

DISCUSSION PAPER - WORKSHOP WITH STUDY CIRCLE REPRESENTATIVES

The Official Community Plan

The 1996 Official Community Plan (OCP) for the District of Maple Ridge provides a “set of policies or rules to guide future decision-making.” The OCP sets out objectives and policies for economic development; land and resource use planning; transportation planning; maintaining and improving the natural and man-made environment; and providing municipal services and public facilities. The Official Community Plan thereby serves as a policy document and long-term planning and decision-making tool. It assists planners and decision-makers to make the right choices that will shape the future of the community.

The District of Maple Ridge has initiated a review and update of the 1996 document. The revised OCP is intended to better reflect the changes that have occurred in the District over the past decade and to guide the development of future growth and change in a manner that is consistent with community objectives. Neighbourhood and community groups play an important role in the development of a new and improved OCP by discussing the issues of importance to the community and identifying strategies for managing the growth and change.

Population Growth and Change

Maple Ridge has experienced rapid growth over the last 30 years that has more than doubled its population to over 63,000 people. Such population growth has altered the face of the community, creating a young family environment, and leading to the development of new infrastructure and amenities. Some of the challenges associated with this growth relate to its transition to a more urban-centred community while striving to retain its agricultural roots and rural spirit.

Recent population projections estimate that the population of Maple Ridge will grow from 63,169 in 2001 to 108,900 by 2031 assuming there is sufficient housing capacity to accommodate such growth.¹ However, the amount of land available for residential development under the current land use designations is limited. The land available for single family homes is particularly constrained. In the next few decades, the community will therefore have to make important decisions to address the housing needs of a growing community bound by land and development constraints.

Housing Issues and Policies

- Maple Ridge has traditionally attracted family-oriented households seeking affordable housing. According to a recent community survey, residents of Maple Ridge place in top priority the following community features: the small size of the community, its rural character, access to the outdoors, community spirit, people, and slower pace. These features in addition to the relatively lower housing prices explain the strong draw for young families.

¹ Sheltair Group & Kelly and Assocs. March 2004. *Demographic Analysis and Population and Housing Projection for Maple Ridge, 2001 - 2031*. Prepared for the District of Maple Ridge.

- Home ownership is often viewed as an important measure of personal attainment and security. Many young families have moved to Maple Ridge in order to own their own house or move into a larger house, while enjoying the described amenities of the community. Thus Maple Ridge has become primarily a community of home owners, with 77.5% of households living in a house that they own.
- The relative affordability of land prices and the availability of land designated for single family homes has meant that 65% of the dwelling units in Maple Ridge are single detached (compared to 43% in the GVRD). The composition of the remaining units is 20% other ground-oriented, such as town houses and duplexes, and 16% in apartments.
- An additional socio-economic issue of concern to residents and decision-makers is the question of homelessness. A count conducted in a 2002 overnight walk-about found 63 homeless people. Although this figure is assumed to be a low indication of the actual number of homeless in Maple Ridge, it still reflects an important measure of a socio-economic problem that is of increasing concern to residents.
- Housing affordability is also a matter of concern, particularly for the tenant population living in the community. A policy that is directly related to this issue is the legalisation of secondary suites. In each of the municipalities in the region, there has been widespread use of secondary suites. Since 1999, the District of Maple Ridge has allowed the legal development of secondary suites to address the fact that many suites are of substandard conditions, to diversify the mix of housing, and to increase the affordable housing available within the community. To date, no more than 30 homeowners have chosen to register their suites.
- Maple Ridge is affected by the aging population trend overwhelming communities throughout North America. This trend has led to an increase in services and housing development for seniors. Currently, there are 170 units of “independent living” or congregate care units. This is in addition to the 416 units in nursing homes or licensed care facilities and 439 in retirement homes. With more and more seniors choosing to age in place, the demand for home care and other support services has also been on the rise.

A Residential Policy Review

A housing and residential policy review process was initiated by the District in order to ensure that its residential lands and residential capacity are managed in a manner that is consistent with other OCP objectives and contribute to a livable and sustainable community. While this project is a significant piece of the OCP review puzzle, it is but one component of the larger process. To date, the District has completed or initiated several studies including demographic analysis and population and housing projection, a commercial/ industrial lands review, and an agricultural lands review.

The intent of the housing and residential lands policy review is to provide background and policy direction for the District in its decision making and in the development of strategies for sustainably managing growth and change. It will include the analysis of issues related to housing and residential lands, an assessment of various options for accommodating future residential growth, and a set of recommendations and strategies for policy development and refinement.

It is important to keep in mind that the strategies and recommended policies must reflect the community development objectives including economic, social, and environmental goals:

- **Fiscal / economic objectives** (costs of services, amenities, and infrastructure; the market viability of different residential growth options)
- **Environmental objectives** (maintaining the natural qualities and features of the District, such as viewsheds, open spaces, and protecting sensitive habit areas)
- **Social objectives** (supporting the diverse housing needs of the community, ensuring continued livability and health of the community)

This residential policy review consists of a four part workplan that will lead to the development of policy recommendations that are realistic and achievable and reflect the need for a sustainable approach to managing growth and change. The plan includes the following components: a context review, a residential capacity review, an evaluation of three different options for accommodating growth, and the development of policy recommendations and strategies.

Community Consultation

A comprehensive policy review includes a component of technical research and community consultation. As representatives of Maple Ridge's neighbourhood, the study circles form an essential part of this consultation. A workshop held with representatives of each of the Study Circles would identify additional forces, factors, and issues at play within the community. It would also serve to build on the existing knowledge base, strategic planning processes, and actions of this important community mobilisation initiative.

To contribute to the residential policy review, representatives from each of the Study Circles have been invited to attend a workshop on May 20th. The objectives of the workshop will be to determine the issues and challenges of residential development faced by the community and to identify suggestions and strategies for policy development.

DISCUSSION GUIDE - WORKSHOP WITH STUDY CIRCLE REPRESENTATIVES

Purpose:

- To discuss options available for housing and residential land development in Maple Ridge
- To identify strategies and approaches for accommodating the anticipated population growth as well as changes in the existing population

Options:

Residential growth management options for Maple Ridge include:

1. An urban containment option that would limit most residential growth to within the existing urban boundaries.
2. An expansion option that would support growth and densification by expanding the existing urban boundary areas where a rationale can be provided for doing so.
3. A hybrid option that would support some densification within the urban containment area using strategies for densification such as infill development and secondary suites, as well as some modest expansion outside the boundary areas.

Questions:

1. Are there other residential growth management options that should be considered for Maple Ridge?
2. What are the social, financial, economic and environmental implications for Maple Ridge of each of the options?

Implications	Examples
Social	Costs of housing, range of housing types and options
Fiscal	Municipal servicing costs
Economic	Ratio of people to local jobs, retail and business development
Environmental	Protection of watersheds, viewsheds, etc.

3. Which option appears to be most amenable to the type of community that Maple Ridge should aspire to be over the coming decades?
4. What are the strategies and approaches that Maple Ridge should consider in implementing the preferred option, e.g. pre-zoning of neighbourhoods to allow densification, infill incentives, etc.?