



CITY OF MAPLE RIDGE

Arts, Culture, Events and Heritage Review: Summary Report

PREPARED BY
Patricia Huntsman Culture + Communication
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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Maple Ridge respectfully acknowledges that we are located on the traditional territories of the Katzie (q̓íçəy̓) First Nation and Kwantlen (q̓ʷa:ń̓ł'ən̓) First Nation.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1** The following report provides a summarized assessment of cultural development in Maple Ridge, examining both the current state of arts, culture, events and heritage in the City and the opportunities that lie ahead.
- 2** The City has three key documents to guide cultural development in Maple Ridge: the city's first cultural plan—awarded the Award of Excellence in Cultural Planning from the Creative City Network of Canada in 2019, *Walking Together (2018)*, the *Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan (PRC) (2023)* and the *Major Event Development and Attraction Plan (2025)*.
- 3** The report provides an overview on the progress since the adoption of the *Walking Together: Maple Ridge Culture Plan (2018)*, inventories existing programs, services, and facilities, and situates Maple Ridge within the broader cultural planning context, including trends in sustainability, equity, reconciliation, and placemaking.
- 4** Included in the analysis is a municipal comparison highlighting operating models, partnerships, funding approaches, and best practices from other communities, while community engagement and perception audits capture local voices, understandings and priorities for the future cultural development in Maple Ridge.
- 5** A key component of the Review was the self-assessment by the City of Maple Ridge Staff Team on the progress of the plan—revealing that there is still lots of progress to be made by the City of Maple Ridge in order to realize the Objectives and Strategic Priorities since the start of implementation in 2019. Efforts need to be refocused in examining the progress of implementation, particularly the City's efforts in implementing the Supporting Actions.
- 6** To align planning efforts with parallel and intersecting strategic initiatives at the City of Maple Ridge, the report identifies key policies, plans, strategies, and practices that may inform future decision-making for arts, culture, events and heritage in Maple Ridge.
- 7** In total, the insights have informed the emerging themes and recommendations that will guide Maple Ridge in advancing a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable cultural future.
- 8** **From all levels of engagement for this review, there has been widespread support for the Vision, Guiding Principles and Strategic Priorities from *Walking Together*.**





1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Through careful planning and programming, the City of Maple Ridge is rich in arts, culture, and heritage opportunities, along with civic-led and grassroots community events delivered by partners, community groups, and direct provision by the City. The City has two key documents at its disposal to guide the enhancement of cultural of infrastructure and services:

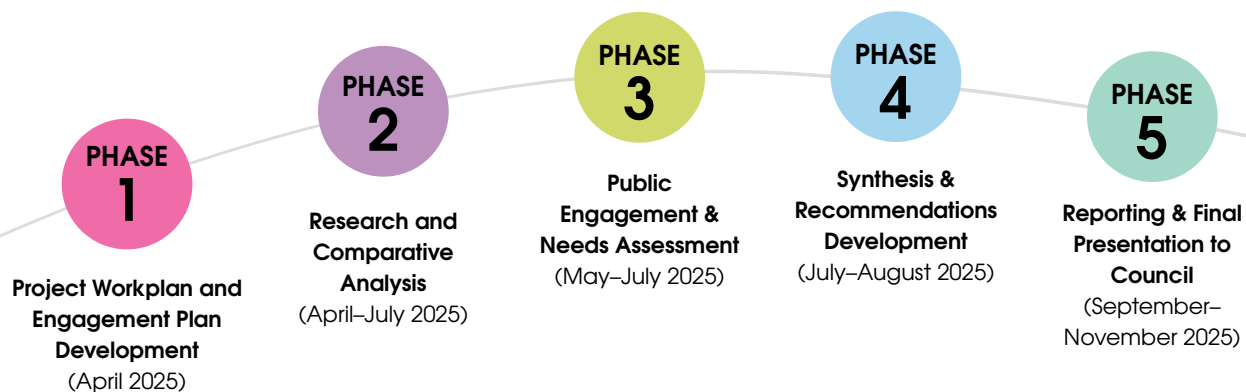
1. The City’s first cultural plan, *Walking Together (2018)*; and
2. The *Parks, Recreation and Culture Master (PRC) Plan (2023)*

Parallel to these plans entering their phases of implementation, in the years since the COVID-19 pandemic there have been major changes within both Canada’s cultural sector (see [page 16](#)), the community of Maple Ridge (see [2.1 Community Profile](#)), and the Departmental structure at the City of Maple Ridge. In light of the time that elapsed since the previous Culture Plan and the broad changes during that period, the City recognized the need for a review of arts, culture, events and heritage service delivery in the city and region.

The City engaged Patricia Huntsman Culture + Communication to review Maple Ridge’s arts, culture, events and heritage services to assess the progress of Maple Ridge’s cultural vision, while also providing recommendations for future focus areas and improvements for equitable service delivery. The recommended actions will help the City determine how to produce the best outcomes with their resources, and ultimately provide the data necessary to refresh the *Walking Together: Maple Ridge Culture Plan* in the future.

1.1 Timeline

The Maple Ridge Arts, Culture, Events and Heritage Review process was a nine-month-long process of research, community engagement, and report development. The planning process, which was carried out by a project team of consultants and the City of Maple Ridge Project Team, unfolded through five phases with the completion of the research and associated documents by end of 2025.



KEY SECTION POINTS FOR STAFF AND COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- The Maple Ridge Arts, Culture, Events and Heritage Review is an assessment of how cultural development has been progressing in the city. It points out what's working well, what could be improved, and suggests actions that fit with the City's cultural vision and goals, with a consideration to resources. The report will also provide information to help update the *Walking Together: Maple Ridge Culture Plan* in the future.
- Prompts for the review:
 - ▶ Two key City planning documents, the *Walking Together: Maple Ridge Culture Plan (2018)*, and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master (PRC) Plan (2023) have entered into their implementation phases.
 - ▶ Major changes within both Canada's cultural sector.
 - ▶ City of Maple Ridge Departmental restructuring.
- A Five-Phased project that was a nine-month-long process of research, community engagement and report development.
- Known as affordable for families, the City experiences challenges (economic, transportation, homelessness, addiction, and crime). Growth in population and diversity is deepening roots and creating opportunities. These realities shape the review, making it specific to Maple Ridge.





2

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

2.1 Community Profile

Maple Ridge is a fast-growing city within eastern Metro Vancouver, located on the unceded traditional territories of the Katzie and Kwantlen Nations. Maple Ridge is rapidly evolving from its rural, agricultural roots to a more culturally active and diverse community. Maintaining its strong ties to nature and farming, its current focus is on economic diversification by prioritizing manufacturing, technology, film production, agriculture, and tourism industries.¹

Known to be an affordable place for young families, with many youth and seniors. Its population reached nearly 91,000 in 2021 (over 10% increase from 2016) with visible minority groups increasing to 19,425 of residents² (6.6% increase from 2016).

Community engagement and civic involvement plays a key role in shaping the community spirit of Maple Ridge. Residents of Maple Ridge appreciate its character. It is rooted in a diversity of landscapes, from natural and rural to suburban and urban. Its uniqueness includes its physical make-up and its social characteristics, and citizens have stated that Maple Ridge's character must be protected and enhanced, to avoid becoming like "everywhere else."³

Like many communities across Canada, Maple Ridge is facing growing concerns⁴ around homelessness, crime, housing affordability, and street disorder, putting pressure on local resources, highlighting the need for comprehensive funding, infrastructure, resources and other supports from various levels of government to enhance capacity.

Note to Reader:

"The Arts Council has played an important role in supporting arts and culture in Maple Ridge for more than 20 years. While the City will assume operations of The ACT, we look forward to working with the Arts Council to shape a future role as a community partner in arts and culture, consistent with models across the region."—City of Maple Ridge

The reader should be aware that this report is based on a research and review period that pre-dates the change in operating the ACT. It should be noted that recommendations pertaining to the ACT Arts Centre are particular to the cultural amenity and facility and can be considered distinct from recommendations for the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Arts Council, unless otherwise specified.

1 Maple Ridge. "News Release - City Advances Key Strategic Priorities: Council Receives Q2 Strategic Plan Update." August 1, 2025. Available online at: <https://www.mapleridge.ca/news/news-release-city-advances-key-strategic-priorities-council-receives-q2-strategic-plan-update>

2 Statistics Canada. 2023. (Maple Ridge Maple Ridge, City). Census Profile. 2021 Census of Population. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. Released November 15, 2023, Available online: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed October 10, 2025).

3 Maple Ridge Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 7060-2014. Available online: https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/District%20of%20Maple%20Ridge_OCP_2014.pdf

4 Maple Ridge. "Council Receives Results of 2024 Citizen Satisfaction Survey." September 25, 2024. Available online at: <https://www.mapleridge.ca/news/council-receives-results-2024-citizen-satisfaction-survey>



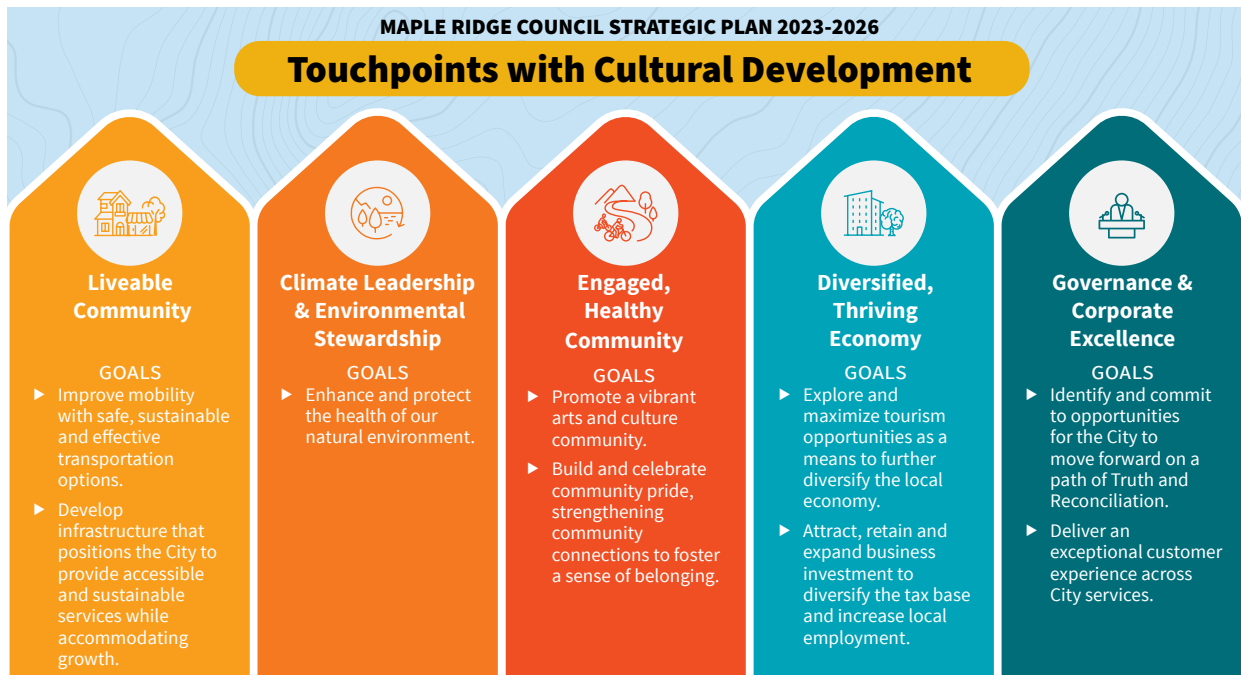
2.2 Overview of Cultural Development in Maple Ridge

Within a municipality, arts, culture, events and heritage services and infrastructure all fall under the wider umbrella of cultural development. Cultural development is the planning and implementation of strategies that leverage a community’s unique cultural resources and assets for the social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefit of a community.

Research shows that cultural development has its greatest impacts when it is positioned at a strategic level within municipal organizational structures, integrating and aligning cultural planning with economic development and other influential policy areas such as tourism, housing affordability, and transportation.⁵

In *Maple Ridge Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026* (a guide for City decision-making, priorities, and activities), cultural development supports all five areas. Some examples of support include: Improving wayfinding signage and promotion of active transportation choices.

- Diversifying city infrastructure to meet the needs of residents and attract tourism.
- Improving affordable housing and studio space options for artists and creators.
- Adopting circular practices such as waste diversion strategies at departmental level.
- Improving inter-cultural appreciation and care for neighbours/other residents.
- Improving community participation in civic activities.
- Animating public spaces and storefronts to create a vibrant downtown.
- Attracting creative workers and industries to diversify the city’s economic portfolio.
- Celebrating local Indigenous protocols, culture and stories.



5 Dick, B., Jeannotte, S. & Hill, K. (2019). Positioning Culture within Canadian Municipalities. *Culture and Local Governance/Culture et gouvernance locale*, 6(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.18192/clg-cgl.v6i1.4550>



Major Recent Achievements in Cultural Development in Maple Ridge include:

- *Walking Together* adopted, with implementation delays related to the COVID-19 pandemic (2018)
- PRC Master Plan adopted to guide investment in capital, service, and program enhancements (2022)
- Albion Community Centre “ACC” opening (2022)
- Multiple community mural projects (2022-2026)
- Rain Pierre art at ACC (2024)
- Mobile Community Stage (2024)
- Public Art mapping guide (2025)
- MR150 Celebrations and Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations *Since Time Immemorial Celebrations* with Kwantlen artist brand collaboration
- New Heritage Grant Pilot Program (2024)
- Increased event and placemaking grants (2025)
- Salish Weave Exhibit with School District 42 (2024)
- Kwantlen Artists Drew and Phyllis Atkins public art (2026)
- Major Events Development and Attraction Plan (2025).

Maple Ridge’s current policy landscape shows strong intent to elevate arts, culture, events and heritage to core civic priorities, to integrate them across all planning areas, and to address gaps in heritage, reconciliation, funding, and metrics.



2.3 Program and Services Review

Community identity and sense of place link well-being to a range of cultural services and facilities. With Maple Ridge’s population growth as an “edge city,”⁶ investments in cultural facilities have been increasing to meet the growing needs of the community.

Arts and Culture

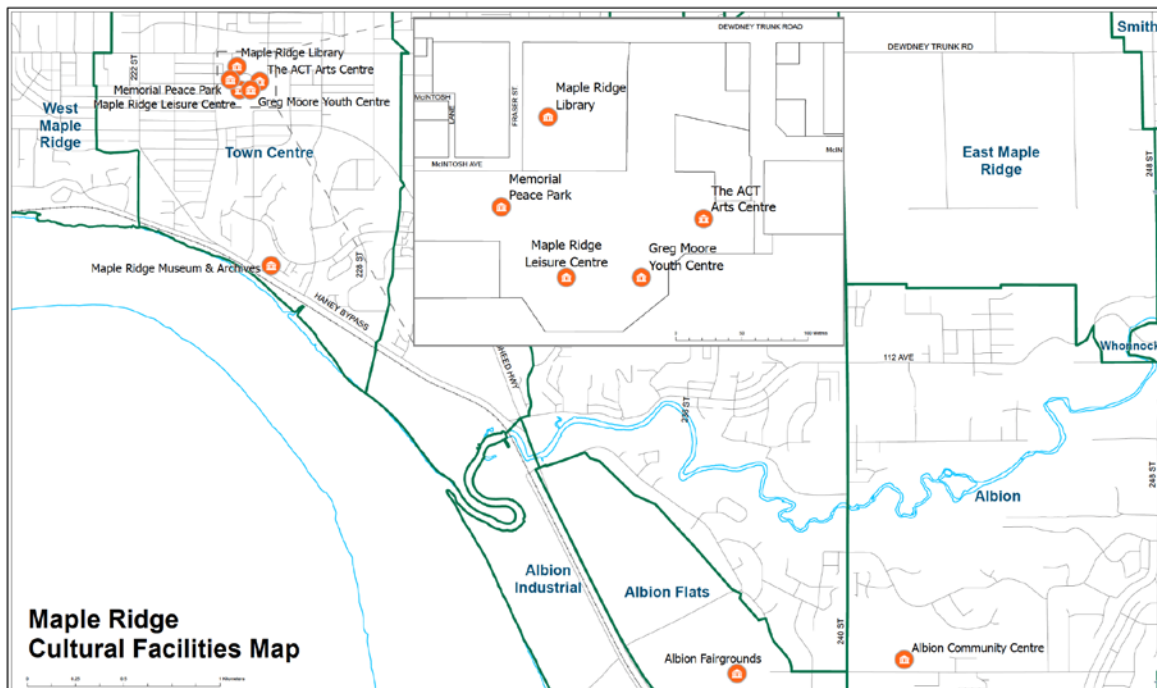
- **The ACT Arts Centre** primary service for performing arts, desire for more options
- **Albion Community Centre** fills some gaps, but limited by technical capabilities
- **Cultural Facilities Grant** assists with rental costs, but need is greater than resources
- **Visual Artists** served by **ACT Arts Centre** and **Art Studio Tour**, desire for more options

Events

- **Events** and festivals have been prioritized and well-resourced, playing major role in the City’s cultural ecosystem; increasing challenges (security and resources)

Heritage

- **Museum and Archives** facilities in acute need of upgrades to protect collections; collections are at risk; only 1% of collection displayed due to limited exhibition space



⁶ “Edge” cities border major metropolitan areas and experience hyper growth in a short period. The expectation of amenities found in larger centres is frequently a gap and needs area that edge cities seek to fill or consider.



KEY SECTION POINTS FOR STAFF AND COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- Cultural development is how a city plans and invests in arts, culture, events, and heritage to improve quality of life, attract people and businesses, and strengthen the local economy—making it a core service rather than a “nice to have” or frill.
- Cultural development has greatest impact when positioned at a strategic level in municipal organizational structures, integrating and aligning cultural planning with policy areas such as tourism, housing, and transportation.
- Recreation and Cultural Services at City of Maple Ridge manage cultural planning and development through event management, volunteer and grant funding, public art and artists-in-residence contributions, community partnerships, operate the ACT Arts Centre starting January 1, 2026, deliver programs.
- *Walking Together* (2018) articulated the community’s vision, values and needs for arts, culture, events and heritage; implementation framework finalized in 2019 shows uneven progress, with most actions ongoing or in progress, while several key actions have not yet been started.
- Maple Ridge’s policy landscape shows strong intent to elevate arts, culture, heritage, and events to core civic priorities, to integrate them across all planning areas, and to address gaps in heritage, reconciliation, funding, and metrics.
- The City of Maple Ridge has a mix of city-owned and non-profit cultural facilities. Events in Maple Ridge are prioritized and well resourced; opportunities to better resource Arts, Culture and Heritage facilities, programs and services.





3

CURRENT TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES

CURRENT TRENDS AND BEST PRACTICES

The following section provides an outline of cultural development's broad benefits, highlighting trends in arts, culture, events, and heritage for the City as it seeks grants from other levels of government.

3.1 Broad Benefits of Cultural Development

Culture enriches civic life by strengthening identity, wellbeing, inclusion, and the economy. Embedding culture into daily life through public spaces, programming, education, and local business creates community connection and vibrancy. The United Nations identified the creative economy as one of the world's fastest growing sectors for income generation, job creation and export earnings. Statistics Canada estimates that cultural industries contribute \$60 billion to Canada's GDP and over 850,000 jobs.⁷ In BC, culture contributed nearly \$8.6 billion to the economy and generated close to 115,000 jobs.⁸



WHY CITY INVESTMENT IN CULTURE WILL BENEFIT MAPLE RIDGE

- **Driving Economic Growth:** Diversifying economy, attracting visitors, and creating jobs.
- **Enhancing Safety:** Revitalizing underused areas through creative placemaking.
- **Building Pride and Belonging:** Supporting diverse voices, Indigenous reconciliation, and fostering community cohesion through inclusive cultural spaces.

3.2 Environmental Sustainability

British Columbia has seen significant changes to climate and weather, prompting the need for positive environmental practices.

In a recent study published in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, researchers found that 57% of the reported disrupted or cancelled events were from extreme weather events caused by climate change.⁹

Due to the financial cost of creating new safety strategies, especially for events typically held outdoors, "arts, cultural and sports events are particularly vulnerable."¹⁰

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of arts, entertainment, and recreation organizations have an environmental practice or policy,¹¹ particularly for festivals and events.

7 Statistics Canada. "Provincial and Territorial Cultural Indicators, 2023," Statistics Canada, June 2025. Available online at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250602/dq250602a-eng.htm>

8 Government of BC. "Arts and Culture Facts and Stats". Government of British Columbia, June 2025. Available online at: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/sports-culture/arts-culture/facts-and-stats>

9 International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction. "Mapping the impact of extreme weather on global events and mass gatherings: Trends and adaptive strategies." September, 2025. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212420925004522?via%3Dihub#b3>

10 Read more here: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/extreme-weather-climate-change-leading-to-more-cancelled-events-1.7599194>

11 Hill, Kelly. "Greener Arts?" *Hill Strategies Statistical Insights on the Arts*. January 21, 2022. Available online: <https://hillstrategies.com/2022/01/12/greener-arts>



3.3 Sector Shifts in Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) and Reconciliation

In keeping with Canada's broader multiculturalism and interculturalism policy, and reflecting the increased diversity and laws that protect equity-deserving individuals, cultural development extends beyond compliance to embrace accessible programming, representation, and co-creation with equity-deserving and Indigenous communities. Progress includes:

- Advancing Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (#67 and #70).
- Implementation of BC's Accessible British Columbia Act (2021).

Key trends shaping the next decade include:

- Global pressures (climate crisis, AI, affordability, instability).
- Funding shifts and more entrepreneurial models.
- Continued EDIA and reconciliation commitments.
- Participatory and family-oriented cultural participation.

3.4 The Role of Creative Placemaking and Art in Public Places

Public art spans beyond monuments to include interactive, community-driven, and temporary works, enhancing identity, inclusivity, sustainability, and local economies. Artist-designed playgrounds, pop-up patios, temporary galleries, and embedding public art into urban planning deepens civic pride and ensures public spaces reflect its diverse stories.

Creative placemaking integrates arts and design into public life, fostering:

- Social Connection & Belonging.
- Health & Wellbeing.
- Economic Vitality.
- Safety, Climate Resilience, and Inclusion.



***In broader context, important trends in Canada’s nearly \$60 billion cultural industry will continue to have a significant influence on arts, culture, events and heritage management and programming over the next five to ten years. These trends include:**

1 Broad societal and global pressures

- The climate crisis and the role arts and culture plays in mitigating climate change.
- The role of technology and changing nature of work through artificial intelligence (AI).
- The affordability crisis; cost of living and cost of art-making/creative spaces are too high.
- Economic and political instability; tariffs’ impacts on Canadian cultural imports/ exports.

2 Policy, funding, and structural shifts

- ICOM (International Council of Museums) approved a new museum definition in 2022 to reflect changes in the role of museums—recognizing the importance of inclusivity, community participation, and sustainability.
- Scaled-back corporate sponsorships and public arts funding.
- Lifecycle of arts organizations: many arts organizations in BC are having difficulty moving to an established phase or shifting to a turnaround mode after a period of gradual decline.
- New operating models for arts organizations that are more entrepreneurial in nature.
- Further capacity-building within community groups, supporting grassroots community-driven programming, shifting a City’s role to be more of a facilitator and convener (rather than a direct-supplier of services).

3 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA) and Reconciliation

- Upholding Calls to Action of Truth and Reconciliation (specifically #67 and #70, which directly call up the Canadian Museums Association and Canadian Association of Archivists).
- Innovations in D/deaf, and Disability arts and accessibility to the arts.
- Creating safer and more inclusive spaces for community dialogue through the arts (e.g., social-change arts practices).

4 Audience trends and cultural participation

- Festivals are struggling to rebuild audiences; challenges in funding, climate change adaptation, and safety concerns.
- Shifting from passive consumption of arts and culture to more participatory arts experiences.
- Generational shifts in arts audiences and increased arts experiences for families.
- Outdoor arts, creative placemaking and co-activations of spaces.



KEY SECTION POINTS FOR STAFF AND COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- City investment in culture will benefit Maple Ridge in following ways:
 - ▶ Driving economic development (business retention and attraction).
 - ▶ Reducing crime & increases safety.
 - ▶ Strengthening community identity, pride & wellbeing.
- The climate crisis has had a profound impact on festivals and events, particularly in BC, leaving many festival and events organizers balancing this precarity with year-round programming.
- The cultural sector has gone through several shifts to address inherent inequities and inequalities within the sector:
 - ▶ Community-led model of artistic programming, responding to the needs and expectations of audiences, meaningfully include under-represented and marginalized people in art-making and decision-making.
 - ▶ Response to Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action: transform sector from within to break down colonial systems.
 - ▶ Moving beyond compliance with accessibility legislation to meaningfully include people with disabilities in cultural spaces.



- The cultural sector is increasingly shifting away from presenting public art as a passive experience, and into a more participatory activity through initiatives such as Creative Placemaking. Creative Placemaking transforms underused public spaces into vibrant and accessible places, and it involves designing and activating spaces with the people who use them.



4

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH AND SUMMARY

4.0 ENGAGEMENT APPROACH AND SUMMARY

To get diverse perspectives on arts, culture, events and heritage programming, services, and facilities in Maple Ridge today, as well as the desires for the future, a range of engagement activities were conducted with key interest holders and the general public. The following demonstrates key findings from our engagement exploration throughout the project.

4.1 Municipal Comparison at a Glance

To explore best practices in operating models, in-house program delivery, partnerships and fee-for-service agreements, funding strategies, and facility management, 7 municipalities were selected for comparative analysis. Complementing desk research on each municipality, cultural managers were also engaged in hour-long, one-on-one interviews.

The municipalities researched were:

- Abbotsford, BC (pop. 153,524)*
- Coquitlam, BC (pop. 148,625)
- Kamloops, BC (pop. 97,902)
- Kelowna, BC (pop. 144,576)
- Langford, BC (pop. 46,584)
- Lethbridge, AB (pop. 98,406)
- Red Deer, AB (pop. 100,844)

**Statistics Canada 2021, Census Subdivision Area*

Operating Models

- Most municipalities use hybrid service delivery models (in-house operations with partnerships and fee-for-service agreements).
- Kelowna is primarily a funder and facilitator, Red Deer and Lethbridge maintain significant in-house delivery with some fee-for-service partnerships, Langford is working to build capacity, currently relying on partners.
- Cultural portfolios often housed within Parks, Recreation & Culture departments; some have shifted events to Economic Development to focus on arts, culture, and heritage.

Partnerships & Fee-for-Service Agreements

Partnerships are central to cultural delivery across all cities. Best practice emphasizes trust-based relationships, consistent municipal liaison roles, and templates that clarify roles, maintenance responsibilities, and performance expectations.

- Formalized agreements include KPIs, reporting, and CPI-linked funding increases.
- Abbotsford and Kamloops modernizing agreements for alignment with city strategies.
- Lethbridge and Red Deer illustrate tension between maintaining long-standing relationships and ensuring transparency and accountability.



Facilities

- Larger cities (e.g., Kelowna, Coquitlam, Lethbridge) maintain multiple purpose-built or city-owned venues operated by partners through Letters of Agreement.
- Smaller municipalities (Langford, Abbotsford) rely on shared, multi-use, or partner-run facilities.
- Facility planning is increasingly tied to long-term capital strategies.
- Many municipalities saw gaps in mid-size, multi-functional, accessible cultural spaces.

Funding Models

- Cultural services are primarily tax-funded, with supplementary grants, sponsorships, and amenity contributions.
- Kelowna invests the most per capita (~\$19), Coquitlam and Abbotsford integrate cultural funding into broader municipal budgets with modest arts-focused grants, Red Deer and Lethbridge balance fee-for-service and community development funds.
- Innovations include community development grants, host-your-own engagement microgrants, and developer contributions (e.g., Community Amenity Contributions).

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility (EDIA)

- Municipalities are at varied stages of EDIA integration: dedicated EDIA staff/ leadership roles, cultural advisors, and city-wide strategies. Others are developing frameworks.
- Best practices include reconciliation partnerships, inclusive programming, and mentorship models for community-led cultural expression.

Emerging Practices and Lessons

Across municipalities, shared insights include:

- Hybrid and decentralized models enhance flexibility and community reach.
- Separating events from culture portfolios can improve focus on arts and heritage.
- Formalized agreements and KPI-driven reporting build accountability.
- Asset-based community development and mentorship strengthen local capacity.
- Incremental investment in cultural infrastructure and leadership is key to success.

4.2 Perception Audit

What we did

10 one-on-one interviews with cultural managers and artists from Metro Vancouver identified regional perceptions, strengths, challenges, opportunities and gaps.

What we heard from

CULTURAL MANAGERS: PERCEPTIONS, GAPS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

Perceptions of Maple Ridge's Cultural Scene

- Known for natural surroundings and being an affordable place for families.
- Not known regionally as a cultural hub compared to other nearby municipalities.
- Cultural activities and public art are less visible, not well integrated into public spaces.

Gaps in Maple Ridge's Arts Infrastructure and Support

- Limited exhibition and performance spaces, commercial galleries, smaller or experimental projects beyond the ACT (recognized as a valuable asset).



- Public art is limited in parks and public spaces.
- City’s cultural offerings lack visibility in regional networks, as well as online.
- Funding focused on festivals/events—little support for visual, literary, or grassroots.
- Minimal cultural staffing and participation at the regional level.

OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Support, Retain and Attract Artists

- Position Maple Ridge as creative hub (affordability, community, slower pace).
- Invest in affordable studios, live/work spaces, and artist residencies.
- Support local “hidden” artists with equitable pay, grants, visibility and recognition.

2. Strengthen Resources: Cultural Infrastructure, Funding, and Staffing

- Expand cultural infrastructure and access to spaces beyond the ACT.
- Broaden arts funding to include visual, literary, and experimental arts.
- Invest in cross-disciplinary staff to manage programs, grants, and partnerships.

3. Rebuild Regional Visibility and Collaboration

- Build and strengthen Maple Ridge’s regional/provincial visibility and representation.
- Collaborate with neighboring municipalities and strengthen ties between local artists.

What we heard from

ARTISTS: PERCEPTIONS, GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Perceptions: How Artists View Maple Ridge

- Maple Ridge is viewed as welcoming, but most unaware of broader local arts scene.
- Artists noted poor transportation options and low visibility of arts programming.
- Public art and programming are perceived as lacking diversity.

Gaps: Barriers Artists Face in Connecting with Maple Ridge

- Few venues and rehearsal/exhibition spaces beyond The ACT.
- Poor transit access and low visibility of public art, workshops, festivals.
- Public art, arts committees and programs viewed as lacking diversity and inclusivity.
- Several artists had not heard of The ACT until approached directly.

OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase Visibility, Transportation and Access

- Improve transportation and shuttle access for artists and visitors.
- Promote artist opportunities to regional networks.
- Use public art and outdoor festivals to make arts more visible in the public realm.

2. Invest in Cultural Infrastructure and Diverse Programming

- Add more venues and rehearsal spaces beyond The ACT.
- Focus on community arts programming: multicultural, youth, and intergenerational.
- Integrate artists in planning projects, including new developments and civic design.



3. Build Equity and Inclusion

- Recruit more diverse artists and cultural advisors to lead and shape programs.
- Support underrepresented artists: targeted funding, mentorship, and in-kind support.
- Celebrate cultural diversity through dedicated events, festivals, and artist-led initiatives that reflect the region's demographics.

4. Support Artist Development

- Create more artist residencies with opportunities for community engagement.
- Establish mentorships and exchanges with neighboring cities. Provide project grants and flexible funding options to help artists experiment and grow in their practice.

4.3 Community Engagement Summary

CITY STAFF, SENIOR LEADERSHIP AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLES

What we did

3 individual, roundtable-format workshops gathered key information from Maple Ridge City Staff, Senior Leadership Team, and *Engaged, Healthy Community Advisory Committee (HCAC)*.

What we heard

- The City is now well-positioned to refocus on cultural development after delays caused by the pandemic and organizational restructuring.
- The *Walking Together's* vision and strategic directions remain relevant; update implementation and supporting actions.
- There is pride in MR150 and other City-led or supported events.

- There is a growing "culture for culture" and openness to innovation at City Hall.
- Cultural development is recognized as a strategic driver for economic development, achieving City goals, and attracting creative workers, youth, and young families.
- Echoing those identified the community, the groups identified the following needs:
 - ▶ Supportive amenities (restaurants, cafés)
 - ▶ Safe, welcoming gathering spaces and creative placemaking
 - ▶ Active, affordable community cultural hub such as the ACT
 - ▶ Capacity-building support for community cultural groups

COMMUNITY COLLABORATOR FOCUS GROUPS AND ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

What we did

To capture perspectives of Maple Ridge community partners, collaborators and programmers on the progress of cultural development in Maple Ridge, gaps and challenges, and future community cultural needs, we engaged over 40 participants in 6 in-person and virtual focus groups and interviews, with representatives from 21 arts organizations.

What we heard

1. Strong Demand for a Convenor/Connector Role

- Repeated calls for a central coordinating body or convenor to enhance collaboration between cultural organizations, artists, businesses, and the City.
- The Arts Council was historically seen as this connector, but its current focus on managing the ACT facility limits its capacity to fulfill this broader role.



2. Facility Access and Infrastructure Concerns

- ACT Theatre access for community groups has been limited due to high rental costs, long lead times (2–3 years), prioritization of large-scale productions, and perceived exclusion of community theatre.
- Calls for a downtown cultural hub, artist incubators, and shared spaces.
- Heritage facilities are aging and not accessible; suggestion to develop a cultural hub combining museum, Indigenous space, and arts programming.

3. Staff and Operational Challenges

- High turnover, vacant positions, and limited decision-making authority within the City have disrupted relationships and caused communication gaps.
- Cultural organizations report difficulty navigating the City structure; requests for a clear organizational chart and expanded, improved liaison roles.

4. Cultural Programming and Capacity Issues

- Insufficient staffing limits growth in arts education, museum programs, and outreach.
- Demand exceeds supply, especially for music, youth, and multicultural programming.

- Barriers to participation: costs, safety concerns, and lack of visibility.

5. Collaboration with Business and Tourism Sectors

- Support use of vacant commercial space for pop-up galleries, exhibits, and artist retail.
- Need for inventory of spaces and contact directories to facilitate use.
- City policies to integrate cultural amenities in developments (e.g., “1% for Art” Policy).

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

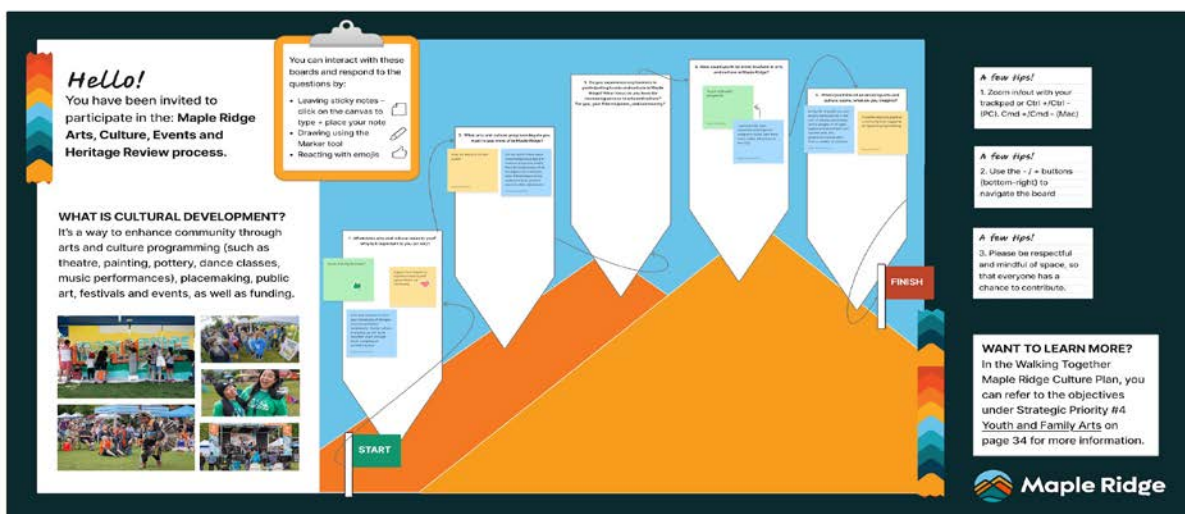
What we did

Youth feedback was captured via open-ended questions on an online collaborative whiteboard, FigJam, designed to raise youth awareness of their role in cultural development, and to gather feedback on satisfaction with arts, culture, events and heritage.

What we heard

Amongst the youth who participated, there was a desire for:

- Community connection and belonging through arts, culture, events and heritage



- Youth leadership and empowerment
- Diversity of creative programs and services, inclusive of all-ages and cultures
- A dynamic and inspiring public realm throughout the city

GENERAL PUBLIC

What we did

Open-ended questions displayed as Sounding Boards at major Maple Ridge summer events, also served to inform the public of the review.

What we heard

What would you like to see more of in Maple Ridge with respect to arts and culture?

1. Clarity on the Role of the City

- Supporting the ACT Arts Centre
- Broader promotion
- Diversify programming

2. Use of Outdoor Spaces

- Local events, markets, festivals
- Public art
- Movie nights/Programming

3. Programs for Everyone

- Family friendly/Youth friendly
- Youth drumming circles & events

4. Inclusion

- Less discrimination
- More inclusive, diverse offerings

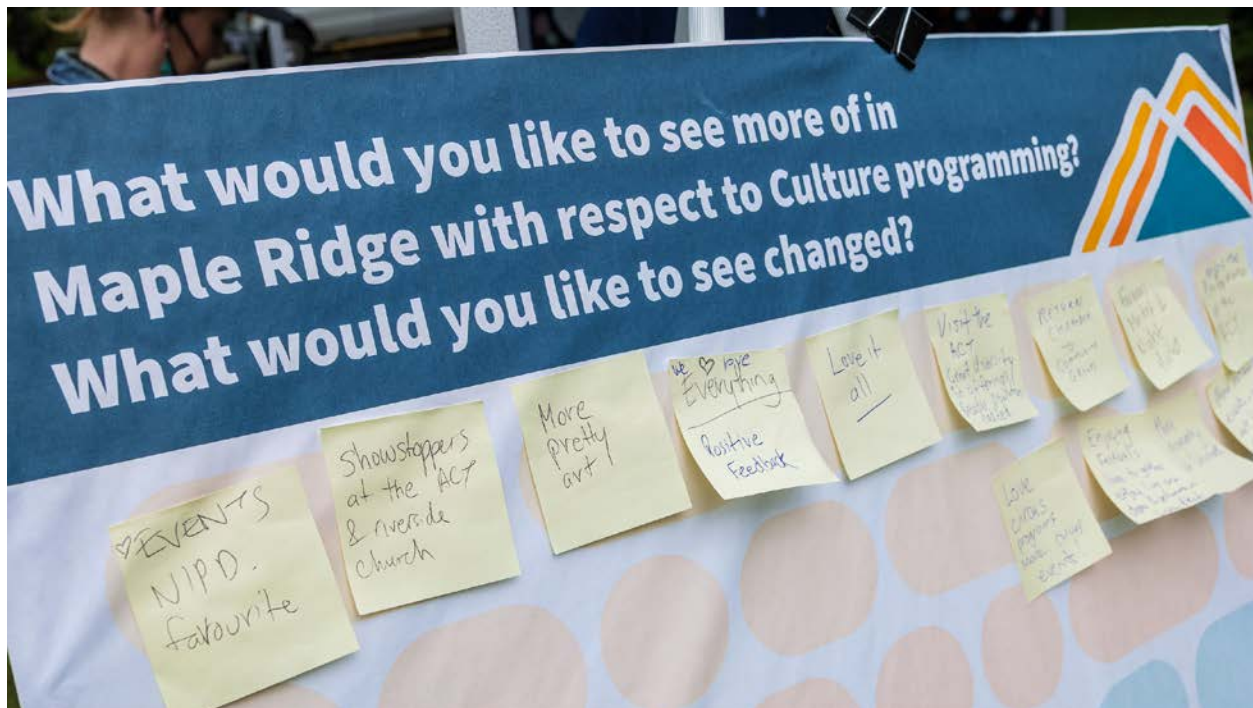
What would you like to see changed?

1. Collaboration Opportunities

- Local artist network
- Students/Youth focus

2. Improved Access

- Free and accessible events/classes
- Improved parking & transportation



KEY SECTION POINTS FOR STAFF AND COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

- A range of engagement activities conducted with key interest holders and the general public revealed diverse perspectives on arts, culture, events and heritage programming, services and facilities in Maple Ridge today, and future needs.
- **Municipal Comparisons:** 7 municipalities were selected for comparative analysis on a range of elements through interviews and desk research.
 - ▶ **Operating & service delivery:** Most use hybrid model.
 - ▶ **Partnerships & agreements:** All cities rely on strong cultural partners.
 - ▶ **Facilities:** Larger centres have multiple cultural venues; developing cities are addressing lack of arts facilities.
 - ▶ **Funding:** Wide range of cultural investment, from modest support to extensive investments, including “percent for art” capital program.
 - ▶ **EDIA integration:** Most have EDIA strategies or plans in progress, with varied stages of development and integration.
- **Perception Audits:** interviews with cultural managers and artists.
 - ▶ Opportunities and Recommendations from Cultural Managers:
 - Support, Retain and Attract Artists
 - Strengthen Resources: Infrastructure, Funding, and Staffing
 - Rebuild Regional Visibility and Collaboration
 - ▶ Opportunities & Recommendations from Artists Outside Maple Ridge:
 - Increase Visibility, Transportation and Access
 - Invest in Cultural Infrastructure and Diverse Programming
 - Rebuild Regional Visibility and Collaboration
 - Support Artist Development



- **City Staff, Senior Leadership and Advisory Committee Roundtables:** three individual, roundtable-format workshops.

- ▶ **City Staff:** greater professional development and knowledge sharing needed to integrate cultural development in local government, and cultural plan implementation.
- ▶ **Senior Leadership:** more risk tolerance and readiness for change, leverage cultural development to align to and achieve City goals across tourism, economic, social and community planning.
- ▶ **Healthy Community Advisory Committee:** Need to build capacity out in the community among local arts and culture groups. Interest in continuing the cultural plan's implementation.

- **Community Collaborator Focus Groups & One-on-one Interviews:** 40 participants from 21 arts organizations in 6 engagement sessions. Key themes:

- ▶ Strong Demand for a Convenor/Connector Role
- ▶ Facility Access Concerns
- ▶ Staffing, Operating and Capacity Issues
- ▶ Collaboration with Business and Tourism Sectors
- ▶ Expand Artist Support and Visibility
- ▶ Build and Renew Cultural Infrastructure
- ▶ Broaden Equity and Inclusion



- **Youth Engagement:** to capture youth perspectives. Key themes:
 - ▶ Community connection and belonging.
 - ▶ Youth leadership and empowerment.
 - ▶ Diversity of creative programming, and services, inclusive of all-ages and cultural backgrounds.
 - ▶ A dynamic and inspiring public realm throughout the city.
- **General Public Engagement:** open-ended questions printed on Sounding Boards displayed at summer events. Key themes:
 - ▶ Clarity on the Role of the City
 - ▶ Use of Outdoor Spaces
 - ▶ Programs for Everyone
 - ▶ Inclusion
 - ▶ Collaboration Opportunities
 - ▶ Improved Access



5

KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While Maple Ridge is currently known for its natural surroundings, affordability, and strong sense of community, the city is not yet widely recognized for its arts and culture scene.

While implementation of the *Walking Together: Maple Ridge Culture Plan* began in 2019, further implementation was delayed by the pandemic. The City's organizational restructuring also impacted the City's ability to maintain connections to community groups as the organization was rebuilding. The City's focus on diverse cultural events and selecting achievable implementation items of the cultural plan during this period are commendable.

The City is now ready to position Maple Ridge as a cultural hub within Metro Vancouver by strengthening its cultural identity and building a more dynamic cultural scene. This can be supported by integrating arts with local amenities (such as restaurants and cafes) to improve the appeal of public gathering places and commercial areas—where both residents and visitors are encouraged to linger, connect, and experience culture together. Enhancing transportation access will increase connectivity of residents, and is important for encouraging greater visitation, participation, and residency from regional artists and audiences.

The following recommendations stem from the research carried out by the consulting team and highlight opportunities to strengthen the city's cultural presence and support Maple Ridge's goals in becoming both a more **connected** and **visible** cultural destination.



5.1 Arts and Culture Recommendations

Invest in Cultural Facilities, Spaces and Infrastructure

- Create more spaces for exhibitions, creation and collaboration, rehearsals, and workshops. Expand infrastructure; invest in additional cultural spaces to complement The ACT and optimize space use of The ACT. For consideration:
 - ▶ Activating empty storefronts; pop-up galleries
 - ▶ Partnering with Businesses/Commercial spaces
 - ▶ Community studios
 - ▶ Creative Hub spaces
 - ▶ Live/work spaces
 - ▶ Creative placemaking in parks and transition spaces

Advance Equity, Inclusion and Cultural Representation

- Continue to support equity and inclusion in cultural programming; interest holders noted that greater representation, outreach, and structural support are still needed.
 - ▶ Create a Cultural Roundtable to bring artists and organizations together to break down barriers, co-develop strategies, and strengthen collaboration.
 - ▶ Ensure a diverse cultural advisory group provides input on programming, public art, and funding decisions.
 - ▶ Develop targeted outreach and artist support programs through capacity building, mentorships, and funding for emerging and equity-deserving artists.

Expand & Integrate Artist-Led Cultural Programming in Public Spaces

- A core gap from the audit identifies a need for more dynamic, visible, and community-connected cultural programming. To create a stronger and consistent city-wide cultural presence, be strategic with programming and expand and integrate artist-led, diverse programming into public gathering spaces. For consideration:
 - ▶ Temporary installations
 - ▶ Pop-up performances and exhibitions
 - ▶ Workshops in cafes, libraries, and community hubs

Strengthen Partnerships and Collaborations

- Findings highlight gaps in regional visibility, cross-sector engagement, and coordination with local businesses and community groups. Partnering can expand programming, attract diverse audiences, and enhance Maple Ridge's cultural profile.
 - ▶ **Local & Regional:** partner with businesses, schools (including universities), community group partners to expand programming and joint initiatives.
 - ▶ **Cross-Sector:** work with city departments and internal/external planners and developers to coordinate public space improvements for arts and culture.
 - ▶ **Multi- and Inter-Arts:** support and facilitate mentorships to develop early career artists and emerging organizations, and collaborations between artists and organizations to stimulate sector opportunities.

Role of the City and Cultural Investment

- **Continue to use the Vision and Strategies of the *Walking Together Culture Plan***
In keeping with feedback from the community, these strategies are still relevant and can guide the City and community in cultural development going forward.
- **Strengthen Capacity and Collaboration**
Promote community connection and relationships through Cultural Roundtables; establish a strong convener to encourage a healthy creative ecosystem for collaboration, coordination, and connection.



- **Enhance Regional Visibility**
Maple Ridge is not well known regionally as a cultural destination. Continue to build connections with regional networks (cultural managers and artists) to increase recognition, help with resource sharing, and foster artist collaboration.
- **Improve Transportation for Artists and Audiences**
Limited transportation access was identified as a barrier in the audit; continue to expand on shuttles or coordinated travel options for events to increase participation, visitation, and regional artist engagement.
- **Data Collection and Analysis**
Regular cultural mapping needed to assess churn rate and displacement of cultural spaces (i.e. how many spaces are we gaining vs losing).
- **Creative Placemaking Initiatives**
Continue to develop and encourage cross-sector partnerships to shape the character of locations through arts and culture, and attract and retain artists.



5.2 Events Recommendations

Facilities, Spaces and Infrastructure

- **Invest in Multipurpose Event Spaces**
Aligning with City's Major Events Development and Attraction Plan pillars: 'Maximize Maple Ridge' and 'Build for Big Moments,' continue to expand and develop event and festival hosting capacity by retrofitting and supporting alternative venues (i.e. community centres, amphitheatres, parks, and underutilized civic or commercial facilities) and support "pop-up" and temporary installations.
- **Improve Accessibility and Amenities**
Ensure all event-related infrastructure is included in new and updated capital plans. Integrate accessibility, wayfinding, and climate resilience as explicit requirements.
- **Address transport barriers**
Continue to expand on event shuttles or coordinated transportation initiatives, especially for downtown, ACC and Albion Fairgrounds gatherings. Improve overall event access and egress for both residents and regional audiences.
- **Enable Community and Artist Access**
Expand affordable rental models and grants, particularly for emerging and community-led festivals. Increase awareness and access to the existing cultural facility rental grant and implement a sliding scale for rates to maximize resident access.
- **Implement Infrastructure Planning Frameworks**
Regularly assess existing and future event space needs through master/principal facility planning with community and partner input, and link event facilities planning to the City's broader placemaking and recreation strategies.

- **Activate the wider public realm**
Deploying modular “activation kits” (mobile stages, lighting, power drops) for parks, trails, and commercial areas can help make cultural events more visible and integrated.

Programming

- **Diversify Event Offerings**
Broaden City-led multi-genre, multicultural, intergenerational, and accessible event programming to support youth, Indigenous, and equity-deserving groups; continue to expand outdoor, neighbourhood-based, family-friendly activities. Extend year-round, daytime and shoulder-season animation of Town Centre to broaden accessibility.
- **Engage the Katzie Nation, Kwantlen First Nation, and heritage partners**
Good practice indicates the importance of strengthening relationships with these nations and partners more visibly within event curation, storytelling, and partnerships, leveraging their expertise and strengthening existing relationships.
- **Emphasize Participatory and Place-based Programming**
Increase support for interactive event components such as workshops, pop-up performances, story circles, community art projects, and “meanwhile” activations of vacant or nontraditional spaces (e.g., markets, cafes, parks).
- **Develop Skills and Leadership**
Build awareness of training, mentorships, and capacity-building for local organizers, volunteers, and artists to boost event quality, sustainability, and social impact.

Collaborations and Partnerships

- **Strengthen Cross-sector Partnerships and Cross-Departmental Collaboration**
Foster collaboration across business, tourism, schools, neighbouring municipalities, and nonprofit groups for event planning, funding, marketing, and resource sharing. Cross-departmental collaboration embeds cultural needs up front and supports the design of event-ready public spaces in new development and streetscape projects.
- **Launch an Events Partnership Framework**
Formalize partnership frameworks for co-delivery with businesses, schools and universities, community organizations, and tourism. Leverage partnerships to co-produce/co-market, broaden audiences, and expand talent pipelines and venues
- **Facilitate Regional and Networked Events**
Feedback indicates that Maple Ridge should position itself as a regional event destination by sharing calendars, cross-promoting signature festivals, and working with transit, tourism, and external partners to encourage regional visitation.

Role of the City

- **Resource and Enable Delivery**
Emphasize City’s role as funder, facilitator, and connector/convener for events, supporting community groups and independent organizers in permitting, funding, and logistics. Establish regular roundtables or working groups with community organizations and business associations for co-ordination and strategic alignment.
- **Clarify Roles and Improve Communication**
Publicly identify City liaisons and organizational structures and ensure consistent feedback mechanisms. Promote knowledge sharing, promotion, and streamline permit and resource access. Invest in sufficient staff to guide and liaise with the sector.



- **Champion Equity and Inclusivity**
Embed EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility) principles in event programming, staffing, funding, communication, and evaluation processes.

Strategic Alignment and Outcomes

- **Integrate Events with Strategic City Goals**
Link events to citywide strategies and articulate contributions to core priorities: community well-being, economic development, reconciliation, and climate resilience.
- **Develop Clear Performance Metrics**
Establish outcome-based KPIs (participation, inclusion, economic/livability impact, visitor satisfaction), and publicly report results. Findings can inform future investment and programming strategies.
- **Embed Continuous Improvement**
Pilot new event formats, test innovative funding, and regularly review and adapt strategies based on evaluation and community input to improve event infrastructure.



5.3 Heritage Recommendations

Facilities, Spaces and Infrastructure

- **Invest in Public Spaces and Collection Storage**
 - ▶ Expand exhibition and interpretation spaces to support informal learning, social cohesion, cultural tourism, and cultural development.
 - ▶ Assess and map out phased space needs, improved environmental controls and security, increased storage space to allow new object donations.
 - ▶ Design and implement collection-appropriate storage for the community's unique material history, ensuring their existence for future generations.
 - ▶ Assess and improve collections building and mechanical systems, which should be likened to those of a community pool: just as pumps, filters, and HVAC must be monitored and kept in good condition to ensure the longevity of the asset, so too does the environmental conditions of museum and archives collections.
- **Expand & Integrate Heritage in Public Spaces**
Centre the Museums as community gathering spaces and inclusive places for cross-cultural connection. Support capacity-building and increased resources to integrate into new and existing public spaces, which may take the following forms:

- ▶ Anchors in creative districts (gathering, exhibition, learning)
- ▶ Collaborators in recreation, parks, and trails (display, interpretation, wayfinding)
- ▶ Contributors to Creative Placemaking and cross-discipline cultural activities

Advance Equity, Inclusion and Cultural Representation

- Increase recognition and support for the Museum and Maple Ridge Historical Society to advance the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations and new Canadian Museums Association standards for implementing UNDRIP.
- Strengthen the Museum’s role as Katzie Nation’s partner and repository for the Nation’s culturally significant objects and records, enhancing the Nation’s opportunities for sharing Indigenous knowledge with residents and visitors.
- Leverage the partnerships cultivated by the professional museum and archives staff who root museum activities in practices including principles of Reconciliation, UNDRIP and EDIA and curriculum-based educational programs.
- Continue to support and enhance initiatives such as the Japanese-Canadian collection, the adjacent Japanese Garden, and related resources and experiences, which also increasingly draw cultural tourism.

Programming

- **Invest in Visitor Experience**
Include universal accessibility principles to create welcoming spaces for all. Capture and reflect visitor experience data using a range of metrics. Support diverse interpretation methods to provide a positive, enriching, and memorable experience.
- **Emphasize Experiential Learning**
Continue to recognize and enrich, through grants and collaborations, Museum contributions to an *Engaged, Healthy Community*, fostering critical thinking, place-based experiential learning, intergenerational connection, and civic awareness.

Collaborations and Partnerships

- **Strengthen Cross-sector Partnerships and Collaboration**
The City can play a role in fostering collaboration and support for Heritage across all levels of government, business, tourism, schools, neighbouring municipalities, and nonprofit groups for funding, marketing, and resource sharing.
- **Support Coordinated Renewal**
Launch a comprehensive renewal framework in partnership with the community, government and business to envision a renewed Maple Ridge Museum, with an outcome of right-sizing exhibits, programs, collections, and supporting infrastructure, by examining community needs and market opportunities, particularly with the potential for broader funding support and earned revenue strategies.



Role of the City

- **Increase outreach and awareness**

Develop and support targeted outreach and increased awareness for newcomers to engage with museum programming to gain insight into their new community, for children to connect through place-based experiential learning, and for seniors to experience a sense of purpose and value by sharing their stories.

- **Foster development opportunities**

Continue to invest in and foster professional development opportunities. Specific technical and professional expertise, ongoing development, and building connections with regional networks to increase collaboration, resource sharing, and best practices.

- **Address transportation needs**

Limited transportation is a barrier; provide shuttles or advocate for public transit.

- **Explore improvements or changes to the City of Maple Ridge–Maple Ridge Historical Society partnership**

- ▶ Leverage partnership agreement to provide for Council representation on Board. Important to foster understanding, alignment, and advocacy of key issues.
- ▶ Examine potential governance models as part of an overall renewal and integrate the Museum and Archives more closely into the City's funding and governance structure. Typical organizational models and their characteristics include:

1. **Operated by a non-profit society** with charitable designation (status quo):

- ▶ Larger array of funding and donor opportunities for a registered charity;

- ▶ Non-profit staff wages are typically lower than municipal wages; and
- ▶ Closer relationships to the community (due to perception of grassroots or neutral organization).

2. **Operated by an expanded City of Maple Ridge Culture Department**

(Council oversight; Municipal-staff-managed):

- ▶ City-funded operation supported by municipal departments, such as human resources, finance, facilities, marketing means efficiencies in certain areas;
- ▶ Unionization, job evaluation and classification system will be complex for some positions, and attract higher wages;
- ▶ Smaller pool of external funding and individual donors; and
- ▶ Direct City Council and staff oversight.

3. **Operated by a Commission of City of Maple Ridge Council**

(Commission oversight; Staff are employees of the Commission):

- ▶ Some of the benefits of municipal department: unionization, closely aligned to City priorities and financial planning;
- ▶ Complexity of unionization and job evaluation process;
- ▶ Human resources and facilities services should align with City's;
- ▶ Eligible for some additional funding and donations as a paramunicipal entity; and
- ▶ Commissioners appointed by City Council.



Strategic Alignment and Outcomes

- Explicitly link Museum and Heritage initiatives to City-wide strategies.
- Strengthen Maple Ridge Museums' potential as key contributors to identity and tourism economy as an attraction for cultural tourism, supported by a community-focused Museum renewal, linking to the Economic Development Strategy.
- Continue to recognize and enrich the Museums' contributions to an *Engaged, Healthy Community* to foster community pride, belonging, diversity, and wellbeing.
- Explore museum and heritage sector metrics to evaluate the impact on the community, framing intrinsic social and educational values and wider benefits.
- Review City Council Committee structure with museum and heritage community services in mind, in keeping with modern museums as vibrant, active places for connection and learning, which supports the *Engaged, Healthy Community* priorities.
- Continue to implement the Heritage Plan (2023-2024).





GOING FORWARD

GOING FORWARD

With an uncertain economic and political landscape impacting cultural sovereignty policy and funding from other levels of government, the City's move to bring cultural development more in-house during the next five years is both prudent and strategic for the sustainability of arts and culture in Maple Ridge. As the City moves towards more direct-delivery of arts and culture programming and related services in 2026-2027, it can seek opportunities to engage with the local creative ecosystem interest holders to:

- Further relationships via the Community Cultural Roundtable.
- Continue to increase coordination and information-sharing.
- Seek input on priority-setting of implementation items in the *Walking Together Cultural Plan*.



Acknowledgements

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The report is authored by Patricia Huntsman, Principal and Lead Cultural Planner, Patricia Huntsman Culture + Communication; Laurel Lawry, Crocus Cultural Strategies; Bridget MacIntosh; Parm Johal, Katie Lapi, Justine Bochenek, and Em Cussen.