council Strategic Plan⁴ (2023-2026) set five strategic priorities that will guide the decisions and actions of the city. Included in the five priorities are:

- Livable Community
- Climate Leadership & Environmental Stewardship
- Engaged, Healthy Community
- Diversified, Thriving Economy
- Governance & Corporate Excellence

⁴ City of Maple Ridge, BC., Council's Strategic Plan, (2023-2026) [Council Strategic Plan | Maple Ridge, BC](#)

Endorsed community strategies

Additionally, the City of Maple Ridge Council has created and endorsed several strategic plans that help guide the ongoing development and implementation of the Accessibility and Inclusiveness Strategy. The strategies reviewed and cross referenced are:

- Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (2023)
- Strategic Transportation Plan (2023)
- Maple Ridge Housing Needs Assessment (2021)
- Dementia Friendly Communities (2018)
- Maple Ridge Youth Strategy (2018)
- “Walking Together” Cultural Plan (2018)
- Maple Ridge Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2016-2021)
- Age Friendly Community Dialogue and Action Plan (2015)

Endorsed policies

Recreation Access Policy (4.23) - all citizens/ residents should have equal and inclusive access to engage in quality recreation opportunities in their community and steps will be taken to facilitate such access.

Financial Access and Support for Recreation Policy (4.35) – dedicated to the vision of an accessible and inclusive community by reducing financial barriers for individuals at risk of exclusion from participation in community recreation opportunities.

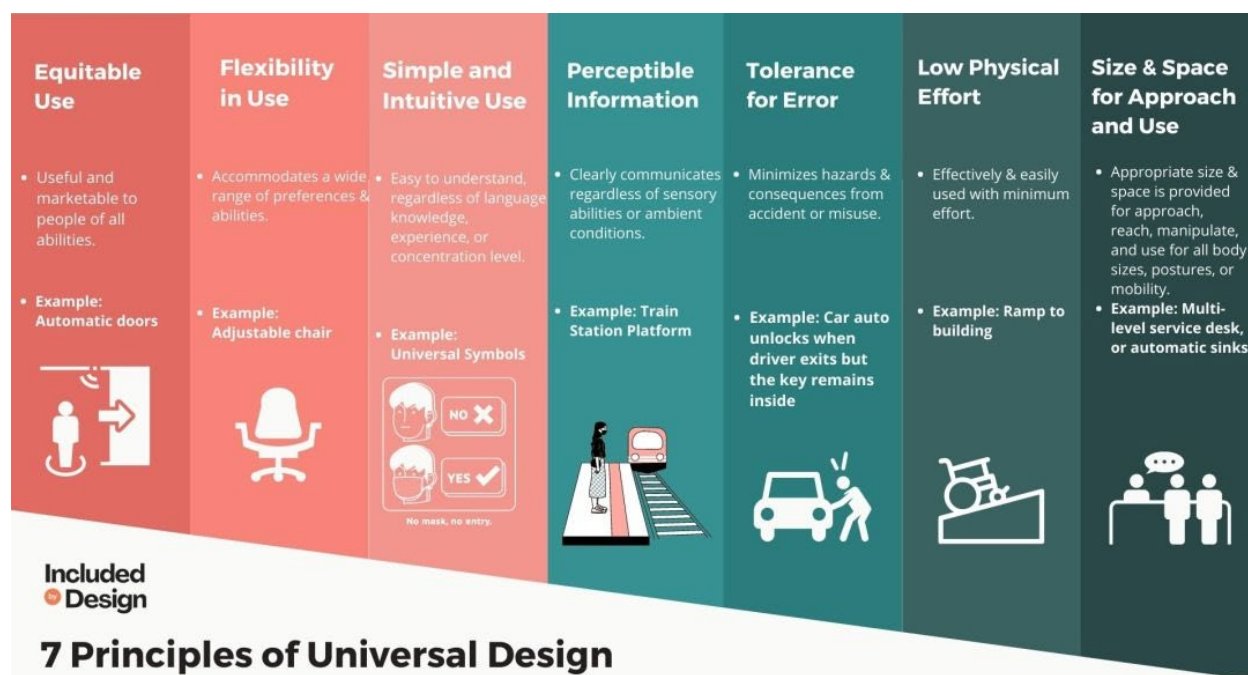
7 Principles of Universal Design⁵

The 7 Principles of Universal Design was originally defined by a working group of architects, product designers, engineers and environmental design researcher led by Ronald Mace (a wheelchair user, himself), in 1997. According to the Centre for Universal Design, the principles “may be applied to evaluate existing designs, guide the design process and educate both designers and consumers about the characteristics of more usable environment.”

⁵ Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, National Disability Authority, 2007 [The 7 Principles | Centre for Excellence in Universal Design](#)

The 7 Principles of Universal Design considers the needs of all persons, is highly inclusive and strives to ensure that the environment is functional for everyone without requiring adaptation or specialized design. The principles are flexible, adaptable, safe and efficient and ensure that whatever is created is usable by all people, regardless of age, disability, or other factors. In essence, Universal Design promotes equality within the community, ensuring that everyone can participate fully and comfortably.

The following 7 principles form the basis of universal design and create a universal experience for every citizen:



Retrieved from: Universal Design 101 - [Universal Design 101 - Included by Design](#)

Please note that the Principles of Universal Design address the built environment and offer guidance to better integrate features that meet the needs for as many users as possible. However, the same principles can also be applied to the development and implementation of programs, services, communication etc.

Engagement process and outcomes

The Accessibility and Inclusion strategy was created based on feedback and contributions from the residents and stakeholders within the City. The project provided several means of engagement for priority populations to be involved; based on the individuals' own personal needs and abilities. Individuals had the opportunity to share their living experiences through:

1. Focus Groups
2. Online Surveys
3. Community Events
4. Individual conversations



The outcome of this process is a set of recommendations that outline the direction for the CMR Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy. The recommendations provide a vision for the City and are organized into 6 categories.

1. Built Environment
2. Civic Participation and Programming
3. Education, Awareness and Public Safety
4. Employment and Volunteerism
5. Communication, Information, Technology and Engagement
6. Governance Policy Design and Advocacy

Included in each objective are potential actions and coexisting related City policies/strategies. As our community continues to grow and develop, new objectives, actions, recommendations, and directions can emerge and become part of the strategy. It will be important that we continue to review and adapt the actions, recommendations, and direction, while at the same time ensuring we are maintaining the accessibility needs of the community.

Additionally, it is important to note that not all recommendations and actions are within the municipal jurisdiction and in these situations the city will advocate appropriate provincial and federal bodies to ensure the voice of our citizens are heard.

As per the Accessible BC Act, the City of Maple Ridge Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy will be reviewed and updated every 3 years.

1. Built environment

To create livable spaces for all residents and visitors, we need to consider how we design and access our roads, sidewalks, parks, facilities, homes, businesses, etc. Well-designed built environments help ensure that individuals can access **City services** with ease, comfort, and safety. Efforts will be made to ensure that all infrastructure (existing and new) incorporates the Universal Design Principles and creates opportunities for social connectedness, which supports individual and community well-being.

Although Maple Ridge is known for its natural beauty, the City recognizes not all residents are able to access the built environment, including public facilities, streets, sidewalks, parks, trails, and water pathways. Studies indicate that ensuring access to natural surroundings provides communities with the therapeutic and sensory benefits nature provides and can positively impact mental health, physical health and social well-being.

1.1. Parks and Open Spaces

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Developing accessible outdoor spaces	• When renovating or building new parks, design for all ages (Children/ youth, adults, and older adults) and incorporate opportunities for both accessible and/or adventure play. • When renovating Destination and Signature parks, include accessible picnic tables, washrooms (including accessible washrooms), parking, access paths/ trails, scooter/wheelchair parking and electrical charging stations, etc. • Look for opportunities to create neighbourhood spray parks with accessible and interactive spray features.	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan
b. Develop a variety of Community Gardens	• Identify and build a variety of community gardens that are accessible and inclusive, (accessible garden beds, social seating, parking, traditional/ ethnic food growing, scooter/ wheelchair parking and electrical charging stations etc.)	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

	• Within existing municipal parks and/or municipal land. • Neighbourhood schools (partnership)		
c. Parks and Open Spaces Audit	• Undertake an accessibility scan of outdoor parks and playgrounds.	High	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan
d. Wayfinding	• Incorporate wayfinding standards in destination and signature parks and trails (contrasting colour, raised lettering, language translation, use of simple language use of picture symbols, etc.)	High	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan
e. Universal/ accessible walking/ nature trails	• Develop accessible and sensory based nature trails that will meet the needs of our diverse populations (universally accessible) • Develop urban loop walking routes with an emphasis on accessible paths. (Consider public, private and active transportation options)	Medium	Recreation Trails Strategy (Future Strategy)

1.2. Community Access (Walkability and Roadways)

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Tactile warning indicators and audible pedestrian traffic signals	• Continue to utilize tactile warning materials as per current professional standards. • Continue to utilize audible signals and amber crossing signals as per current professional standards. • Continue to utilize current professional standards to ensure persons with mobility aids have adequate crossing times at controlled intersections.	Ongoing	Strategic Transport. Plan
b. Clear and unobstructed	• Design sidewalks that meet or exceed the subdivision and servicing bylaw to allow for the unobstructed use of mobility aids etc.	Ongoing	

2. Civic participation

The City of Maple Ridge provides an open and welcoming environment for all residents and visitors, encouraging individuals to participate in social, civic, and economic opportunities, programs, and services. Programs and services are built on equity and understanding that everyone has their own diverse needs. Building programs and services based on respect and inclusion is the right thing to do and is the responsibility of the whole community.

2.1 Civic Participation (Programming)

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. PRC Registration Processes	- Review program registration process to ensure equitable access for all community members. (online vs in person registration) - Review and consideration for individuals deaf and/or hard of hearing	High	Parks, Recreation, Culture Master Plan
b. Adaptive Programming	- Continue to offer a variety of Try-It events that promote accessibility. - Look for opportunities to offer adapted swim programs.	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation, Culture Master Plan
c. Cost of Programming and Services	Explore programming opportunities that minimize the cost of service/ programming.	High	Parks, Recreation, Culture Master Plan
d. Mentorship Programming	Explore opportunities to develop a volunteer program supporting people with diverse abilities. (e.x. Leisure Buddies).	Medium	NA

2.2 Social Inclusion

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Social Programming	Develop Drop in social opportunities for persons with disabilities and their care partners. (Parent/Tot, Children, Youth, Young Adults, Adults, Seniors)	Ongoing	Age Friendly Action Plan

2.3 Civic Participation (Events and Festivals)

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Events and Festivals	Continue to make decisions for/ regarding festivals and events with accessibility in mind	Ongoing	Walking Together – Maple Ridge Culture Plan
b. Opening Ceremonies and Official speeches	- Consider options to offer American Sign language at opening ceremonies for festivals and events. - Consider equipment is accessible for all participants and attendees (stage access etc.).	High Ongoing	Walking Together – Maple Ridge Culture Plan
c. Pathways and sidewalks	Ensure that event/festival related vehicles are cleared from the pathways and sidewalks prior to the start of the event/festival	Ongoing	NA
d. Cooling/ Resting/ Sensory Spaces	- Develop and offer Sensory Friendly Space/ tent for individuals who are neurodiverse. - Offer misting tents at summer festivals/events. - Make note of accessibility for wheelchair and scooter users to participate (surfacing).	High	NA
e. Event Access	- Note Accessibility features on event maps (washrooms, information tent etc.) - Encourage that events and festivals are in areas with good transportation routes: - Parking, including accessible parking that is well marked and clear of event vehicles. - Public transportation. - Explore other modes of transportation (City run Shuttle etc.)	High Ongoing High Medium	NA
f. Training and Awareness	Incorporate joint accessibility and awareness training within festival/event planning quarterly meetings.	High	NA

g. Wayfinding	• Ensure adequate access and signage for participants to find: • Washrooms and Accessible washroom • Information/ first aid tent/ lost person tent • Event happenings (day of schedule/event map)	High	NA
h. Promotion community events	• Provide multiple communication sources inviting citizens to all community events: • Print material • Digital material • Social media • Develop promotional material with simple (plain) language, minimal print, and in multiple languages	Ongoing	NA

2.4 Civic Participation (Public Art)

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Public Art	• Offer inclusive and diverse opportunities for arts and culture that represents the history of Maple Ridge • Create opportunities for residents to participate in large scale public art projects.	Medium	Public Art Policy

2.5 Civic Participation (Financial Access)

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Financial Assistance	• Review current PRC Financial Assistance program: • Meet and/or exceed current best practices. • Online process. • In person process.	Ongoing	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

3. Education and awareness

The City of Maple Ridge is committed to ensuring that all staff have the appropriate tools and knowledge to support the needs of our diverse community.

3.1 City Led Grant Opportunity

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Accessible/ Inclusive/ Diverse Grant Program	• Explore opportunities to develop a grant program for local businesses to improve their physical accessibility, and/or inclusive/ equitable access for all customers. • Explore opportunities to develop a grant program for local festivals and events to enhance accessibility at community events and festivals	Medium	NA

3.2 Awareness Training

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Staff Training	• Provide staff with the tools and training to support all populations within our community: • Diversability / Neurodiversity/ Mental Health etc. • Translation technology • Community resources • Interacting with diverse populations (use of language)	Ongoing	NA
b. Kindness Campaign	• Co-develop with partners and promote a community kindness campaign focusing on the acceptance of all populations (reducing stigma, supporting persons with disability(ies) and/or Mental Health)	Medium	NA

c. Adaptive Equipment (Staff Training)	• Provide staff with the education and training regarding onsite adaptive equipment: • Ceiling lifts, • Change tables • Weightroom equipment • Etc.	High	NA
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4. Employment and volunteerism

The City of Maple Ridge provides employment opportunities through a fair practice recruitment process. In addition to employment opportunities, individuals are invited to participate on a variety of volunteer opportunities including but not limited to, Committees of Council, festivals and events, recreation programs and services etc. Without the strength of our employees and volunteers, the City of Maple Ridge would not be the City we are today.

4.1 Employment

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Hiring Processes	• Review hiring process to ensure inclusive and diverse opportunities.	High	NA
b. Workplace accommodations	• Provide managers and supervisors with resources that allow for the creation of a supportive, diverse and inclusive workplace (work-place accommodations).	High	NA
c. Employment Fairs	• Participate in local employment fairs.	Ongoing	NA

4.2 Volunteerism

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Volunteering	• Explore opportunities to develop a supported volunteer program for persons with disabilities (modified roles, responsibilities, peer support etc.)	High	NA

5. Communication, information, technology and engagement

Civic communication, information, technology and engagement are integral to ensuring all residents have access to community information. Being able to access community information allows individuals to build a sense of community pride. Accessible and inclusive communication is about developing a variety of communication tools, and includes the integration of picture symbols, large print, screen reader technology, etc.

5.1 Civic Communication

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Digital Communication	- Explore options to include translation and use of simple language. - Explore options to incorporate picture communication symbols, large print formats. - Explore options to include technology that supports screen readers. - Explore layouts that promote ease of use, minimal layers, quick access etc.	High Medium Medium Medium	NA
b. Use of Plain Language	MACAI members to explore communication standards specific to persons with disabilities.	High	NA
c. Close captioning/ sign language	Explore options to include either close captioning and/or sign language in audio/video communications	Ongoing	NA
d. Printed Resources	- Explore opportunities to offer print options for the Recreation guide - Explore opportunities to offer print options for individual drop-in schedules. - Explore opportunities to offer print options for individuals applying for services (recreation and city hall). - Explore opportunities to create a print option (welcoming package) for newcomers to	High High High Medium	NA

	Maple Ridge, outlining civic services, roles, and responsibilities.		
e. Digital Communication	• Explore options to include translation and use of simple language. • Explore options to incorporate picture communication symbols, large print formats. • Explore options to include technology that supports screen readers. • Explore layouts that promote ease of use, minimal layers, quick access etc.	High Medium Medium Medium	NA
f. Use of Plain Language	• MACAI members to explore communication standards specific to persons with disabilities.	High	NA

6. Governance and policy design

As a local government, it is important to ensure that all residents can participate in community life. A community that embraces equitable participation will be a stronger and united community. “Nothing about us, without us!”⁶

6.1 Policy Review/Development and Engagement

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Community Engagement	• Explore best practices, tools, training to develop a community engagement processes that includes accessibility, inclusion and diversity: - Provide multiple forms of engagement (focus groups, surveys, open house, etc.) - Provide opportunities for individuals to speak with staff 1:1 (focus questions, survey completion).	High	Public Part. and Engage. Framework

⁶ Rick Hansen Foundation, APN2023 [Homepage | Rick Hansen Foundation](#)

b. Recreation access Policy	Review and update the Recreation Access Policy to ensure it meets the needs of the community and customers	High	Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan
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6.2 Council Engagement

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Committees of Council	Explore opportunities to encourage and include the inclusive and diverse population on committees of councils	Ongoing	Committee of Council Policy
b. Municipal Advisory Council on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (MACAI)	- Provide a portal of open communication for individuals experiencing accessibility and inclusiveness issues. - Explore opportunities to promote the work of MACAI within the community	High High	Accessible BC Act
c. Council meeting videos	Offer council videos with closed captioning and/or American Sign Language	Medium	NA

6.3 Local Government Advocacy

Objective	Action	Progress	Related Policy(ies)
a. Housing	- Advocate for affordable rental housing for all individuals: - Individuals/ Families - Seniors - Rental units that allow pets	High	Official Community Plan/ Housing Action Plan
b. Mental Health advocacy	Advocate for local mental health services for all ages.	High	NA
c. Community Navigator	Advocate and/or support community organizations to develop a process to	Medium	NA

	support individuals who are seeking specialized services based on their needs: 7. Opportunity for one stop supports and/or resources		
d. Housing	- Advocate for affordable rental housing for all individuals: - Individuals/ Families - Seniors - Rental units that allow pets	High	Official Community Plan/ Housing Action Plan
e. Mental Health advocacy	Advocate for local mental health services for all ages.	High	NA
f. Community Navigator	Advocate/ support community organizations interested in developing a navigator position, supporting persons with disabilities. (One stop supports/ resources)	Medium	NA

Next steps

The Accessibility and Inclusion Strategy is specific to addressing accessibility and equity within our community with the aim of improving the overall social and emotional wellness across the city. It is recognized that many of the initiatives within this strategy are cross referenced within other departmental strategies and workplans. Therefore, it will be imperative that all city departments work together to strive and achieve an inclusive and welcoming community.

Review of Strategy

As per the BC Accessibility Legislation, the Accessibility and Inclusiveness Plan will be reviewed every three years to ensure we are meeting the ongoing and growing needs of the community and to measure our success in improving accessibility and inclusiveness.

Additionally, some of the goals and objectives listed within the strategy are in progress, nearing completion or completed. Goals and objectives that are in progress, nearing completion or completed will be highlighted and reported out by the Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusion annually.