

Business Retention and Expansion Strategy

CITY OF MAPLE RIDGE

MAY 2025



EBP 

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1. Executive Summary

The City of Maple Ridge, one of British Columbia's fastest-growing communities, has developed a comprehensive Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Strategy to strengthen its economic base and support local businesses. This strategy, developed by EBP in parallel with the City's Investment Attraction Strategy, is grounded in data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and best practices to enhance Maple Ridge's business environment and position the City for sustainable growth.

1. Current Landscape and Key Findings

Maple Ridge's Economic Development department has taken steps toward structured BRE activities, including a CRM system and annual business visits. However, current outreach efforts remain largely ad-hoc. Stakeholder engagement highlighted the need for a more systematic and proactive BRE approach, stronger interdepartmental coordination, and improved relationships with community partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, utility providers, and educational institutions.

Key strengths include the City's affordability, young and growing population, scenic environment, and emerging sectors such as advanced manufacturing and film. Yet, businesses face several critical challenges: limited available industrial land, slow permitting processes, transportation congestion, insufficient temporary accommodations, and a lack of skilled trades and post-secondary education options within city limits.

2. Opportunities and Recommendations

The BRE Strategy identifies multiple areas for improvement:

- **Workforce Development:** Leverage partnerships with institutions like UBC, BCIT, and JIBC to support school-to-job pipelines, and advocate for a post-secondary campus in Maple Ridge.
- **Permitting & Governance:** Streamline permitting and licensing processes, improve transparency, and promote internal collaboration.
- **Communication & Outreach:** Expand digital presence, establish consistent social media strategies, and increase awareness of City services.
- **Targeted Support:** Customize support for different business segments (e.g., large firms, small entrepreneurs, high-growth startups), and emphasize the importance of concierge-style services and business walk programs.
- **Partnerships:** Strengthen coordination with the Chamber, local utilities, and other regional stakeholders to share responsibilities and align goals.

- **Future-Proofing:** Prepare for macroeconomic shifts such as trade disruptions, remote work trends, and climate-resilient industries by adapting local policies and support mechanisms.

3. Implementation and Resourcing

The report includes a detailed implementation plan emphasizing internal process improvement, the use of CRMs to manage business relationships, and ongoing performance monitoring. It proposes a segmented BRE model tailored to “Elephants” (large firms), “Mice” (small stable businesses), and “Gazelles” (high-growth firms), each with distinct needs. The strategy also recommends establishing task forces and enhancing feedback loops with businesses and community groups to ensure that efforts are data-driven and outcomes-focused.

4. Conclusion

The BRE Strategy provides a roadmap for Maple Ridge to become a more responsive, supportive, and competitive business environment. Through targeted actions, strategic partnerships, and sustained investment in infrastructure and workforce, the City can foster a thriving local economy that benefits all residents and businesses.

2. Introduction

The City of Maple Ridge, situated in British Columbia's Lower Mainland, is one of Metro Vancouver's fastest-growing communities, with a current population exceeding 106,000 and projections estimating growth to 150,000 within the next 15 years. To support this expansion and enhance the quality of life for its residents, the City is committed to strengthening its economy by attracting investments and expanding support to existing businesses.

The Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Strategy contained in this document covers the work performed by EBP, a multi-national firm that specializes in economic development and investment attraction. This work includes data analyses, engagement with key groups and businesses in the local and regional economic development ecosystem, and a robust implementation plan to support BRE activities in the City. This Business Retention and Expansion Strategy was developed in parallel with a separate Economic Development initiative, the Investment Attraction Strategy. EBP has developed both strategies and refers to the Investment Attraction Strategy in different places in this report. The research team engaged with private sector representatives, local government, community groups, and other members of the regional economic development ecosystem in interviews and focus groups, gathering key insights into

the City's business environment and the dynamics of and opportunities for improving business support services in the City.

The analyses and research enabled the EBP team to evaluate the City's overall strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats that the City faces in supporting and retaining current businesses. Similarly, the EBP team evaluated political, economic, and social factors that may impact the City's ability to support BRE activities.

3. Environmental Scan

This task aimed to assess the current state of BRE in the City of Maple Ridge and comparable geographies to inform the development of a forward-looking BRE strategy and implementation plan. As the city continues to grow, this plan will support retention and expansion of the local business community.

Figure 1 presents an overview of the Maple Ridge Economic Development department's current practices laid out on a framework of BRE best practices. These practices, sourced from EBP's expertise as well as guidance from British Columbia and the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), serve as a starting point for Maple Ridge to systematize touchpoints with its business community and community partners.

1. In-House BRE Activities

According to its Economic Development Strategy (2021), Maple Ridge's BRE program is "presently focused on a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to efficiently manage business relationships, and an annual business visitation program."¹ The practices in this report centre largely on BRE activities and partnerships that are more proactive in general.

As the City nurtures different BRE activities, it is important that the Economic Development department considers the following tenets:

BRE is an ongoing, perennial effort. While annual events like networking mixers or annual surveys are useful, BRE is best thought of as an ongoing, multi-pronged effort to build relationships with the community's businesses. The Economic Development department could elevate its impact on the local business ecosystem by systematizing existing practices (e.g., focus groups, business walks, in-depth facility visits, and marketing) that are currently ad-hoc.

¹ City of Maple Ridge Economic Development Strategy (2021).

BRE is a team sport. Economic development is just one of multiple entities supporting BRE efforts in the community. To that end, it is essential that Economic Development department engage its partners and position itself as a central player that helps coordinate partners' programs. This is especially important given the Chamber of Commerce's BRE activities. Not only does this avoid duplicated efforts and save labour and resources, but it also improves the business ecosystem's interconnectedness. This strategic planning effort offers a moment for the team to rethink its current activities and how partners can assume or transfer existing or new responsibilities in a way that plays to partners' strengths.

Figure 1 Summary of Maple Ridge's Current BRE Practices



Ad-hoc outreach

Maple Ridge Economic Development offers ad-hoc support to businesses but understands the need for more consistency within the BRE program. For example, the team addresses ad-hoc inquiries from businesses as they arise and there are multiple input and data entry points in the City of Maple Ridge. Inquiry response is one of the primary interfaces for businesses. The Economic Development department does not have its own dedicated Facebook or LinkedIn, but the team does repost content from the City of Maple Ridge, the Ridge Meadows Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association. The Economic Development department and its partners currently engage in the following:

- Announcements about new businesses
- Grand openings and ribbon-cutting events
- Business spotlights and success stories
- Choose MR -shop local campaign (such as 'Choose Maple Ridge – Support Local' campaign²)
- Opportunities for local businesses (e.g., grants, technical support services, educational resources)
- Tariff response efforts (new and upcoming)³

2. Economic Development Partnerships

BRE is a team sport, and Economic Development plays a coordinating role among various players in a complex ecosystem (Table 1). The Economic Development department does not have the time or resources to tackle every possible component of BRE, which means that collaboration is essential as well as prioritization.

Among other partnerships, reconciliation with First Nations and Indigenous communities should remain a priority. Some strategies that other municipalities have undertaken toward reconciliation include:

- The City of Regina, SK, has implemented an Indigenous procurement policy aimed at fostering economic reconciliation. This policy sets a target for at least 20% of the total value of city procurement contracts to be awarded to Indigenous vendors. Regina's efforts are guided by an Indigenous Procurement Advisory Committee.⁴

² [Choose Maple Ridge - Support Local | Maple Ridge, BC](#)

³ [Tariff Response Resources | Maple Ridge, BC](#)

⁴ [City of Regina | Tenders & Procurement](#)

- The City of Montreal, QC, has developed a 2020-2025 Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, which outlines seven key objectives. Among these is the establishment of a government-to-government relationship within city institutions, recognizing Indigenous governments as key partners in regional dialogue. The strategy also acknowledges the vital role of Indigenous civil society and organizations in decision-making and problem-solving on urban issues that affect their communities.⁵
- The City of Edmonton, AB, has strengthened its relationship with the Enoch Cree Nation by signing a Memorandum of Understanding, reflecting their commitment to collaboration as neighbouring communities. This partnership has facilitated joint initiatives in areas such as recreation, land use planning, and public transit, contributing to regional prosperity and community well-being.⁶

⁵ [2020-2025 Strategy for Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples | Ville de Montréal](#)

⁶ [Relationship with Enoch Cree Nation | City of Edmonton](#)

Table 1. BRE Partners

	Economic Development Department	Rest of City	Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD) Govt	Chamber	Utilities	Educational Institutions	Business Leaders	Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association (DMBRIA)
Manage the program	X							
Serve as an advisor to the program				X	X	X	X	X
Financially support the program	X	X		X				
Conduct outreach	X	X		X		X		X
Evaluate outreach feedback	X			X		X		
Problem-solve	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Identify subject-matter experts	X		X	X		X	X	
Provide technical assistance		X	X	X	X	X		
Ensure program sustainability	X	X						
Promote the program	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Advocate for the program	X			X			X	X
Recruit participants for the program	X			X		X	X	X

Chambers of Commerce

Chambers of Commerce are a critical fixture in economic development ecosystems. In Maple Ridge, the Economic Development department has a service agreement with the Chamber of Commerce to delineate roles for each organization, which work in tandem and can overlap. The Chamber conducts business walks, conducts outreach to new businesses to orient them to resources, hosts workshops and educational sessions to support local businesses, and organizes roundtable to discuss emergent issues in the business community.

To maximize effectiveness, it is essential that both organizations maintain open lines of communication, regularly share insights from their respective engagements, and jointly plan initiatives where appropriate. By leveraging each other's strengths and relationships, they can present a unified front to the business community, foster stronger relationships with local enterprises, and more efficiently respond to emerging economic challenges and opportunities.

Utilities

Utility providers play a unique role in BRE because they share an interest with the Economic Development department in maximizing its customer base without incurring large costs to access new geographies. In other words, utility companies often prioritize maximizing their customer base using its existing infrastructure.

Given this alignment of interests, the Economic Development team can collaborate with utility firms to improve the business climate. Utility firms in the Maple Ridge region already independently do BRE-like activity, such as efficiency programs, HVAC replacement, and other incentives. This offers an opportunity for the Economic Development department to help coordinate efforts and find new ways to collaborate.

The Economic Development department should foster an ongoing relationship with utilities to find symbiotic opportunities. The team should explore possible collaborations with initial conversations about mutual interests and needs. The Economic Development department's current relationship with utilities is generally ad-hoc, but it is a good sign that utilities have collaborated with them for specific issues.

Task Forces BRE task forces, also called committees, offer another way to build buy-in, better distribute activities, and gain strategic support. More generally, task forces create a feedback loop from stakeholders to Economic Development and serve as another touchpoint for Economic Development. There are various types of task forces, for example to discuss and help solve issues related to workforce, data analysis, communications/marketing, or special initiatives. The most common and important task force is the Executive Task Force, which generally comprises

stakeholders from across the BRE landscape, e.g., trade associations, chambers, educational institutions, workforce development organizations. These task forces can identify and execute tasks to support the Economic Development department. Maple Ridge does not currently have any such committees or task forces.

Educational Institutions

Maple Ridge is supported by a range of post-secondary institutions, including the Justice Institute of BC (JIBC), UBC Research Forest, BCIT, Douglas College (via WorkBC), and the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV). However, the absence of a dedicated, full-scale campus within city boundaries presents a barrier to equitable, consistent, and community-centered access to higher education for residents. In 2024 and early 2025 considerable work was done to build a collaboration with key partners to encourage location of a post-secondary institution in Maple Ridge. Establishing a collaboration model is now completed and will continue to be maintained. Future work will focus on connecting the post-secondary engagement and collaboration to investment attraction needs regarding the future labour force. While the Economic Development department regularly engages with Malcolm Knapp Research Forest (UBC), BCIT, JIBC, and Simon Fraser University (SFU), there are more opportunities for future collaboration amid new enthusiasm. For example, School District 42 and JIBC have new leadership interested in school-to-job programs and collaborative engagement with local businesses by UBC. There is also interest in Research Forest development opportunities of, for example, meeting spaces, commercial kitchens, and business incubator spaces. Such opportunities can be explored further while the City waits for a feasibility analysis from the government of British Columbia and determine next steps towards establishing a post-secondary institution campus in Maple Ridge.

These new initiatives—and especially a potential institution in Maple Ridge—present key opportunities for BRE collaboration.

3. State of Business Data Collection Activities

Maple Ridge does not have a live centralized database of active businesses. Its current lists (the Business Licence Directory and Business Finder app) present challenges to effective BRE outreach and data collection:

- **Partial lists.** Current lists require voluntary opt-in, meaning that these lists are not exhaustive. The lists also exclude non-residential licences (contractors, film productions, etc.) not registered in Maple Ridge. Similarly, Fraser Valley Inter-Municipal Business Licence (IMBL) holders domiciled outside Maple Ridge are also excluded.

- **Esoteric industry categories.** Maple Ridge's current business information does not use NAICS categories, making definitions unclear and noncomparable with data from peers or across the country.
- **Intermittently accurate.** The information for these lists is compiled in November before licences expire every year on December 31. Because late notices extend into late February and March, the data is not yet "useful" until April or later.

The above issues are substantial challenges for effective BRE. In the long term, the Economic Development team, in conjunction with Bylaw, Licensing and Community Safety, should explore how to establish a streamlined system that will enable the City to better track its economic progress using universal terminology, which allows for benchmarking with peers and within national classification systems such as North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

4. Provincial Programs

The Government of British Columbia publishes diverse [BRE resources and templates](#).

- Performance Measurement Toolkit
 - Includes a library of possible indicators
- Excel-based Dashboard and Workbook Templates
- Annual Report Template
- [Funding Finder Tool](#) and funding [program list](#) to support cities' Economic Development departments.

The City of Maple Ridge can greatly benefit from these resources.

5. BRE Activities in Comparable Geographies in the Region

Geography	Region	Notes	In-House BRE	In-House Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
Airdrie (City)	Alberta	Proximate to Calgary, Suburban market, has similar sectors as Maple Ridge	New business outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome emails In-person visit Social media for new/re-opening businesses Ad-hoc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown events Grant opportunities Inquiry response Marketing (FB, IG, LinkedIn) Downtown Revitalization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographically targeted IA/BRE 	Airdrie Entrepreneurship Common Economic Development Team-led partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover SMARTstart AdvanceSMART Mentor Meetup The Cashflow Canvas Ad-hoc <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops (e.g., two about leasing) Ongoing Entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business breakfast 	Chamber <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Luncheons Networking events Annual trade show Economic Development liaison on Board of Directors City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual business breakfast Programming
Bellingham (City)	Washington, USA	Suburban market with proximity to nature; redeveloping areas (e.g., waterfront) to attract business	New business outreach/support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Small Business Development Center (SBDC) connects businesses with a Certified Business Advisor who will help create a business plan, develop financial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free of charge 1:1 business consultation SCORE connects businesses with a retired business professional who knows the ins and 	Expedited Permitting Faster permitting options for green building projects; free technical assistance and support is also available. Financing support A variety of local, state and federal options for funding businesses. ⁹

⁹ [Home | Small Business Development Center | Western Washington University](#)

Geography	Region	Notes	In-House BRE	In-House Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
			forecasts, obtain financing and more – all at no cost. ⁷	outs of running a small business. ⁸	
Boulder (City)	Colorado, USA	Suburban market with proximity to Denver and nature	<p>The city, under its BRE strategic plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continues to proactively analyze trends in market forces to shape its activities, plans and policies regarding local business and business retention. Considers the projected needs of businesses and their respective employees, such as commercial and office space, when planning for transportation infrastructure, programs and housing. Conducts analysis of market trends and policies about affordable business space and a diverse employment base.¹⁰ Works with the local business community and residents to make sure the city's regulations and development review processes provide flexibility. 		
Chilliwack (City)	British Columbia	Local competitor in Fraser Valley / Lower Mainland of British Columbia		Online learning platform (The Chamber Academy) for businesses to access affordable workshops and educational resources.	The Chamber of Commerce helps local businesses thrive by offering valuable financial support resources. The Downtown Chilliwack Business Improvement Association, (DCBIA) , in partnership with other communities, has a Health Benefits Program that offers small companies an

⁷ [Home | Small Business Development Center | Western Washington University](#)

⁸ [Bellingham | SCORE](#)

¹⁰ [Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan | City of Boulder](#)

Geography	Region	Notes	In-House BRE	In-House Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
					opportunity for pooled benefits that may otherwise not be affordable.
Coquitlam (City)	British Columbia	Local competitor in Metro Vancouver	<p>Conduct a survey of local businesses on a bi-annual basis to identify areas of success and areas of concern and pro-actively address issues.</p> <p>Develop an inventory of business support and incentive programs and prepare a marketing portal as part of the City's Economic Development website for local and prospective businesses.</p>	Work with the local business community to develop 'ready for market' programs and support services for export-oriented businesses.	<p>Work with the local hotel and hospitality industry to explore the viability of establishing a Coquitlam Destination Marketing Organization</p> <p>Support the establishment of new Business Improvement Areas for various employment clusters by leveraging our relationship with the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce.</p>
Langley (Township)	British Columbia	Local competitor in Metro Vancouver			Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce – NextGen Business Network, Women's Business Network ¹¹

¹¹ [Langley City Business Resource Booklet by LangleyCity - Issuu](#)

Geography	Region	Notes	In-House BRE	In-House Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
Pickering (City)	Ontario	Proximate to Toronto, similar population and economy	The Small Business Hub provides entrepreneurs items to borrow as they start up and grow. This includes a Grand Opening Banner (intended only for the Grand Opening date); assistance with product photography; and items to support business tradeshow, conferences and events.	Red Ribbon Cutting Ceremony ensuring invitations are extended to Mayor, Councillors and local stakeholders	<p>The Business Advisory Centre Durham (BACD) free services support small business and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Advisory Services • Business Training • Mentoring & Workshops • Entrepreneurship Funding Programs • Networking Opportunities <p>Durham Business Showcase event provides an opportunity for businesses to share their products and services with municipal staff and other public sector partners</p>
Strathcona (County)	Alberta	Proximity to Edmonton and natural environment (e.g., a	Strathcona County conducted a business survey to identify the needs and challenges faced by local businesses.	Business Learning Seminars (e.g. Negotiating Commercial Leases and Renewals)	Each year, businesses in the region are invited to attend the Supply Chain Forum - an event connecting attendees with many of the

Geography	Region	Notes	In-House BRE	In-House Entrepreneurship	Partnerships
		national park that must be accessed via the municipality)	Led promotions, council visitations, marketing campaigns, publications (including annual survey results), start-up workshops, events like Savour Strathcona to increase visibility of local food vendors, agricultural producers and artists, marketing support, and mentorship programs		region's major industrial companies. The 2023 forum was held jointly by the City of Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon County, and Strathcona County, with support from the Sherwood Park & District Chamber of Commerce.

4. Relevant Groups Engagement

The City of Maple Ridge's initial outreach and engagement with key groups have helped to build a strong foundational understanding of the Maple Ridge business environment and strengthen business connections and will directly inform the Business Retention and Expansion strategy. These efforts have also provided valuable insights into the ongoing health and success of local businesses.

Different groups have varying perspectives on the advantages and challenges of operating in Maple Ridge. While concerns such as traffic congestion and inadequate infrastructure create obstacles for businesses, Maple Ridge also offers significant benefits. Its affordability, access to a younger talent pool, and a growing sense of optimism contribute to its attractiveness for business growth and retention.

Some key findings with recommended next steps are summarized in Table 2. It is important to note this section covers "what we heard" in the field and they may not fully reflect ongoing effort of the City to address different challenges.

Table 2. Key Findings and Opportunities for Maple Ridge

Challenge faced by the City	Resulting Implications for Local Businesses	Opportunities for the City Leadership
Infrastructure Gaps	Businesses must invest heavily in basic amenities like water and sewer services, leading to increased costs.	Streamline communication, implement modular infrastructure solutions, and ensure leadership support for growth-focused policies
Limited Industrial Land	Businesses struggle to find suitable locations for operations and expansion, restricting economic growth.	Identify and rezone land for industrial use and explore mixed-use developments to optimize available space
Transportation Connectivity Issues	Congestion, particularly on Lougheed Highway and Golden Ears Bridge, creates logistical challenges and increases transportation costs.	Advocate for regional transportation improvements and explore mobility solutions to ease congestion
Slow Permitting and Approval Processes	Lengthy development approval and business licensing timelines discourage investment, delay	Streamline approval processes by enhancing interdepartmental coordination

	project completion, and put government grants at risk.	Better support and improve awareness of concierge services within the Economic Development department to keep businesses informed through the process
Insufficient Temporary Accommodations	Lack of hotels and short-term rentals impacts industries like film and construction, making it harder to attract workers.	Encourage hotel and short-term rentals development through incentives and partnerships with private developers
Lagging Commercial Development	Residents travel outside the City for amenities and services, reducing local consumer spending and business viability.	Support local business growth by attracting retail and service-sector investments to enhance commercial offerings, such as celebrating 'Shop Local Week'
Historical Lack of Interdepartmental Collaboration	Inefficient processes and bureaucratic delays worsen business development challenges, causing frustration among business owners.	Strengthen Economic Development team's role in interdepartmental working groups to improve communication and accelerate decision-making

1. Initial Outreach Engagement

EBP worked closely with the City to identify key partners for engagement, including local businesses and City leadership. In close collaboration with the Economic Development department, we identified critical groups such as local companies, Indigenous communities, and business associations, recognizing their essential roles in the successful implementation of the BRE Plan.

The Economic Development team scheduled engagements with local businesses and community leaders for the EBP field visit. Unfortunately, due to logistical constraints, we did not have an opportunity to meet with the First Nations communities; however, we strongly encourage the City to continue prioritizing these communities and to make it a consistent practice to involve them. The City intends to continue fostering and strengthening these relationships, particularly those established or strengthened through this initiative, ensuring sustained collaboration and support for the long-term success of Maple Ridge's business community and the effective implementation of the BRE Plan.

2. Relevant Group Engagement from Field Visit

The objective of the field visit was to gain insight into the needs and experiences of both existing businesses and potential investors while identifying early opportunities, legacy challenges, and discrepancies between perceptions and data realities. This exercise provided a deeper understanding of the current business ecosystem, key opportunities, and any perceived barriers to growth within the community. Table 3 summarizes the relevant groups the team engaged with during the field visit, which took place January 21-23, 2025.

Table 3. Groups Engaged During Field Visit

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Focus Group 3
Meadowridge School	Haney Builders Supply	Business Improvement Association (BIA)
Sanscorp Products Ltd.	Therapeutic Collective	Chambers of Commerce
Meadowridge School	Supreme Structural Transport	
University of British Columbia (UBC)	JLL	
Avison Young	Vanspec	
Partap Forest Products	Switchback Brewing	
Production Playground (A division of Owen Holdings Ltd.)	BC Hydro	
Beedie Development Group	Mainland West	
Orion Constructions	Haney Builders Supply	
Meridian Farm Market	Colliers	
Jewel WFC	JIBC	
Invest Vancouver	JEDI	
	Advanced Self Storage	

- Themes explored with local businesses/ companies included:
 - Location decision – Why is your business in Maple Ridge?
 - Local regulatory processes & business supports – your experiences working in and with the City
 - Land, infrastructure, and utilities in and around Maple Ridge
 - Talent and workforce development
- Themes explored with City Business Officials included:
 - Members' businesses, goals, and challenges
 - Business Improvement Association (BIA) and Chamber roles, goals, and challenges

- The future of the Maple Ridge business environment

3. Findings

1. Perceived Wins

Location

- The City provides access to nature and the environment, promoting a sense of stewardship and encouraging residents to appreciate and protect these natural resources.

Expanding Resources' Inventory

- Land granted by the province to UBC led to the development of the Malcolm Knapp Research Forest, which is currently developing a welcome and education centre, which will also serve as a destination building with event space.
- The Golden Ears Bridge is a vital transportation and logistics asset. Chilliwack has successfully attracted investment due to its proximity to Highway 1, highlighting a similar opportunity for Maple Ridge.
- Despite rising costs, Maple Ridge still offers a strong value proposition, as industrial land south of the Fraser River is significantly more expensive.
- Maple Ridge stands out for its talent and population density, affordability, and access to nature.
- Younger workers are moving to Maple Ridge, supported by an affordable housing market. This gives the City the opportunity to retain younger talent in the community by helping them identify more job opportunities in the City.

Lower/ Competitive Property Tax and Other Costs

- Maple Ridge was selected for growth in the lumber and manufacturing sectors over Surrey and Abbotsford due to its lower property taxes and less restrictive land use policies. Businesses prioritized affordability to avoid being priced out of more expensive markets.
- Affordability remains one of Maple Ridge's key advantages, attracting many individuals from Vancouver and Burnaby, particularly younger professionals. Housing availability is a major selling point, drawing both residents and businesses to the area.
- For example, we learned during in-person interviews in the field that Meadowridge School considers Maple Ridge an ideal location for staff to raise families, which helps attract

high-quality applicants. Additionally, the private school brings in 40 to 70 families each year who relocate specifically for its strong educational opportunities.

Growing Opportunities to Explore

During field engagement, participants recognized that the City has the potential to contribute to the green economy and explore further opportunities.

Younger generations increasingly prefer to shop locally, a trend that has contributed to the success of Chilliwack's development. The area has effectively balanced big-box retailers with the charm of local businesses, attracting young consumers. Maple Ridge can leverage this trend by fostering a similar environment that supports both large and small businesses.

Growing Optimism and Positive Momentum

Most of the people noted that the City has been great to work with, fostering close collaboration with businesses and neighbouring communities. The business community is noting a shift in the City recently to being more responsive and flexible, which needs to continue. There is optimism that the new leadership will streamline the permitting process, making it more efficient.

Businesses have experienced a strong commitment from the City, with a proactive approach to engagement. One company described their experience as the best they've had with any city—officials met with them quickly, identified key contacts, and established regular meetings with clear timelines. This efficient coordination was especially crucial for a large, high-priority project. Ensuring all relevant departments, such as planning and fire services, are aligned early in the process remains essential.

There is also a strong appetite for building relationships and connections within the business community. Economic Development has played a key role in fostering conversations to attract film investment that have been highly successful, generating excitement for the future. Such activity provides evidence to the business community that there is a cultural and practical shift taking place with the City becoming more responsive and business friendly.

2. Perceived Challenges

Resource Limitations

- Maple Ridge is struggling to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses in certain areas of the City. Many local businesses must invest heavily to access basic amenities such as water and sewer services. In Ruskin, for example, some services are provided on an on-call basis, leading to increased insurance rates.

- The limited availability of industrial land further complicates business operations in Maple Ridge. The City is low on industrial land inventories, making it increasingly difficult for businesses to establish and expand their operations.
- Transportation connectivity remains a challenge in certain parts of the City, particularly access via the Golden Ears Bridge due to congestion on Lougheed Highway.
- Despite having a fair inventory supply of industrial lands in the City, there is a perception that there is a lack of industrial land that makes it harder to do business in the City, as Maple Ridge's industrial land inventory is among the smallest in the region, ranking just above First Nations land.
- Commercial development is lagging population growth, leading many residents who move to Maple Ridge to travel outside the City for amenities and recreational opportunities. The City needs more retail shopping options and 'Saturday entertainment'.

Gaps in Service Provision

- The Silver Valley neighbourhood has limited services for residents.
- Business deals are being lost due to a lack of available accommodation.
- Temporary accommodation, such as hotels, are insufficient to meet the needs of the film industry and other sectors, particularly for union workers on contract. As a result, many struggle to find suitable lodging within the City or near their work sites.

"Can we arrange for the people involved in the show to stay at a hotel just 10 minutes from the site? This is a key deciding factor for a major film opportunity that was considering our location."

Restrictive Regulatory & Permitting Processes

The permitting process was extensively discussed in focus group discussions. The number of permits required, along with the lengthy approval process for each, presents a significant barrier to entry and business operations in the City. Additionally, the City has a limited number of permitted dump sites, which some businesses rely on for their operations.

In certain cases, the permitting and business licencing process has taken much longer than what was initially estimated by the City. As a result, businesses have faced escalating costs while waiting for approval, with inflation adding to the problem as well.

What makes the situation even more frustrating is that similar businesses in other cities, which applied later, received their permits before those in Maple Ridge. Due to these inefficiencies, Maple Ridge has gained a negative reputation among other cities for its slow permitting such as development approvals processes.

There is significant competition in the region, making Maple Ridge's lengthy permitting and approval process even less attractive for new or expansion development projects. For example, an investor expressed interest in building a hotel in the City but ultimately decided not to proceed due to the complexities of the permitting process.

"It took 2.5 years for a company to complete its relocation, significantly discouraging the business owner from pursuing any larger developments. The standard process should have taken no more than six months. Frustrated by the delays, the business owner ultimately decided to scale back plans."

"Complications with building permits caused major setbacks, preventing us from moving forward with our intended work."

Some also noted that these delays are not unique to Maple Ridge but are resource- and time-intensive across the province, averaging 1.5 years. However, this is still significantly longer compared to Alberta, where the process takes only six months. Businesses also noted that the bylaws and procedures between the two provinces appear very similar, but it is more a matter of philosophy/culture than any other factor. In Maple Ridge, a historical lack of collaboration among different departments has further exacerbated the issue. The lengthy approval timelines not only result in higher costs for businesses but also put government grants at risk if a submitted permit does not proceed as planned.

Land developers and construction professionals emphasized that they carefully select the communities they work in, with ease of doing business being a major deciding factor.

Lack of Skilled Trade Workers

Maple Ridge lacks higher education institutions and trade/ technical schools, which limits local workforce development.

- In industries like film, there is a need for stronger collaboration between tradespeople and business professionals.
- The lumber and manufacturing sectors rely heavily on workers from Mission, Abbotsford, and Surrey, with little to no local workforce participation.
- The hospitality sector, particularly in roles like cooks and food service, has faced staffing challenges, often requiring workers from outside the City.

Other Issues

- Recent changes within the City management, including changes in human resources and organizational changes, may have disrupted continuity in planning and decision-making processes.
- Many businesses are unaware of the services the City offers, particularly in three key areas: safety, business revitalization, and promotion.
- Despite being well-positioned to address core challenges around homelessness and safety, the City continues to struggle with a persistent negative perception regarding public safety.
- Maple Ridge has pioneered innovative programs to improve community care and address homelessness, yet it does not receive due recognition from the province or other municipalities. While jurisdictions have adopted these approaches, they have not acknowledged Maple Ridge's leadership in this space.

4. Recommendations Shared During Group Engagement

Enhance Communication and Collaboration

Maple Ridge can learn from Langley's proactive and customer-focused approach, where city services work in coordination to foster a strong interdepartmental team culture. Streamlining communication between businesses, developers, and city officials would improve efficiency and encourage investment.

The City should also improve communication regarding the future of the Haney Mall site by actively exploring potential redevelopment opportunities. Additionally, commercial landowners could take a more proactive role in informing the community about plans for vacant storefronts, helping to generate public interest and engagement.

More broadly, the City needs to enhance communication about ongoing initiatives, including safety measures and business activities, to correct misinformation and build confidence in the community.

Adopt a Pro-Growth Mindset

For Maple Ridge to support long-term growth, engineers should play an active role in decision-making to develop innovative, modular housing solutions that address the City's unique challenges. Implementing strong decision-making framework—backed by strong top-down support for pro-growth policies—will be critical in attracting and retaining businesses. A more modular and adaptive approach to planning and development would help Maple Ridge better

prioritize infrastructure investments, addressing longstanding issues such as limited industrial land, transportation bottlenecks, and service accessibility.

Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships

Establishing structured partnerships between developers, engineers, and the City would help Maple Ridge address its pressing infrastructure challenges, particularly in areas like Silver Valley and Ruskin, where businesses face high costs for basic utilities. By fostering collaboration, the City can develop more effective and sustainable solutions for infrastructure expansion, industrial land availability, and transportation improvements, ultimately creating a more business-friendly environment.

Expand Education and Workforce Development

Introducing a trade or technical school in Maple Ridge would strengthen workforce development, building on the foundation provided by local high schools. This would build on the foundation already provided by local high schools and help create a pipeline of skilled workers.

Improve Business Support Services

The Economic Development department should be the primary point of contact for businesses looking to establish or expand in Maple Ridge. Raising awareness of the "Business Ready" initiative would help increase support for new and existing businesses. The department has the potential to adopt various BRE practices such as concierge services for new and existing businesses in the City.

Invest in Infrastructure

To support proactive growth, Maple Ridge must make significant upgrades to its roads, water systems, bridges, and recreational facilities. The City currently has one of the smallest industrial land inventories in the region. Expanding industrial land and improving infrastructure are critical to attracting and retaining businesses.

Additionally, Maple Ridge urgently needs a hotel to accommodate business travellers, film industry professionals, and other visitors. The redevelopment of Haney Place Mall should also be a priority, particularly as the site will serve as the terminus for the new Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line connecting to the SkyTrain in Langley. As one of the first impressions for visitors, transforming this space into a vibrant, well-utilized hub would be beneficial for economic development and the City's image.

Investing in commercial spaces that support small businesses, such as breweries and local retail, is also a key opportunity. The establishment of Patch Brewery is being viewed as a huge

win for the City and has generated demand for such establishments, reinforcing the need for strategic infrastructure investments that create a more dynamic business environment in Maple Ridge.

Enhance Transportation Connectivity

Connecting the Golden Ears Bridge via Abernethy Way extension to 256 Street would unlock significant industrial development potential, as the area has large tracts of land available. Strengthening transportation infrastructure will be key to facilitating long-term economic growth and regional connectivity.

5. Future Trends

Maple Ridge Economic Development Department's Business Retention & Expansion (BRE) strategy should be tailored not only to the City's current economic ecosystem but also to future needs. Economic data analysis provides a high-level understanding of Maple Ridge's current industries. Qualitative data from business leaders provide deeper insight into emergent trends that are not as easily captured in Census data.

This report provides an overview of Maple Ridge's businesses and discusses sector-level trends at the local, regional, provincial, national, and international scales that will shape Maple Ridge's business needs. It aims to inform the City's BRE strategy to resiliently navigate economic shifts.

Highlights:

- **Supply chain volatility & manufacturing risks:** Trade policy and supply chain shifts threaten Maple Ridge's industrial production. While advanced manufacturing (e.g., metal products and machinery) shows resilience, wood product manufacturing faces risks due to U.S. tariffs and recent sawmill closures, highlighting the need for targeted BRE support.
- **Workforce shifts & remote work:** With 18.8% of the workforce working remotely, Maple Ridge can leverage trends like remote work and home-based businesses.¹² However, that is a risk, as there is growing pressure by employers to have employees return to the office. BRE strategies should focus on supporting non-traditional business models through investments in high-speed internet, affordable housing, and quality of life.

¹² Environics estimates via Esri Canada. Derived from Statistics Canada census data.

- **Quality of life:** Maple Ridge's amenities, outdoor features, and recreation are crucial for attracting and retaining talent. A strong quality of life supports workforce retention and, in turn, local business growth, especially as remote work becomes more prevalent.
- **Retail trade remains a large employer:** Retail in Maple Ridge is sensitive to consumer spending shifts, particularly amid inflation. Targeted retention strategies for key retail sectors and expansion opportunities for big-box and specialty stores can help retain local spending. Focus retail development/ investment to the Town Centre area to complement and support other initiatives in the area, including enhanced transit service.
- **Healthcare is a large stable employment sector:** Healthcare remains a major employer, driven by an aging population and steady hiring demand, making it a key sector for economic stability.
- **Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services are a significant but not dominant employer:** Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services are a sizable sector with potential for growth, especially with available commercial land and possible connections to post-secondary education pipelines.

1. Maple Ridge's Business Community

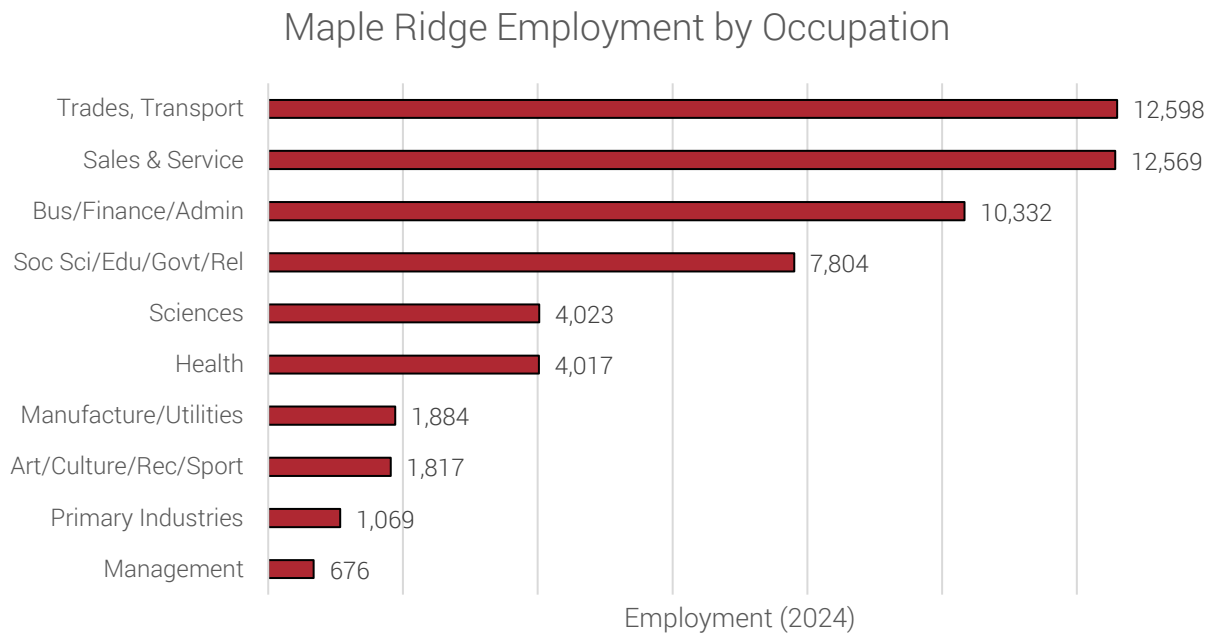
Maple Ridge's labour force comprises nearly 58,000 individuals and has strong market and workforce access as a part of the Metro Vancouver region. As of 2021, the City's residents had a workforce participation rate of 67.6%, above British Columbia's (65.2%) and Canada's rate (65.3%), which may in part speak to the City's slightly younger-than-average population. The City itself has a population of 105,000 but has access to a population of 3,200,000 within a 1-hour driving distance.

Around 13.9% (8,000 workers) of Maple Ridge's workforce are self-employed, which is on par with national average.¹³ Approximately 41.5% of the workforce have "white-collar" jobs, while 27.4% have "blue-collar" jobs and 31.1% service jobs.¹⁴ This roughly aligns with the workforce's educational attainment. In the City, 6.3% of the population has no certificate, diploma, or degree; 26.9% have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate; 11.1% hold an apprenticeship, trade certificate, or diploma; 25.5% have a university bachelor's degree or higher; 29.4% have a combined non-university certificate or diploma and university education below the bachelor level.

¹³ Environics estimates via Esri Canada. Derived from Statistics Canada census data; [Trading Economics](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

Figure 2. Maple Ridge Employment by Occupation

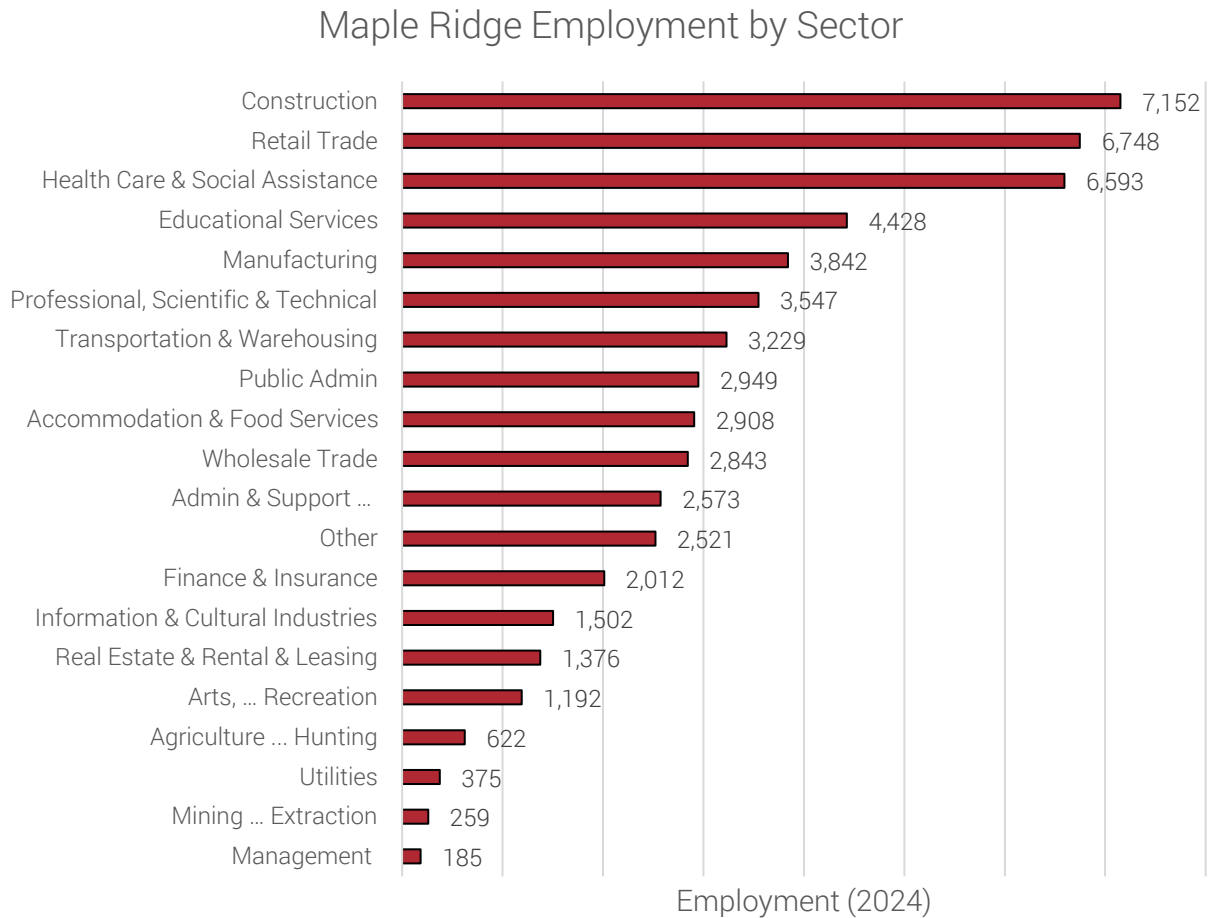


Source: EBP Analysis of Environics estimates via Esri Canada. Derived from Statistics Canada census data.

Occupational data tells a similar story to industry employment data (Figure 2). A plurality of Maple Ridge's labour force works in trades & transport and sales & service. These occupations best align with industries including construction, transportation & warehousing, retail trade. The third largest occupation category in Maple Ridge is business, finance, and administration, which is best reflected by the professional services industry.

Maple Ridge's largest employment sector remains construction (7,200 workers), although shift share analysis showed that this sector had the greatest negative local competitive effect, in that this sector's employment underperformed relative to national and industry-level expectations (see Competitive Benchmarking section in the Investment Attraction companion report). Nonetheless, Maple Ridge's concentration of construction workers still suggests robust activity in the City (Figure 3).

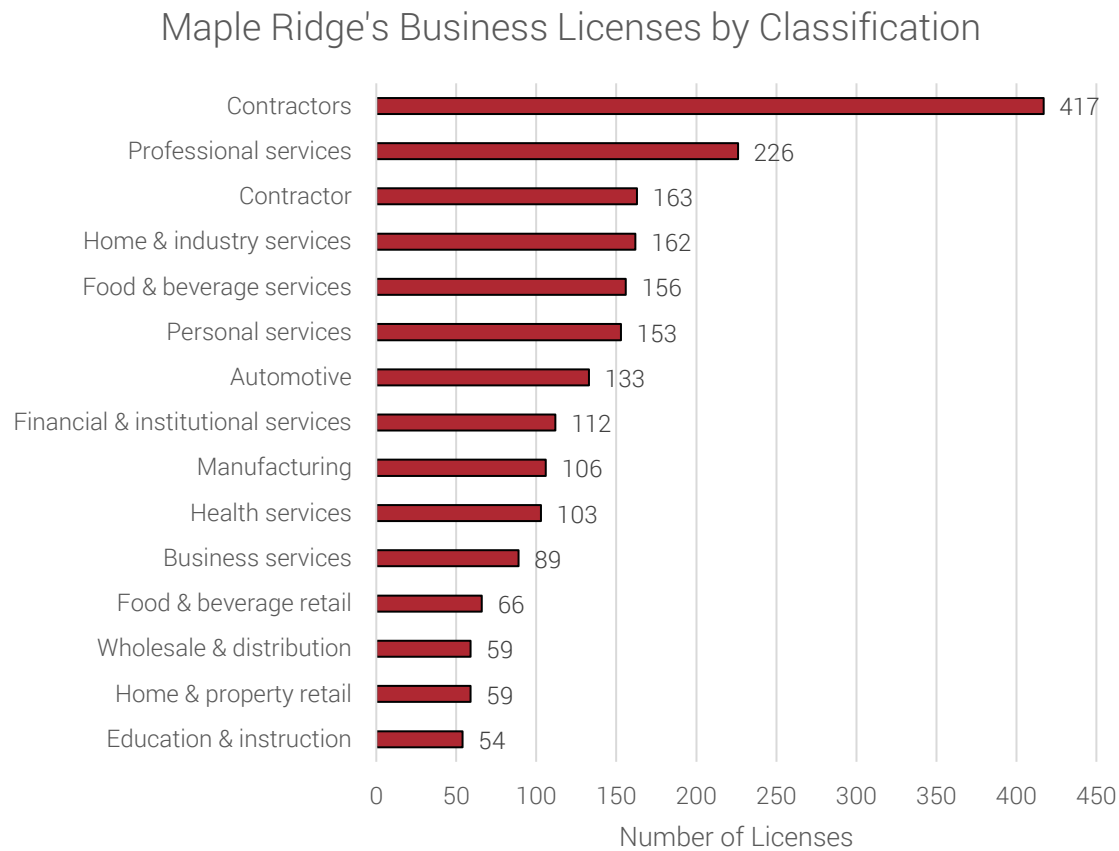
Figure 3. Maple Ridge Employment by Sector



Source: EBP Analysis of Environics estimates via Esri Canada. Derived from Statistics Canada census data.

In terms of employment, construction is closely followed by retail trade (6,700 workers) and healthcare (6,600 workers), and more distantly by educational services (4,400 workers), manufacturing (3,800 workers), and professional, scientific, and technical services (3,500 workers). All these sectors exhibit local competitiveness, which reflects Maple Ridge's above-average employment growth in recent years. Manufacturing's local competitiveness is particularly noteworthy, especially given recent manufacturing developments not yet reflected in historical public data.

Figure 4. Maple Ridge's Business Licences by Classification



Source: EBP Analysis of Maple Ridge business licence data via Business Finder.

2. Key Trends

The following selected trends are important to consider within the context of Maple Ridge's local BRE program.

1. Local Trends

Workforce housing needs. Maple Ridge faces a growing need for affordable housing to house its workforce and attract talent. Addressing this need is essential for business retention and workforce stability, particularly as remote work becomes more prevalent.

Room for expansion. About 56% of the City's commercially zoned lands are developed while 11% are vacant and 33% are under-utilized, particularly in the Town Centre and Lougheed Highway areas.

There is an opportunity to leverage vacant and underutilized commercial land in the Town Centre. Supportive policies and zoning could accommodate both business expansion and new residential development, contributing to Maple Ridge's overall BRE goals.

Competitive edge in manufacturing. Maple Ridge's manufacturing sector, particularly advanced manufacturing, remains competitive despite broader industry challenges. The increasing demand for skilled trades and technological advancements ensures the sector's continued resilience and growth. Notably, there is a growing provincial interest in developing the prefabricated, mass timber, and modular housing industry, further strengthening its prospects.

Educational institutions. A local post-secondary education campus could provide valuable support to businesses in Maple Ridge, particularly in the professional services sector. There is growing interest in exploring such opportunities. Additionally, given the City's strong construction industry, there is a clear need for a trade/ technical school to help develop a skilled workforce.

Robust film industry. While not captured in employment and business licence data, film industry activity in Maple Ridge is critical to retaining and expanding local businesses that serve the film industry.

2. Regional Trends

Federal interest in trade relationships across the Pacific Ocean. Maple Ridge is strategically positioned within the jurisdiction of the Port of Vancouver, allowing it to benefit from federal efforts to increase trade activity across the Pacific. This opportunity aligns with growing interest in transportation and multi-modal logistics, supporting potential growth in the warehousing and distribution sectors.

3. National Trends

Supply chain and trade policy disruptions. Volatile U.S. trade policies and reshoring efforts are driving manufacturers to diversify or shorten their supply chains to reduce risks. This shift creates opportunities for Maple Ridge to attract manufacturers seeking stable, local alternatives and reliable infrastructure.

Technological disruptions. Manufacturers are increasingly adopting new technologies like automation and artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and manage costs amid inflation and an aging workforce. This technological shift is reshaping the industry, with AI playing a key role in optimizing processes and asset management, presenting opportunities for local businesses to innovate and stay competitive.

3. Implications for Maple Ridge's BRE

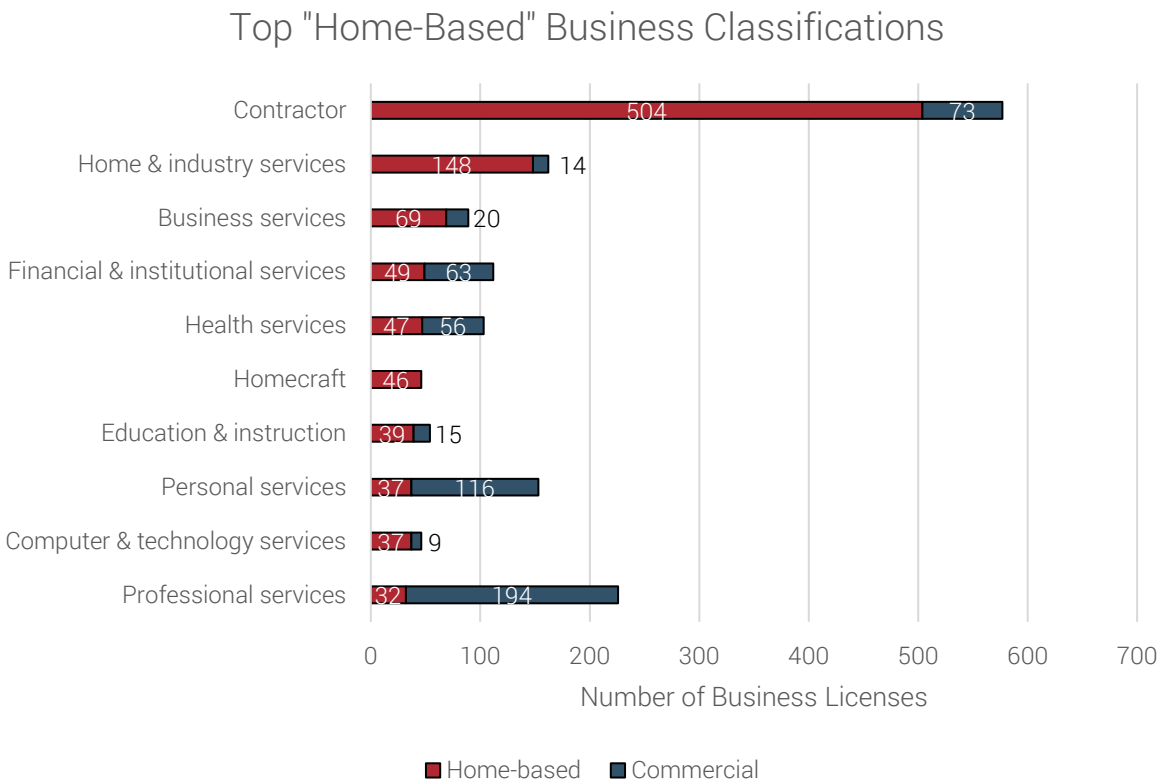
4. Home-Based Business

Home-based businesses are another key segment of Maple Ridge's local economy. According to Maple Ridge's business licence data on Business Finder, 1,358 (nearly half) of the City's 2,739 licences are classified as home-based.¹⁵

Home-based businesses, however, should not be conflated with WFH. For example, most contractor and agricultural business licenses are classified as home-based, but these sectors' activities are typically in-person and geographically bound. That said, home-based businesses and WFH businesses will likely necessitate a similar BRE strategy, i.e., focus groups and individual outreach rather than site visits and business walks, as there may be no brick-and-mortar location.

¹⁵ Business Finder data, provided by Maple Ridge Economic Development

Figure 5. Maple Ridge's Top Home-Based Licence Categories



Source: EBP Analysis of Maple Ridge business licence data via Business Finder.

5. Brick-and-Mortar Businesses

Maple Ridge's business community also includes many non-home-based businesses. Professional services, food & beverage services, personal services, and retail-related businesses are the most numerous, but these businesses likely have small numbers of employees.

By contrast, sectors like manufacturing and healthcare have fewer business licences but far more employees, indicating they are larger businesses. It is also noteworthy that shift share analysis suggests that both these sectors have local competitive advantages.

Professional, scientific, and technical services

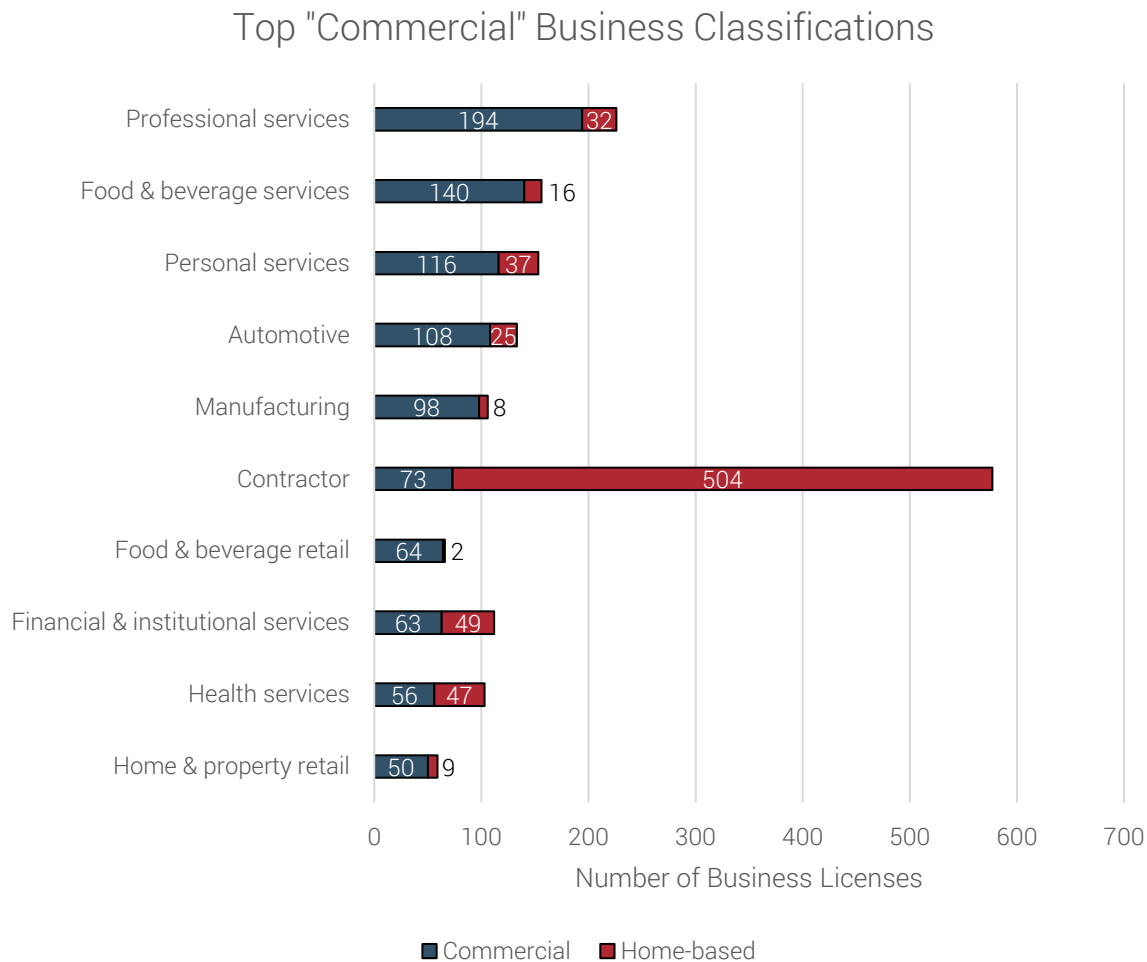
With 3,500 workers, the professional services sector is the sixth largest sector in Maple Ridge. Its closest corresponding business licence category has the largest number of commercial business licences.¹⁶

This sector captures a wide variety of economic activity and subsectors. **Engineering services** remain competitive through innovation and serve both renewable and traditional energy markets, with smaller firms thriving regionally. Meanwhile, **management consulting** has experienced revenue fluctuations, with demand surging post-pandemic for restructuring and risk management, particularly in major provinces. **Environmental consulting** is growing as stricter regulations and sustainability concerns drive demand, especially in construction and energy. Finally, **IT consulting** in Canada is especially important as the country sees increasing activity cloud-based services and networking infrastructure.

All these subsectors share a need for skilled talent pipelines (post-secondary education is often required) and office space availability. Maple Ridge's Official Community Plan indicates that there is room for opportunity on both issues. Maple Ridge is exploring post-secondary institution options to better service this sector's businesses.

¹⁶ EBP is unfortunately unable to crosswalk license and employment data because Maple Ridge's business license categorization scheme does not align with traditional NAICS codes.

Figure 6. Maple Ridge's Top Commerical (not Home-Based) Licence Categories

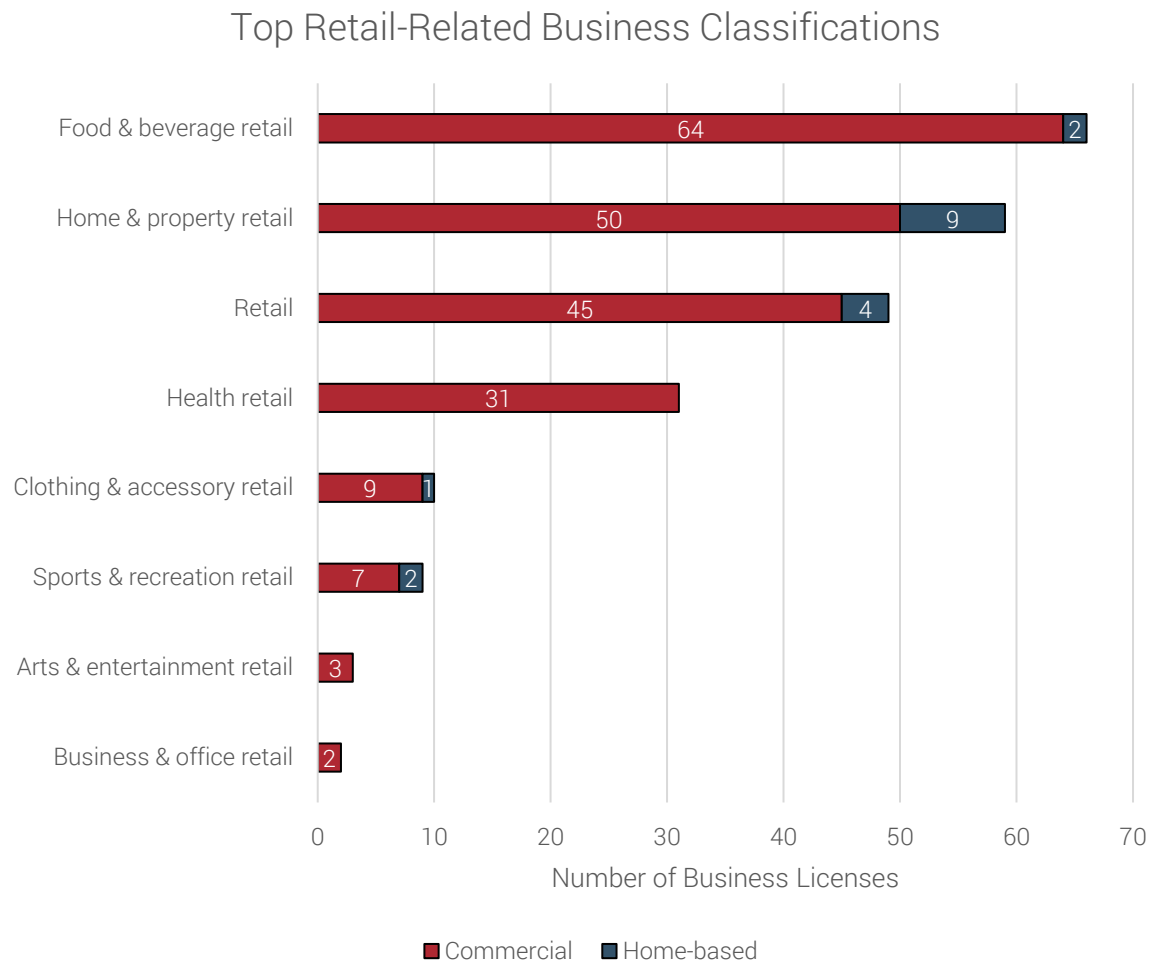


Source: EBP Analysis of Maple Ridge business licence data via Business Finder.

Accommodation & food services and retail

Maple Ridge's accommodation and food services sector is best reflected in its food & beverage services licences. With 6,700 workers, retail is the second largest employment sector while accommodation and food services are the ninth largest employer sector (2,900 workers). In terms of business licences, food & beverage services have the second largest number of commercial business licences. A majority of the 62 licences in food & beverage retail are convenience stores, supermarkets, and liquor stores while nearly all food & beverage services are restaurants.

Figure 7. Maple Ridge's Top Retail-Related Licence Categories



Source: EBP Analysis of Maple Ridge business licence data via Business Finder.

The retail industry is typically more sensitive to consumer behaviour changes and economic volatility. That said, Maple Ridge's Retail Market Analysis suggests that the City has the consumer demographics and disposable income to meet unmet retail demand in the City. The study found that most people are shopping for essentials in Maple Ridge, but leave for non-essential "destination" shopping, to such shopping districts as Willowbrook in Langley Township, Langley City Centre and Coquitlam City Centre. This suggests that there is unmet demand for big-name retailers (e.g., Costco, Home Depot, Best Buy) and a revitalized downtown.¹⁷

The report highlighted retention opportunities for grocery, drug store, personal services, electronics, books/media, toys/hobbies, and family entertainment. The report also identified

¹⁷ City of Maple Ridge, "[Retail Market Analysis](#)" (Dec 2023)

attraction opportunities for mall-type spending (e.g., health & beauty, accessories, specialty retail, sporting goods, full-services restaurant, and clothing/shoes/jewellery). Building on this report and changing trade patterns in response to U.S. tariffs, there is a growing opportunity to promote 'buy local / buy Canadian' movement to spur more local activity.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing stands out as Maple Ridge's fifth largest employment sector (3,800 workers) despite having a smaller number of business licences than the above sectors, suggesting that manufacturing facilities have a high concentration of employment. With an average hourly wage of \$31.00 in 2021, the manufacturing sector boasts strong wages.

While Maple Ridge's business licence data does not specify the subsector for a plurality of licences, the most numerous subcategories for which there is data include wood products, food and beverage, metal, sawmill, and machinery & equipment.

The economic outlook for manufacturing is complicated by inflation and high costs. While efficiency through technologies show promise for cutting costs and scaling operations, manufacturers commonly cite prohibitive costs and uncertainty.¹⁸ There are persistent challenges related to inflation and supply chain disruptions, especially amid US-Canada trade policy volatility. Sudden and uncertain changes in tariff policy will have mixed effects across subsectors and will likely cool business investment in the near term.

Economic outlooks vary for Maple Ridge's manufacturing subsectors:

- **Wood products** – Trade policy has large implications, as the US imports account for nearly half the Canadian wood industry's revenue. Building on tariff rate increases on Canadian softwood lumber in 2025, the current US administration has taken additional steps to increase the US's domestic supply of lumber.¹⁹ Citing these tariffs as well as rising costs and reduced demand after a 2021-2022 housing construction boom, major sawmill and wood production companies (e.g., West Fraser, Canfor) closed mills in Canada.²⁰ These negative outlooks have critical implications for Maple Ridge's sizeable number of wood product and sawmill, shake, and shingle manufacturers, which together account for at least 27.6% of the City's manufacturing business licences.

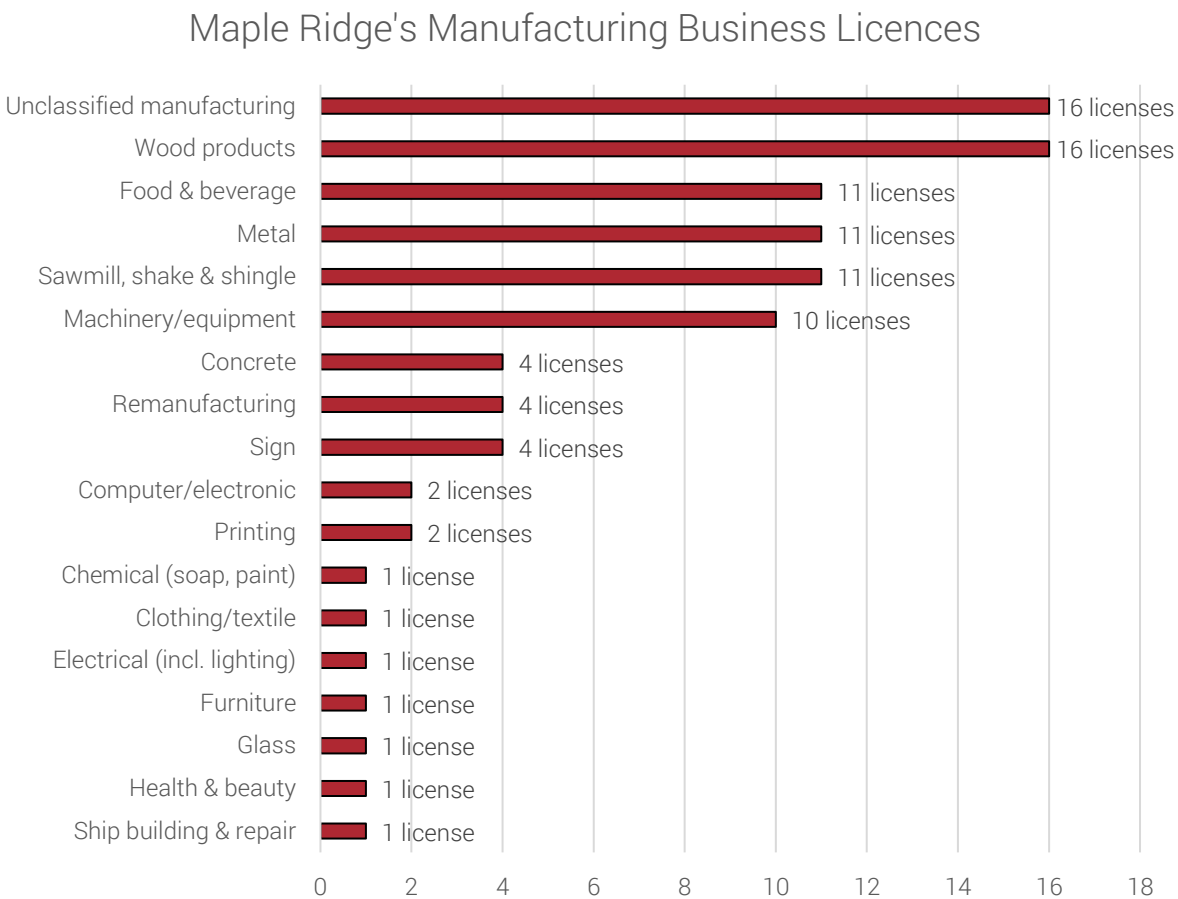
¹⁸ *Canadian Manufacturing*, "[2025 Advanced Manufacturing Outlook](#)"

¹⁹ National Association of Home Builders, "[US Nearly Doubles Canadian Lumber Tariffs](#)" (Aug 2024); *New York Times*, "[Economic Upheaval and Plans to Retaliate: Canada Braces for Tariffs](#)" (Mar 2025)

²⁰ IBISWorld, "[Sawmills & Wood Production in Canada - Market Research Report \(2015-2030\)](#)"; IBISWorld, "[Wood Panelling Manufacturing in Canada - Market Research Report \(2015-2030\)](#)"

- **Food & beverage manufacturing** – Food & beverage manufacturing is one of Maple Ridge’s largest subsectors. It is expected to improve but remain “lean” amid a decrease in consumer spending (particularly for alcohol) and persistent inflation.²¹
- **Metal manufacturing and machinery & equipment manufacturing** – Due to improvements in production techniques and efficiency technologies (e.g., prototyping, 3D modelling, laser cutting, and automation), metal product and machinery & equipment manufacturing have performed well despite market volatility. These improvements are expected to drive revenue growth.²² This may bode well for Maple Ridge’s 11 metal manufacturers and 10 machinery & equipment manufacturers, depending on their operations.

Figure 8. Maple Ridge's Manufacturing Business Licences



Source: EBP Analysis of Maple Ridge business licence data via Business Finder.

²¹ [Food in Canada](#); For more on outlook, see also [BC Food & Beverage](#).

²² *Canadian Manufacturing*, "2025 Advanced Manufacturing Outlook"; IBISWorld, "Structural Metal Product Manufacturing in Canada - Market Research Report (2015-2030)"

Healthcare and social assistance

Healthcare is Maple Ridge's third largest employment sector (6,600 workers). This suggests that healthcare businesses have a high concentration of employment. This aligns with hiring studies conducted in 2022 and 2023 that showed healthcare as the top hirer across multiple quarters. Top hirers included Provincial Health Services Authority, Fraser Health Authority, and Prime Health Ltd. The Ridge Meadows Hospital, operated by Fraser Health, is a particularly large single employer.

The outlook for healthcare employment in Canada is positive, given expectations of an aging population with greater healthcare needs. At the same time, these expectations could be tempered by the fact that Maple Ridge's healthcare sector has slightly under-average employment concentration in comparison with Canada at large, and that the City has a slightly younger average population.

6. Work-from-Home

BRE strategies have shifted in recent years to capture the benefits of remote business.

Economic development organizations have invested in campaigns, for example, to target early-career workers looking to relocate from traditional employment hubs like Vancouver back to their suburban hometowns. Some jurisdictions even offer moving expense stipends and homebuying assistance to reattract workers.²³

An estimated 18.8% (10,900 individuals) of Maple Ridge's labour force works from home.²⁴ Maple Ridge's work-from-home (WFH) population is contextualized by a rise in remote work and digital-based professions across North America. As of November 2023, about 20% of work hours in Canada were performed from home.²⁵

A strong quality-of-life value proposition is critical to retaining workers and supporting the local businesses on whom they depend. Although supporting large brick-and-mortar employers remains important, strategies must balance this approach with support for live/work/play initiatives to attract and retain local talent that stimulate local business. In other words, BRE is not just about business logistics and permitting, but also supporting a high quality of life:

²³ Consult IEDC's "[Live, Work, and Play: Attracting and Retaining Tomorrow's Talent](#)" for examples of how EDOs have integrate quality-of-life initiatives into BRE strategies. The report outlines marketing collateral, microsites, and remote worker attraction programs.

²⁴ Environics estimates via Esri Canada. Derived from Statistics Canada census data.

²⁵ Statistics Canada, "[Working from home in Canada](#)" (Jan 2024)

- **Lower cost of living** is the most important cited reason for workers' decisions of where to relocate, according to Development Counsellors International research in 2024.²⁶ The next cited reasons are housing costs, safety/crime rates, housing availability, quality healthcare, and ability to live/work/play in location without a long commute. Maple Ridge's efforts to increase its housing stock will play an important role in providing a variety of housing options and keeping the cost of living competitive.
 - Maple Ridge's Housing Needs Report showed very low rental vacancy and a need for denser rental unit developments for middle income households, possibly along the Lougheed transit corridor.²⁷
- **Quality of life** plays an essential role in business and talent attraction and retention. Perceptions of safety and crime are a critical component and underscore the importance of Maple Ridge's façade improvement and initiatives to address property theft.
 - Many residents and workers also value the ability to access local amenities, including popular natural spaces and recreational destinations like Golden Ears Provincial Park.²⁸
- **Reliable high-speed internet** is a key determinant of where WFH workers choose to locate, as many remote business models require good connectivity.

4. Conclusion

Manufacturing merits its own targeted BRE approach because of the City's demonstrated competitive edge. As a sector that provides high-wage, stable employment and can drive innovation, Maple Ridge should bolster support for manufacturing businesses. These companies are often key employers in the region and their growth tends to have a ripple effect across other sectors, including transportation, logistics, and skilled trades.

BRE support should focus on initiatives that help companies modernize and adopt new technologies like automation and AI, workforce development to ensure a skilled labour pool, and infrastructure improvements to support logistics and supply chain needs. Supporting manufacturers with access to capital, training programs, and incentive programs for technology adoption will help drive long-term growth and secure high-value jobs in the city.

²⁶ DCI, "Talent Wars" (May 2024)

²⁷ City of Maple Ridge, "[2024 Housing Needs Report](#)" (Sep 2024)

²⁸ The importance of lifestyle and amenities is reflected in the City's value proposition in the 2021 Economic Development Strategy.

The quality of life plays an important role in Maple Ridge's economic development strategy. As remote work continues to be a significant and important form of work, the City's natural and built amenities, safety, and overall living environment are key factors in attracting and retaining both talent and businesses. Supporting quality-of-life initiatives, such as affordable housing, green spaces, quality schools, amenities, and community infrastructure, will enhance Maple Ridge's appeal as a place to live and work—particularly for remote workers who can bring their spending power to local businesses.

While retail and healthcare may not be primary targets for investment attraction, they remain major employers in Maple Ridge, providing stable jobs and supporting the local economy. Retail, despite its sensitivity to consumer spending shifts, provides a significant number of low-to-middle-skill jobs, while healthcare remains a cornerstone sector driven by sustained demand for services and institutional stability. These sectors are crucial for the local workforce and should continue to receive BRE support to ensure they remain stable and grow where possible.

EBP's BRE programming suggestions build off these findings and are spelled out in detail in the Implementation and Resourcing Plan.

6. Implementation and Resourcing Plan

The City of Maple Ridge is growing, and its business community plays a key role in driving economic growth. To support both existing and new businesses—regardless of size or sector—the City must adopt proactive approaches to Business Retention and Expansion (BRE). Before implementing specific BRE initiatives, it is essential to define what BRE means for Maple Ridge and establish the broader goals of the program. Given the City's strong presence of retail-focused and local businesses, targeted support from the City could help these businesses achieve positive and impactful successes. A BRE program should:

- Assist businesses in capitalizing on opportunities to enhance their growth potential using a wide range of business support services
- Eliminate or reduce local challenges that hinder businesses overall prosperity and growth
- Improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of the market area
- Foster resilience within the local economy

A well-designed, systematic, and sustainable BRE program consists of four interconnected components, mirroring the principles of effective private-sector customer service models. These include:

- Establishing strong **relationships with businesses**
- Delivering comprehensive **business support services**
- Maintaining ongoing **business engagement and follow-ups**
- Implementing effective **business knowledge management such as CRMs**

This section serves as an implementation plan for the City of Maple Ridge's BRE efforts. This plan provides:

- **A framework** for identifying and supporting businesses at different stages of growth
- **Guidance on relationship management** with key stakeholders such as industry associations, workforce development organizations, and utility providers
- **Actionable strategies** for outreach and engagement
- **Processes for tracking and measuring success**, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement

1. Internal BRE Structure & Processes

Streamlining internal BRE programs and processes is as important as developing public-facing relationships with the business community. Having a robust internal structure would make the program more resilient, efficient, and organized.

There are some best practices that City of Maple Ridge can consider for its BRE program:

- The City should conduct an in-house exercise to define clear goals / objectives that the City is trying to achieve under this program. This can take the form of an annual work plan to help maintain focus, set achievable goals, and allocate resources appropriately such as a financial support program for home-based businesses.
- For an effective plan to be implemented, goals should be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound (SMART). Regardless of the framework used, it is crucial to avoid the pitfall of merely checking boxes and instead maintain a strong focus on execution and tangible outcomes. See Appendix 1: Economic Development BRE Action Checklist for a sample action list that the Economic Development department can consider implementing.
- The City has immense potential to leverage its local strengths by focusing on strengthening the small business community rather than seeking Big Box Retailers. Insights from on-site focus group conversations indicate that many residents prefer to shop locally and want to see homegrown businesses thrive.
- The City should develop its own toolkit to understand the level of support it can provide to BRE activities in the community. The toolbox can cover:
 - Marketing efforts designed for new business outreach: Currently, the economic development department does not have its own dedicated Facebook or LinkedIn page, which can result in messages being unclear or getting overshadowed by other communications.
 - Support with land and facility needs: This is further expanded in the Asset Inventory document prepared by EBP for the Investment Attraction project and is applicable to BRE efforts as well.
 - Assistance with permitting and licensing processes: While the City is piloting a concierge service, there is room for improvement and better marketing.
 - Identify different business support services that the City can offer such as financial support, tax incentives, workforce development through training and retraining programs, access to technology resources, etc.
 - Provide guidance on reducing energy costs and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations. This knowledge bank can comprise programs available from local utilities as well as from the province.

"You can't manage what you can't measure" – Peter Drucker

1. Organizational Leadership

The BRE team is responsible for program sustainability, entrepreneurial development, business recruitment, community development, and workforce development. As the team is expected to wear multiple hats, effective and strong program management is critical to the success of BRE initiatives. The program manager should be a senior-level economic development or allied professional affiliated with the sponsoring organization. The ideal program manager should possess excellent communication and organizational skills, along with experience in front-line economic development and/or private-sector sales. They should be adept at using technology, particularly CRM systems, and managing multiple priorities simultaneously. Since BRE managers often need to identify and address program deficiencies, they must also have the confidence and decisiveness to make tough decisions when necessary.

2. Organizational/Team Structure

An ideal BRE team for the City is described in Figure 9.

Figure 9. BRE Team Organizational Chart



Job Descriptions – Economic Development Officer (EDO)

When writing job descriptions, succinctly and clearly convey your human resource needs. Job descriptions should have the primary responsibilities and functions (experience and education) required for the job, the salary and benefits offered, and the date to begin. Although much of the search process to fill a position is done through professional networks, defining and communicating your needs is an important first step.

Sample Job Description for Maple Ridge - Economic Development Officer (EDO)

Education: Bachelor's degree required

Experience:

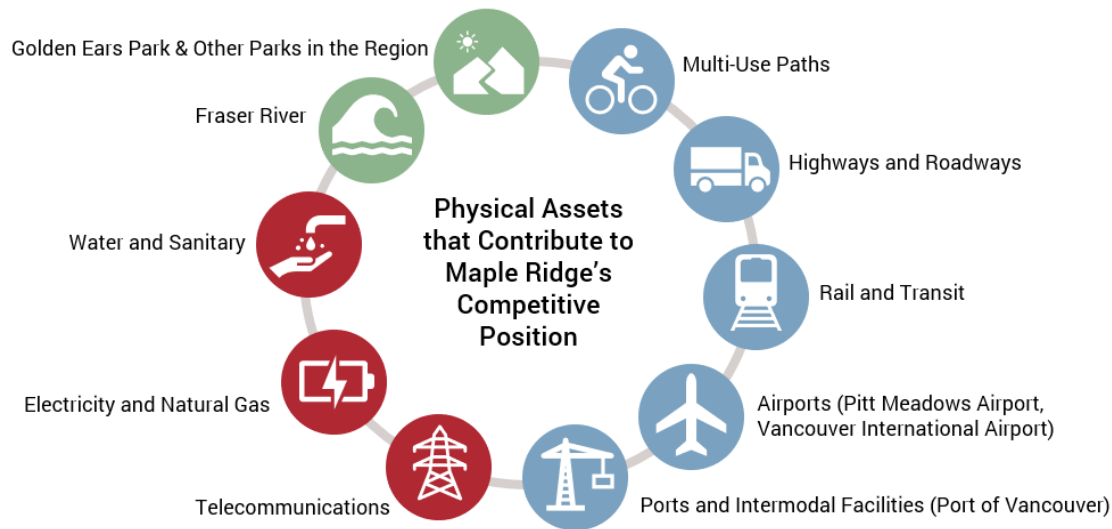
- Economic development exposure; experience with promoting economic development activities.
- Prior understanding of economic development needs in a constantly changing environment.
- Builds and maintains strong working relationships with departmental staff, municipal employees, local business owners, and the public.
- Tracks project progress, prepares reports, and ensures successful completion.
- Strong public speaking and written communication skills.
- Diplomatic internal and external communications skills; political savvy.

Source: Adapted from IEDC's "Managing Economic Development Organizations" Manual

3. Identify Key Assets and Resource Partners

To develop strategies suited to local conditions, the City of Maple Ridge must first gain a comprehensive understanding of its key economic assets. EBP's work on creating an Asset Inventory under the Investment Attraction project will serve as an initial step in helping the City identify its core strengths, resource capacity, and the level of service it can offer (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Maple Ridge's Physical Assets Scan



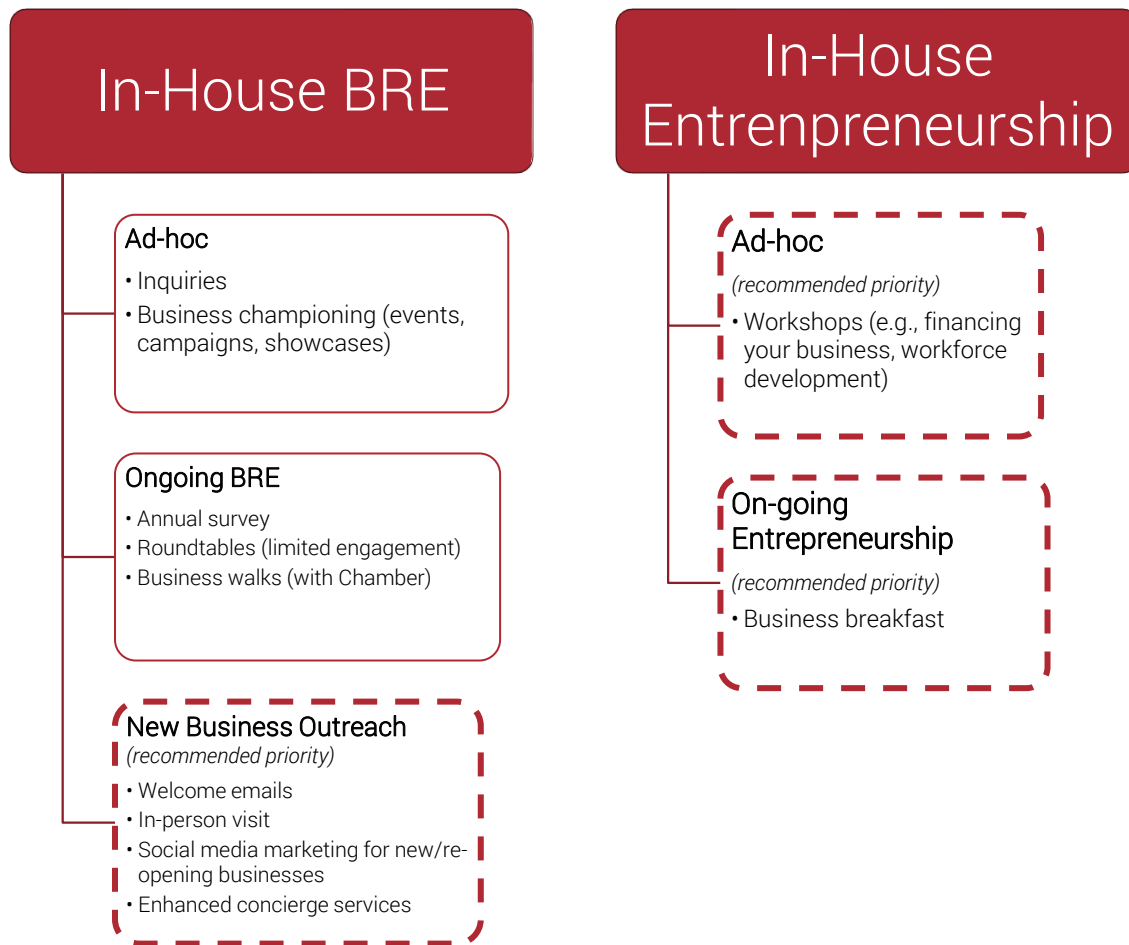
Resource Partners

In most cases, valuable resource partners already exist in the form of community, economic, and workforce development organizations that independently serve businesses at the city, regional, or provincial levels. Rather than duplicating efforts, the goal is to collaborate with these organizations and leverage their technical expertise within the BRE initiative.

4. Current and Recommended In-house BRE and Entrepreneurship Programs

Figure 11 presents an overview of Maple Ridge's Economic Development's current practices as well as toolkit for recommended BRE activities. These recommendations, discussed in greater detail below, serve as a starting point from which this Implementation Plan can evolve.

Figure 11. Summary of Maple Ridge's Current and Recommended Internal BRE Practices



Ad-hoc outreach

Maple Ridge Economic Development offers ad-hoc support to businesses. For example, the team addresses ad-hoc inquiries from businesses as they arise. The team intends to improve their CRM that minimizes multiple channels of manual input. Inquiry response is one of the primary interfaces for businesses, so while revisiting CRM functionality, Economic Development department should consider the following functions:

- **Clear handoff** - The system should enable a clear handoff process such as the one presented in the sample inquiry hand-off protocol below.
- **Response time standards** – The system should enable real-time monitoring of response time (e.g. 24, 36, or 48 hours, depending on the type of inquiry).

- **Report generation** – Useful report functions include average response times, inquiry source, types of businesses making inquiries, types of business needs, types of interventions, and outcomes related to business expansion, job creation, or investment.
- **Task automation** – Ability to automate time-intensive, repetitive tasks such as regularly planned outreach, thank you notes, and internal and external reminders.
 - Maple Ridge's business data system (based on permits and licences) is currently fragmented, which would not be solved by a CRM.

Sample Inquiry Hand Off Protocol

1. **Entry into CRM** – Every inquiry from an online inquiry form is logged in the CRM with relevant details. The inquiry field could include:
 - a. business name,
 - b. sector/industry (NAICS is ideal but may not be possible given current data),
 - c. issue type (e.g., permitting/regulatory, expansion support, incentives and grants, workforce, infrastructure/utilities, local supplier or partner connections, general).
 - d. Inquiry priority level (e.g., urgent, routine, informational).
2. **Assignment & Notification** – The inquiry is assigned to a team member, who receives an automated notification. Assignment to a team member can be manually managed by an inquiry supervisor or could be assigned automatically based on the inquiry's topic.
3. **Acknowledgment** – The assignee must confirm receipt (either by clicking "Accept" in the CRM, replying to an internal notification, or another trackable method).
4. **Follow-Up** – The assignee responds within the defined timeframe (24-48 hours) or provides a status update if resolution takes longer.

Social media can also play a role in ad-hoc BRE. The Economic Development department does not have its own dedicated Facebook or LinkedIn, but the team does repost content from the City of Maple Ridge, the Ridge Meadows Chamber of Commerce, and Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association.

Whether on social media or emails or websites, ad-hoc communications should be responsive to real-time events. Economic Development and its partners currently engage in the following:

- Announcements about new businesses
- Grand openings and ribbon-cutting events
- Business spotlights and success stories
- Shop-local campaigns
- Local product showcases

- Opportunities for local businesses (e.g., grants, technical support services, educational resources)

New business outreach and in-house entrepreneurship (recommended)

The BRE team can draw upon numerous tools to interface with the business community, with each tool having their own advantages and shortcomings. Because these methods can yield different answers, they can be used in tandem—they are not always either/or. For detailed guidance, we recommend [British Columbia Economic Development Association's BRE guide](#).

5. Program Methodology/ Approach

Maple Ridge Economic Development program currently uses a geographic approach, but it is important to segment your business community in other meaningful ways. Using the available business lists, Economic Development department should distinguish three broad groups of businesses—Elephants, Mice, and Gazelles. A one-size-fits-all approach won't maximize impact. These groups can also be divided by sector, geography, or thematic issue.

A Segmented Approach to BRE

Elephants (Large, Stable Firms)

- Common needs:
 - Predictable regulatory environment
 - Workforce pipeline and talent attraction
 - Infrastructure and utilities reliability
 - Expansion and reinvestment support
- BRE approach:
 - Regular executive outreach and site visits (facility tours)
 - Customized workforce development programs
 - Advocacy on policy and infrastructure needs
 - Proactive problem-solving for business retention

Mice (Small, Entrepreneurial Firms that Stay Small)

- Common needs:
 - Access to local networks and resources
 - Low-cost business support services
 - Zoning and permitting assistance
 - Visibility in the local economy
- BRE approach:
 - Streamlined permitting and regulatory guidance
 - Small business grants or microloan programs
 - Marketing and promotion (e.g., shop local campaigns)
 - Business networking and mentorship connections

Gazelles (High-Growth Entrepreneurial Firms)

- Common needs:
 - a. Access to capital and incentives
 - b. Scalable workforce solutions
 - c. Strong innovation ecosystem
 - d. Fast-track regulatory approvals
- BRE approach:
 - a. Introductions to investors and funding opportunities
 - b. Growth-oriented incentives (e.g., tax breaks, grants)
 - c. Rapid response permitting and site selection assistance
 - d. Support for R&D partnerships with universities or incubators

6. Communication and Digital Strategy

As part of its work plan, the City of Maple Ridge should actively promote the BRE program to the broader community. During field engagement, many groups noted significant changes occurring within the City. While optimism is growing, few businesses are aware of the available support services or how to access them, particularly in terms of business expansion opportunities that

can eventually increase retention. Strengthening outreach and communication efforts will help bridge this gap and ensure businesses can fully leverage the City's resources.

The program should deliver a consistent message about its benefits by partnering with local media outlets and leveraging communication channels established by other stakeholders. Organizations such as utility providers and educational institutions often run outreach initiatives targeting local businesses, presenting an opportunity to expand the reach and impact of the BRE program.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation Tools

The Economic Development department should continually monitor and evaluate the activities undertaken as part of this Implementation Plan. Monitoring and evaluation activities enable process improvement and also provides information to demonstrate to stakeholders that the department's resources are being used wisely and reassure partners that their efforts are having a meaningful impact.

Monitoring and evaluation begin by identifying metrics and measures of interest to the City and stakeholders. These metrics often include number of jobs, personal income, number of businesses, property values, investment in plants and equipment. They should incorporate and reflect the goals and values established by the City's economic development strategy as well as this BRE plan.

The team should regularly collect and maintain relevant data and information that can be used to evaluate progress toward established goals. The International Economic Development Council recommends the use of both process-based and outcome-based measurements. Examples of each type are presented below. Both types of measurements are of value on their own, however together, process-based and outcome-based measurements allow the team to connect their efforts to outcomes, i.e., the number of interactions per job created or number of active workforce development program partners and investment in workforce development.

Examples of Process-Based Evaluation Measures

- Number of interactions with businesses across touchpoints
- Action items (partner referrals) generated
- Type of action items (partner referrals) generated
- Resolution of action items (partner referrals)—open, closed, unable to close
- Number of active program partners
- Programs, policies, or strategies developed because of the BRE program

2. External BRE Structure and Processes

8. Best Practices

Across all the touchpoints with relevant groups and business community (summarized in Table 4), consider these key principles:

- **Solicit candor.** Consider how the meeting format (e.g., number of participants, participants' relationships, prompts/questions, location) impact participation and

Examples of Outcome-Based Evaluation Measures

- Job creation
- Increased tax base
- Investment in talent/workforce
- Creation of affordable housing
- Creation of childcare centres
- Educational attainment of workers
- Export dollars/expansion of exporters
- Investment in technology
- Technology transfer
- Economic diversification
- Quality of jobs

honesty. There is no one-size-fits-all. Choose the most appropriate BRE tool/touchpoint to meet different expectations to put them at ease and make them feel heard and advocated for.

- **Build trust.** Building rapport is a long-term endeavour. Assuring confidentiality around sensitive information is essential to building trust over time. Tailor the Economic Development team's value proposition to the business's need. Businesses might not initially be receptive to BRE activities. They could be skeptical of its value, so it is important to demonstrate Economic Development's value to an individual business.
- **Be action oriented.** Businesses need to see that these calls and meetings yield results. The Economic Development department should identify next steps from each of these touchpoints and flag businesses for a follow-up (typically every 6 months or 1 year, depending on the business's needs). A good CRM should support these efforts to automate messages and reminders for outreach.

- **Be mindful of partners' interests.** Economic Development should identify possible points of friction or possible worries among partners. Be aware of who does what in the community and avoid making partners feel forgotten, usurped or threatened, e.g., they may have a system or process or goal that they may not want to give up or change. Consider how these interests can be aligned to play to partners' strengths.
- **Mark your calendar.** Always generate a to-do reminder from interactions. There should always be a reminder or event on the calendar. For example, if a company mentions they might undertake a new project in a couple months, create a reminder to ask how it's going. When you have a call or meeting with a business, flag them for follow-up in 6 months or a year. The CRM can be helpful for setting these reminders.
- **Tailor efforts.** Segment your high-value business community – downtown, at-home businesses, large vs small, startups vs mature firms. Also consider segmenting by target sector or geographic region. Outreach to these segments can overlap.

Table 4. Recommended Business Retention and Expansion Activities

Touchpoint	Description	Duration/ Frequency	Who	Advantages	Drawbacks
In-person Facility Visits	Objective: discuss business strategy (e.g., workforce, supply chain, markets), and discuss opportunities and threats	Duration: ≤1hr- tour of facility and organic discussion Frequency: 1-2 times per year for approx. 5 large target businesses	Business: 1 high- value targeted firm (ideally decision- making representative) Economic Development department: 1-2 economic developers (can include local gov't official or other partner)	Build rapport. One-on- one meetings build rapport On-the-ground understanding of a target business/ industry	Time-consuming. Facility tours can be time intensive. In- person facility visits are by far the most expensive tool.
Business Walks	Objective: Identify common opportunities and challenges. Advance notice. Be sure to notify businesses and strategize outreach tactic. “Business walks” vs “in-person facility visits.” Walks focus on breadth (covering	Duration: 2- 4hrs (across 1- 2 days) Frequency: Once per year for 3-4 business regions	Businesses: Many businesses in a target geography Economic Development department: 1-3 team members, possibly two groups. Include partners (Chamber, City, Utilities)	Presence. Economic Development shows it is present in the community On-the-ground. The team can see businesspeople in their place of business Cost-effective. The team can cover much ground, introduce contacts, and leave information.	Limited feedback Some business may not have thought about what they want to say, and they may be busy with clients.

Touchpoint	Description	Duration/ Frequency	Who	Advantages	Drawbacks
	ground) while in-person visits focus on depth (just a handful of large employers) British Columbia has widely cited guidance for BRE walks: read more .				
Focus Groups	Objective: Identify collective challenges and opportunities and corresponding program/policy solutions.	Duration: ≤2hr Frequency: Once per year for 3-4 groups	Businesses: 4-6 businesses with a common theme (e.g., firm size, target industry, opportunities or threat) Economic Development department: 1 experienced facilitator	Cost-effective use of time Flexibility: In-person or virtual Synergistic feedback from businesses	Marginalization: Some businesspeople may be more reticent in a large group, esp. with competitors.
Stakeholder Events	Objective: Get face time with businesses and build rapport.	Duration: varies Frequency: varies	Economic Development department: 1-2 team members to	Presence. Economic Development shows it is present in the community	Third-party. Economic Development may be a third party in these

Touchpoint	Description	Duration/ Frequency	Who	Advantages	Drawbacks
	<p>Facilitate networking and resource-sharing</p> <p>Be sure to have the full calendar of community events held by the Chamber, City, etc. Economic Development should be present.</p>		cover events. The team can liaison with BIA and Chambers of Commerce to execute these events.	Cost-effective. The team can cover much ground, introduce contacts, and leave information.	spaces and may not be a priority for people.
Social media	<p>Duration: 1-2 posts Frequency: weekly or monthly Objective: Disseminate information, promote opportunities, and keep Economic Development relevant</p> <p>Set up a regular posting calendar while also addressing ad-hoc topics as they emerge.</p>		Economic Development department: 1-2 team members to cover events.	<p>Low-cost. Social media posts can reach a large audience with low effort.</p> <p>Open forum. Social media offers another way for community members to voice thoughts.</p>	Partial engagement. Social media platforms' audiences vary. Some businesses may rely on social media, but others may not at all. This highlights the importance of having strategic redundancies.

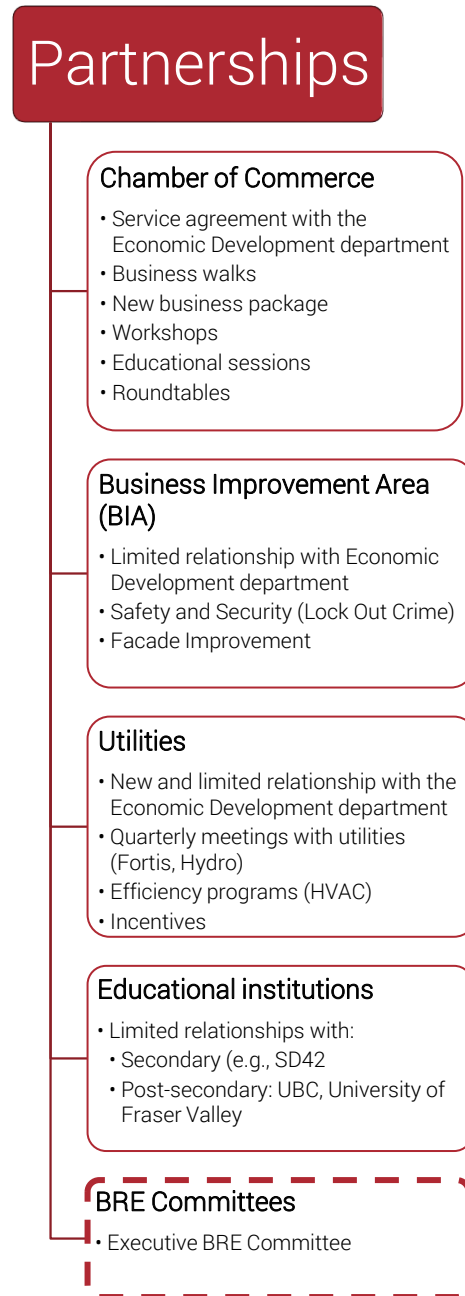
Touchpoint	Description	Duration/ Frequency	Who	Advantages	Drawbacks
Digital communication	<p>Duration: 1</p> <p>Frequency: weekly or monthly, or every other month</p> <p>Objective: Disseminate information to various target audiences (by sector, geography, size, etc.)</p> <p>Yearly BRE surveys can also be sent by email or distributed via QR code.</p>		<p>Economic Development department: 1 team member to manage or regulation all communications. The team should be coordinated on all digital touchpoints to avoid duplicated or inefficient efforts.</p>	<p>Low-cost. Social media posts can reach a large audience with fairly low effort.</p> <p>Open forum. Social media offers another way for community members to voice thoughts.</p>	<p>Limited engagement. Sending too many or overly lengthy emails/surveys will reduce engagement. Be targeted in</p>
Inquiry response	<p>Duration: varies</p> <p>Frequency: as needed</p> <p>Objective: Address particular issues and make businesses feel supported</p> <p>Always flag businesses for follow-ups months after an issue is resolved.</p>		<p>Economic Development department: 1 team member to manage and route inquiries to the best contact.</p>	<p>Direct support. Businesses feel supported.</p>	<p>Reactive, not proactive. It's always better to proactively identify and address issues</p>

Touchpoint	Description	Duration/ Frequency	Who	Advantages	Drawbacks

9. Current and Recommended External BRE Partnerships

Figure 12 presents an overview of Maple Ridge Economic Development's partnerships.

Figure 12. Summary of Maple Ridge's Current and Recommended External BRE Partnerships



10. Economic Development Partnerships

Partnerships are central to BRE and Economic Development plays a coordinating role among various players in a complex ecosystem (**Error! Reference source not found.**). Economic Development does not have the time or resources to tackle every component of BRE, which means that collaboration is essential, and some prioritization is required.

Table 5. Actors and Roles in the Economic Development Ecosystem

	EDOs	Local Govt	Metro Vancouver Regional District (MVRD) Govt	Chamber	Utilities	Educational Institutions	Individual Business Leaders
Manage the program	✓			✓	✓		
Serve as an advisor to the program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Financially support the program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Conduct outreach	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Evaluate outreach feedback	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Problem-solve	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Identify subject-matter experts	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide technical assistance	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Ensure program sustainability	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Promote the program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advocate for the program	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Recruit participants for the program	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
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Utilities

Improvement financing. Utility companies can acquire capital improvement financing, which can in turn be disbursed via loans or grants to small-to-medium customers that otherwise cannot afford improvements.

Site preparedness. Utilities are also key partners to upgrading infrastructure for available sites. It is important that Economic Development communicate with utilities to identify high-potential sites that utilities can invest in. Utility companies can also provide up-to-date marketing material and site-level detail. The Economic Development department can also facilitate business expansion (or new investments) by liaising with utilities to ensure the expanding business's needs are met.

Committees (recommended)

BRE committees (or task force) offer another way to build buy-in, better distribute activities, and gain strategic support. There are various types of committees. The most common and important committee is the Executive Committee.

Executive Committees can comprise representatives from local business or trade associations, utilities (e.g., Fortis), community foundations, workforce development organizations, the Chamber, universities or trade schools. This can also include organizations such as Invest Vancouver and IVAC. Involving diverse stakeholders helps give them a reason to engage with the Economic Development department and build trust. The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide strategic direction validated by community members and to take on some of the BRE work. For example, committee members can support outreach, developing marketing materials, providing subject matter expertise for inquiries, and developing process improvements. Committee members also serve as Economic Development ambassadors to all businesses they interact with.

Special-purpose committees (aka taskforces) can be formed with more particular purposes, such as workforce issues, communications/outreach, economic data analysis, major project, or special issues.

Role of Economic Development. The Economic Development representative on the committee can serve as a facilitator but should ensure the Committee members largely steer themselves, both to give them a stake but also to avoid overcommitting Economic Development resources. Committee members find value in supporting their community while having an opportunity to promote their own business.

Other collaboration

Facilitating creative solutions. There are many ways the Economic Development department can facilitate solutions among partners. For example, the team can contact local educational institutions or workforce organizations to set up a satellite program/courses in the local library about business taxes or business planning. The team can similarly facilitate a business-to-business initiative for a community warehousing space, other incubator-like spaces, or pop-ups for nascent businesses. Cities also encourage “beer or food walks” initiatives to foster business sales and increase footfall. In short, the team can identify collective needs among businesses and facilitate a possible solution that other stakeholders then manage.

One-stop shop. The Economic Development department should serve as a one-stop shop, having at hand the knowledge and resources businesses need to succeed. As a central connector, all roads should lead to Economic Development — offering guidance on permitting, business establishment, financing options, and continuity planning. The team should be able to quickly route businesses to diverse resources:

- Federal/provincial/local and intergovernmental programs
- Utilities, Chambers, and all other partners.
- Workforce
- Taxes
- Permitting

Local business champion. The Economic Development department should continue to actively promote local businesses and events online, amplifying their visibility and fostering community engagement. Beyond resources and promotion, the team should champion economic development by recognizing and appreciating businesses through dedicated events, reinforcing Economic Development’s commitment to a thriving business ecosystem. Economic Development can always ask its partners how the team can help them.

Appendix 1: Economic Development BRE Action Checklist

This non-exhaustive checklist serves as a starting point to implement EBP's recommendations.

Quick Wins

☐ Brainstorm to list potential "quick wins" to enhance Economic Development team's impact and improve the business ecosystem.

☐ Ensure that the City's website serves as a one-stop shop for BRE. What quick additions or fixes can be made?

Ongoing BRE Activities

☐ Using the City's business finder directory, identify key segments that merit specific attention.

List the firms for each category and mark levels of priority

☐ "Elephants," "mice," and "gazelles" (mark the highest priority firms in terms of employment or economic contribution)

☐ Target sectors (e.g., film)

☐ Geographic areas (Town Centre, Silver Valley, etc.)

☐ Determine the cadence, content, metrics, and managers/partners of recommended BRE activities. Set up a recurring calendar (or excel sheet or CRM) to prompt follow-up. Consider the following activities:

☐ Facility visits (one-on-one) with ~5 priority firms – recommended 1-2 times a year

☐ Business walks by geography – recommended once a year for 3-4 regions.

☐ Focus groups – recommended once a year for 3-4 groups of 4-6 businesses grouped by size, sector, issue area, etc.

☐ Downtown revitalization – Consider how general BRE dovetail or complement downtown efforts. Consider how to consolidate activities and improve efficiency.

☐ Review the inquiry response system to align with BRE activities metrics and content

☐ Clarify process for inquiry response management (inquiry assignment, standards for response time)

Partnerships

☐ Pursue ongoing relationships with utilities

☐ Develop Economic Development's pitch for collaboration with utilities

☐ Conduct outreach to utilities to ask about their needs and pitch possible points of collaboration (efficiency improvement funding, site preparedness, response to inquiries)

☐ Explore the creation of an Executive Committee

☐ Establish a purpose for the Executive Committee

☐ Identify possible partners and conduct stakeholder analysis (interests, concerns)

☐ Clarify process for inquiry response management (inquiry assignment, standards for response time)