

MAPLE RIDGE YOUTH STRATEGY

*To support, engage, and empower
our youth and emerging adults*



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planning design engagement



MAPLE RIDGE

British Columbia

acknowledgements

Thank you to the dedicated staff, volunteers, service providers, caregivers, parents, and youth who contributed their time, energy, and ideas to create the City of Maple Ridge's first ever Youth Strategy.

The City would also like to extend a special thanks to the Youth & Adult working teams, as well as the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Network and Maple Ridge Social Planning Advisory Committee who helped to guide this process:

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executive summary

INTRODUCTION

The City of Maple Ridge is committed to supporting a youth friendly, youth focused, and youth engaged community. The Youth Strategy provides an overview of the current reality for youth (12-18 years) and emerging adults (19-24 years) in Maple Ridge and provides a list of recommendations to promote positive physical, psychological, and social youth development.

Using best practice research and input from over 1,000 local youth, emerging adults, parents, and service providers. This Strategy includes recommendations to enhance support for youth and emerging adults; improve working partnerships between youth, caregivers, and service providers; and, create pathways to ensure that youth are seen as partners in their own future.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Youth and emerging adults benefit from our community's strengths, and they also face some key challenges.

Strengths:

- Outdoor amenities and recreation
- Small town feel
- Facilities and amenities (ie., Greg Moore Youth Centre)
- Strong collaboration among community service providers
- Strong traditional and alternative school programs
- Growing awareness of mental health in schools

Challenges:

- Substance use and addictions
- Mental health, waitlists
- Poor transit service
- Transitioning to adulthood (life skills, work experience, post-secondary)
- Boredom and lack of social spaces
- Affordable housing, poverty and homelessness
- Negative perceptions of youth
- Safety (bullying, drugs/crime)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategy provides a number of recommendations organized under four key themes:

1. Inclusive Community Spaces & Activities
2. Community Engagement
3. Wellness & Mental Health
4. Transitioning to Adulthood

Within each of these themes, this Strategy identifies a number of goals and actions.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Strategy will require continued communication, collaboration, and action by many partners. The City's roles in implementing the recommendations may be to lead an action, partner with other organizations, or advocate to influence decisions and policy at more senior levels of government.

Community partners are not bound by this plan, but rather are seen as key players in providing an integrated and holistic approach to youth wellbeing in Maple Ridge. The City's Social Policy Advisory Committee, who initiated the Youth Strategy, will also play a key role in overseeing implementation and meeting with local community organizations and provincial ministries to review the Strategy and develop a shared approach for implementation. More information about implementation can be found at the end of this Strategy.

**“we need solutions for youth,
created with youth...”**



INTRODUCTION

context

Today's youth and young adults face a challenging and ever-changing world. They face increasing pressure, competition, and expectations to do well in school, get into post-secondary, find a good job, and follow their passion all while dealing with unprecedented levels of debt, unaffordable housing, an uncertain global future, and often decreasing resources and support from senior levels of government.

The digital age has opened the door to limitless opportunities and knowledge, but also an overwhelming amount of possibilities and decisions. This generation faces the blessing and the burden of unlimited access to information and in the face of these personal and generational challenges, they are optimistic and poised to make meaningful change for our future world.

The question is, how can we better support our youth and young adults in Maple Ridge to allow them to grow and develop to their highest potential?



the youth strategy

The City of Maple Ridge's Youth Strategy provides recommendations to enhance support for youth (12-18 years) and emerging adults (19-24); improve working partnerships between youth, caregivers, and service providers; and, create pathways to ensure that youth are seen as partners in their own future.

The Youth Strategy outlines the current reality for youth in Maple Ridge, identifies the future needs of youth and emerging adults and provides a list of recommendations to promote the most positive physical, psychological and social development outcomes.

The Vision for the Youth Strategy (developed by the Youth Working Group):

Maple Ridge will be...

'A community where there is a common understanding of the rights and responsibilities of youth. One where youth development and growth is seen as dynamic and youth are engaged to provide meaningful input to inform decisions affecting them.'

The City is committed to supporting a youth friendly, youth focused, and youth engaged community. This commitment to youth is reinforced by some of the City's recent initiatives, such as the creation of the Greg Moore Youth Centre in 2001, the Maple Ridge Resilience Initiative Strong Kids Team formed in 2015, creation of the Ridge Meadows Youth Wellness Centre pilot in 2016, and the ongoing dedication of the extensive network of service providers and community organizations. It is our hope that this Youth Strategy will provide a springboard for continued and coordinated action to support and empower youth and emerging adults in Maple Ridge.

The Youth Development Wheel

In addition to the Strategy, a Youth Development Wheel has been created to outline the windows of typical physical, social, and psychological development for youth and emerging adults.

A valuable resource for parents, caregivers, teachers, and service providers.

Contact Youth Services at youthwheel@mapleridge.ca to get your copy!



the framework

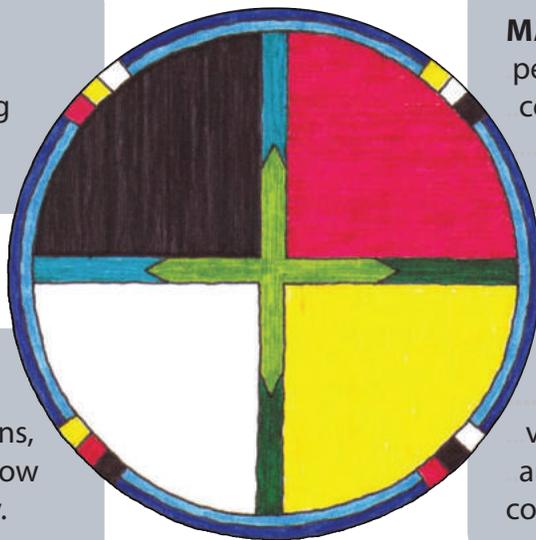
The “Circle of Courage Philosophy” has been used to guide the development of the Youth Strategy and the Youth Development Wheel. This model, developed by the Reclaiming Youth Network, integrates First Nations philosophy to identify four universal growth needs of youth:

BELONGING: a sense of being part of a community and feeling connected to others.

MASTERY: striving for personal growth; a sense of competence and the ability to overcome challenges.

INDEPENDENCE: the ability to make decisions, solve problems and show personal responsibility.

GENEROSITY: the virtue of helping others and making positive contributions to the world.



The Circle of Courage is a Trademark of Circle of Courage, Inc. Used with Permission From Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future by Larry Brendtro, Martin Brokenleg, and Steve Van Bockern (pgs. 137-138). Copyright 1990 and 2002 by Solution Tree (formerly National Educational Service).

best practices

Best practice research and resources for youth development have expanded significantly since the 1990's. The dialogue has shifted from "fixing troubled kids" to a more positive and preventative approach that focuses on supporting the development and empowerment of *all* youth.

Some key principles of this new approach include :

- Focusing on positive outcomes and measures rather than negative trends.
- Supporting a range of activities that enhance youth competence, connections, character, confidence, compassion, and contributions.
- Recognizing that the needs of youth vary dramatically, so services, supports and opportunities need to reflect the diverse and changing needs of individual youth.
- Recognizing youth as valued and respected community members and involving youth voices in decision-making.
- Providing support to youth over the long-term to assist them as they transition into early adulthood.
- Involving the broader community in the positive development of youth and providing a collaborative network of services, supports, and opportunities.
- Providing opportunities and boundaries to experiment in safe environments to develop positive social norms and behavior.
- Developing policies and programs that engage youth as partners rather than clients.

This list of principles draws on materials from:

- Oregon Commission on Children & Families. *Best Practices: Positive Youth Development*. Available at http://unofficialambassadors.com/wp-content/uploads/files/best_practices.pdf
- Search Institute. *40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents*. Available at <http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18>
- Learner, Learner & Colleagues. *The Positive Development of Youth*. Available at <http://ase.tufts.edu/iaryd/documents/4HPYDStudyWave7.pdf>
- ACT for Youth Upstate Centre of Excellence. *Understanding Youth Development Principles and Practices*. Available at www.actforyouth.net/resources/rf/rf_understandyd_0904.pdf

the process

Beginning in February 2016, youth, stakeholders, and community members were engaged to identify, share, and discuss key issues, opportunities, and priorities for the future.

Engagement activities included:



Youth and Adult Tables established to help guide the process and strategy development.



An Adult Survey (created and delivered by the Maple Ridge Strong Kids initiative) completed by 297 adults and caregivers/parents of youth.



Interviews with a range of local service providers to identify key strengths, challenges, issues and potential strategies or 'big moves' that would make the most difference to the system.



A Youth Survey (co-created and delivered by the Maple Ridge Strong Kids initiative, Maple Ridge Youth Strategy, and the Ridge Meadows Local Action Team) completed by 566 youth, the bulk of whom were 13-18.



A series of 7 youth workshops with over 115 youth and emerging adults including high school and alternate education classes, Maple Ridge Youth Council, Youth Futures, PLEA LGBTQ Group, and local community colleges.



A series of two focus groups with 21 service providers to dive deeper into potential solutions and prioritize actions and ideas in terms of feasibility and impact to youth.

Over 1,000 local youth, parents, and service providers shared their ideas



680+
youth &
emerging
adults



30+
service
providers



~300
adults,
parents &
caregivers





COMMUNITY PROFILE

demographics

Maple Ridge is the third fastest growing municipality in the Metro Vancouver region. The City is also unique in that we have a much higher proportion of youth and children than the province as a whole. Our community's abundant natural beauty and outdoor recreation, family-oriented housing, great schools, and amenities continue to draw more and more families and youth to the area – a trend that has continued since the 1990's.

This trend is expected to continue as the younger population ages and the community continues to grow. In contrast, the proportion of young/emerging adults (aged 20-24 years) in Maple Ridge is slightly lower than BC. This may indicate that our younger citizens are leaving the community to gain access to services, resources, and/or activities that better meet their needs.

AGE RANGE	MAPLE RIDGE POPULATION	MAPLE RIDGE - % OF POPULATION	BC - % OF POPULATION
0-4 years	4,300	5.7%	5.0%
5-9 years	4,455	5.9%	5.0%
10-14 years	5,040	6.6%	5.4%
15-19 years	5,870	7.7%	6.3%
20-24 years	4,675	6.1%	6.4%
25-29 years	4,170	5.5%	6.6%
30-34 years	4,210	5.5%	6.3%
35-39 years	5,010	6.6%	6.4%
40-44 years	6,265	8.2%	7.1%
45-49 years	6,955	9.1%	8.0%
50-54 years	6,545	8.6%	8.1%
55-59 years	5,135	6.8%	7.3%
60-64 years	4,220	5.5%	6.6%
65-69 years	2,850	3.7%	4.8%
70-74 years	2,170	2.9%	3.7%
75-79 years	1,790	2.4%	2.9%
80-84 years	1,260	1.7%	2.2%
85 years +	1,140	1.5%	2.1%

Future Youth: Maple Ridge can expect high proportions of youth in the future.

Current Youth: Maple Ridge has a significantly high proportion of youth.

Emerging Adults: Maple Ridge has a lower proportion of emerging adults

Future Retirees: In the next 20 years, almost one quarter of BC's population is expected to be 65 or older. This means a significant proportion of our population will be retiring and we will need younger populations to support our community and our economy.

Source: Census 2011, Statistics Canada

current reality

The following provides an overview of what we heard from youth, adults, and service providers through the engagement process:

STRENGTHS

- **Outdoor amenities and recreation:** Youth appreciate the abundance of outdoor recreation in Maple Ridge such as hiking, canoeing, biking, etc.
- **Small town feel:** A strong sense of community and connectedness was a common theme identified by both youth and service providers.
- **Facilities & amenities:** While youth expressed a desire for more amenities, they also appreciated the existing sport associations, pools, fields, rinks, and Greg Moore Youth Centre, as well as malls, restaurants, shops, etc.
- **Strong network and collaboration among community service providers:** Community service providers emphasized the importance of their strong networks that meet frequently and collaborate closely. Community organizations were described as responsive, proactive, and action-based. Youth are able to access multiple services and are often referred from one service provider to another.
- **Strong traditional & alternative school programs:** The variety of alternative and traditional high school programs complement each other well and provide a range of options for youth.
- **Mental health awareness in schools:** Youth noted that schools have started to take a proactive approach to mental health awareness (promotion of mental health, self-regulation, yoga, and other wellness programs).



**“We need more spaces like the
Greg Moore Youth Centre!”**

CHALLENGES

- **Substance use:** Substance use/addictions was one of the top concerns for community members of all ages. Youth in particular were concerned about the prevalence and ease of access to drugs and alcohol in the community. While not always connected, many people noted the linkages between substance use and mental health. These issues can affect youth directly, but can also have a huge impact on youth whose families or caregivers face mental health and/or substance use challenges. Youth and other community members stressed the need for social support from family, friends, and community along with professional support services.
- **Mental health:** Youth, adults/parents, and service providers all emphasized mental health as a key priority to address. Today's youth face increasing pressure from school, work, family, and peers as well as stress, anxiety, depression, and other issues that can seriously impact their wellbeing and their ability to cope with daily life. Both youth and community service providers noted that long waitlists can be a significant barrier to youth accessing mental health services in a timely/effective manner.
- **Reactive approach to wellness:** Youth noted that although there are great resources in the community and many proactive organizations, there still seems to be an emphasis on treatment services rather than prevention. For example, it was noted that there are lots of free programs for teen mothers but no free access to birth control; or that there are many resources for addictions but less focus on drug awareness and prevention.
- **Safety:** Many youth were also concerned about safety; some noted they do not feel safe in certain areas of the city due to drug use, 'scary' people, general cleanliness, and social issues like homelessness. Youth also emphasized there should be less tolerance for bullying (in schools and online), as well as racism and discrimination (in schools but also the broader community).
- **Boredom and lack of social spaces/amenities:** Youth noted a lack social spaces to hang out after school hours and on weekends. They wanted more malls, shops, restaurants, and places to recreate as well as more programming and opportunities to contribute to the community. Both youth and service providers suggested there are connections between boredom/lack of social activities and the prevalence of substance use and risky behavior, as well as mental health issues (anxiety, depression). Adults/parents were also concerned about the amount of screen time that youth engage in.

- **Negative perception of youth:** Youth noted that they often don't feel respected, heard, or valued by adults. Although a 'strong sense of community and small town feel' was noted as one of the City's key strengths, many youth also noted a lack of connection and belonging and believe the community has a negative perception of youth.
- **Poor transit service:** It is difficult for youth to get around the City (especially in less connected neighbourhoods in East Maple Ridge) due to the infrequency of buses, limited routes, and hours of service. This further limits the amount of social spaces and amenities available or accessible to youth.
- **Transition to adulthood:** Youth and emerging adults shared their fears about transitioning to adulthood and emphasized the need to learn life skills like budgeting, filing taxes, paying bills, getting a job etc. Many were also uncertain about finding their passion or direction in life and expressed a desire for more support services and resources to explore different career options.
- **Affordable housing, poverty & homelessness:** Many youth/families and emerging adults struggle to find affordable/rental housing and there are limited options for youth living in precarious situations or facing homelessness. Youth or families living in poverty have less access to suitable housing, food, recreation, and material goods – this can lead to lower self-esteem and poorer overall health outcomes. After the closure of the Iron Horse Safe House / Youth Shelter, the only shelters available are in Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Surrey, which uproot youth from their community and support services.
- **Access to education:** Many youth expressed a desire to pursue post-secondary education, but were deterred by the cost, not sure how to pay for it, or worried about incurring a large debt in the process. Emerging adults in post-secondary struggle to pay for school and housing.
- **Getting a job:** Many youth and emerging adults were concerned about finding a job or struggled with minimum wage jobs. Youth, especially, noted the difficulty in gaining relevant work experience in order to find a job/career that pays well and is satisfying.

community statistics

INCOME

- **Average household income.** Average income is higher in Maple Ridge (\$81,122) than the BC average (\$78,580).¹
- **Low income.** There is a smaller proportion of low income families in Maple Ridge (11.5%) than the province as a whole (16.4%); however, this still means that over 2,000 local families are struggling to make ends meet on a daily basis.¹

EDUCATION

- **High school completion.** Maple Ridge high school completion rates (87%) are stable and above the BC average (84%). Graduation rates for Aboriginal students in Maple Ridge are significantly higher than the province (72% in Maple Ridge vs. 64% in BC).²
- **Post-secondary education.** Residents in Maple Ridge over the age of 25 are less likely to have a university degree (15.4%) than the province as a whole (27.3%) but equally or more likely to have some post-secondary, a college diploma or trade certification.¹

HOUSING

- **Rental housing.** Average rental costs are lower in Maple Ridge (\$922 for a 2-bedroom) compared to Vancouver (\$1,522) or the province as a whole (\$1,136).³
- **Housing prices.** Average housing prices are lower in Maple Ridge than other areas of the region; however, prices have risen dramatically in recent years. As of 2016, the average price for a single family home in Maple Ridge (\$602,300) increased almost 25% from 2015 and over 50% since 2006. Average prices for townhouses (318,000) and apartments (\$177,700) have also increased since 2015.⁴

CRIME

- **Juvenile crime rates.** Serious crime rates for juveniles (ages 12-18) are much lower in Maple Ridge than the province as a whole, and have declined dramatically in the past decade.⁵
- **Overall crime rates.** Maple Ridge has higher rates of criminal offences than the province as a whole, but lower rates of violent crimes and lower rates of drug offences.⁵

HEALTH & WELLBEING

- **Child wellbeing.** A higher proportion of children (grade 4) in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows School District are *thriving* when compared to the average of 15 school districts across BC. Measures of physical, social and emotional development include optimism, happiness, self-esteem, absence of sadness, and general health.⁶
- **Physically active youth.** High school students in the Maple Ridge Local Health Area are significantly more physically active (11-12% higher) than the BC average.¹

VULNERABLE YOUTH

- **Youth in poverty.** Over 3,000 children and youth (under 18) in Maple Ridge live below the poverty line (as of 2006) which has a significant impact on their overall wellbeing.⁵
- **Youth in care.** The proportion of youth in care in the Maple Ridge Local Health Area (9.7 per 1,000 population aged 0 to 18) is slightly lower than the provincial average (10 per 1,000) but significantly higher than the Coquitlam Health Area (5.7 per 1,000).⁵
- **Teen pregnancy.** The teen pregnancy rate in Maple Ridge (31.9 per 1,000 teen females aged 15-19) is slightly higher than the BC average (27.9).⁵
- **Youth mental health.** It is estimated that over 1,100 children and youth (aged 0 to 18) in Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Katzie area are experiencing serious mental health disorders (as of 2008).⁵

¹ Fraser Health (2010). *Community Profile: Maple Ridge Local Health Area*.

² School District 42. *Graduation Rates 2014/15*.

³ Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, 2016.

⁴ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2012.

⁵ Legacy Heritage Consultants (2009). *Building Community Solutions: Community Profile Snapshot 2009, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Katzie*.

⁶ UBC Human Early Learning Partnership (2015). *Middle Years Development Instrument: 2014/2015 School District and Community Report, Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, School District 42 (Grade 4)*.



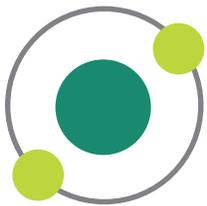
RECOMMENDATIONS

city roles

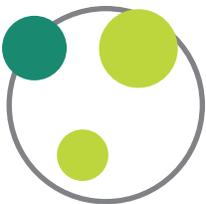
While the City has influence over many aspects that affect local youth, certain issues fall outside of the powers of local government and rely on support, funding or guidance from senior levels of government, other agencies (such as TransLink), and local community organizations.

Implementation of the Strategy will require continued communication, collaboration, and action by many partners. The recommendations provide a starting point for the City and community partners to inform their planning and work together to achieve our shared goals.

The City has three distinct roles in implementing the Youth Strategy:



LEAD – *primary responsibility*. The City will implement an action, working alone or with other community partners; this may involve coordinating, funding, planning, or service delivery.



PARTNER – *shared responsibility*. The City will work with appropriate community partners to achieve an action; this may involve joint planning, coordinating or funding but will rarely involve service delivery.



ADVOCATE – *complementary responsibility*. The City will seek to influence decisions and policy through an organized effort (working alone or with other community partners).

LEGEND



Youth Strategy goal or action



City of Maple Ridge



Other stakeholders / partners

partners

Implementation of the Strategy will require collaboration and action by many partners. The following identifies a number of potential partners; these organizations are not bound by this plan, but rather are seen as key players in providing an integrated and holistic approach to youth wellbeing in Maple Ridge.

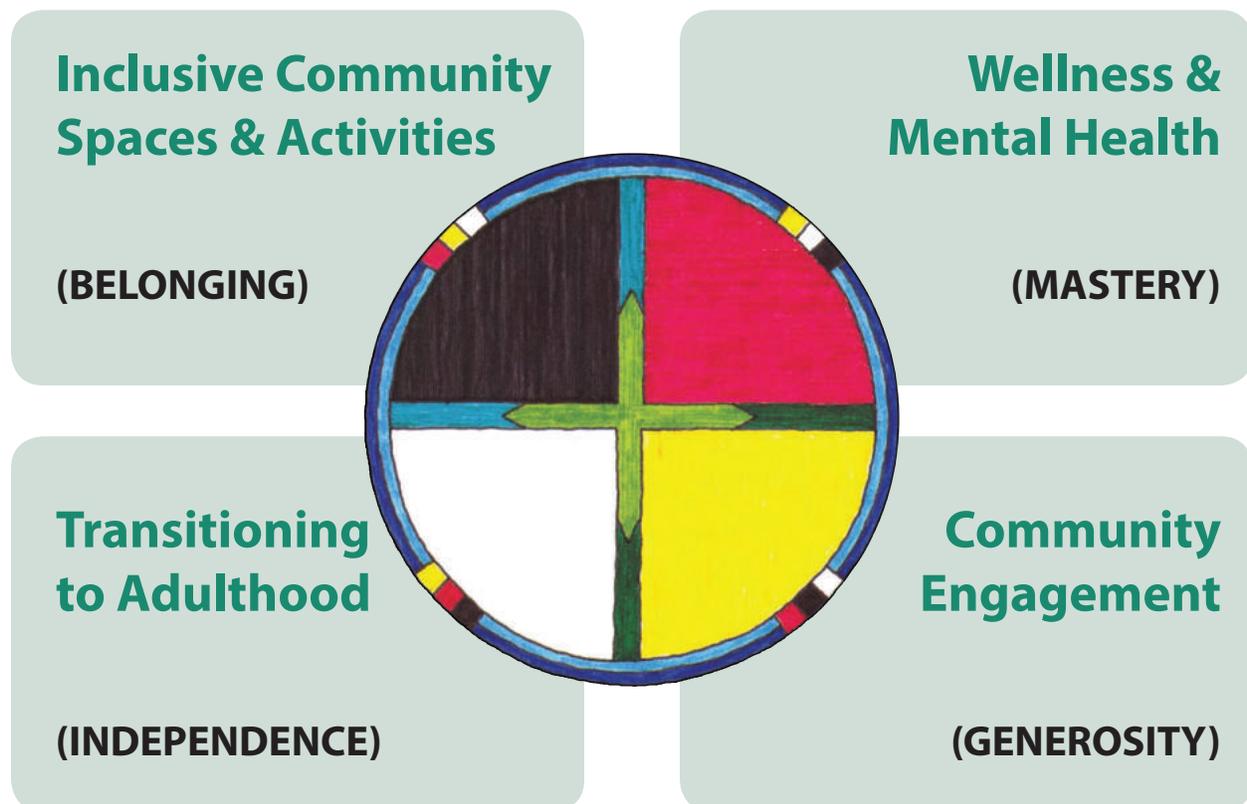
Potential partners include:

- Federal agencies and provincial ministries
- Regional and other agencies (i.e., TransLink)
- School District 42
- Maple Ridge City Council
- Members of the Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Network and other local community service organizations
- Local organizations who support youth (i.e., sports, arts and culture, learning, recreation)
- Advocacy groups outside of the community (ie., mental health, sexual health organizations)
- Local businesses, Downtown Business Improvement Association
- Parents and other community members
- Local youth, emerging adults, and youth organizations

As part of the implementation process, the City's Social Policy Advisory Committee will meet with local community organizations and provincial ministries to review the Strategy, confirm partnerships, and develop a shared approach for implementing actions.

themes

Recommendations have been organized into four major theme areas. While there is some overlap, each theme area generally corresponds to one of the four “Circle of Courage” areas:



Goals and actions are identified for each of these theme areas in the section that follows.



1. INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY SPACES & ACTIVITIES

Just as social environments can affect youth wellness, safe and inclusive physical environments are critical to youth development and overall wellbeing. Having access to a range of physical, social, creative, and leisure activities is necessary to support our youth to develop to their fullest potential and to help prevent risky behavior and unhealthy lifestyle choices. Both youth and adults in Maple Ridge noted the connection between themes like drugs and alcohol, boredom, and a lack of social spaces and activities for youth.

Many adults are concerned about the amount of screen time that youth engage in. While this is an important issue, when asked an open-ended question about their favorite activities to do, the majority of youth surveyed listed sports, outdoor recreation, arts activities, spending time with friends, and relaxing.

The choices that youth make are influenced by the spaces in which they live and play. As many youth don't drive, they must rely on walking, cycling, transit, or rides from others to get around. Youth can also face financial challenges – whether it's being able to afford to join a sports team, or just finding somewhere to hang out that doesn't cost anything (and isn't 18+), it can be tricky for youth to find spaces that are welcoming. Communities that are more compact, accessible, and affordable can help to support youth as well as other groups who face similar restraints.

“in an ideal world, our community would be safe and inclusive for everyone.”

“We need more recreation and social spaces for youth throughout the community.”

GOALS:

- 1.1 Reduce barriers and provide more opportunities for youth recreation.
- 1.2 Increase transportation options for youth.
- 1.3 Support safe, inclusive and youth-friendly public and social spaces.
- 1.4 Support walkable and accessible neighbourhoods.

GOAL 1.1 Reduce barriers and provide more opportunities for youth recreation

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
1.1.1 Provide more youth-oriented recreation opportunities in “after school hours” (3-8pm and summer) that are affordable, accessible, and meet the needs and interests of local youth, including a range of sports, leisure, music, arts and culture.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
1.1.2 Work with community partners to explore funding and transportation options to support youth in accessing recreation opportunities.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Partner
1.1.3 Continue to engage with youth about the type, amount, and location of recreation they desire.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead

GOAL 1.2 Increase transportation options for youth

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
1.2.1 Work with community partners to explore the potential to develop a local youth transportation program to support youth to get around (to school, recreation) and better connect areas of the City underserved by transit (i.e., community Ride Share program and/ or a community shuttle with safe options designed specifically for youth).	Youth	Partner
1.2.2 Continue to advocate to TransLink and senior levels of government for more public transit service in the City.	All ages / broader community	Advocate
1.2.3 Provide clear information on how to access public facilities using public transit and safe bike routes.	All ages / broader community	Lead

GOAL 1.3 Support safe, inclusive, and youth-friendly public and social spaces

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
1.3.1 Collaborate with youth to create a variety of fun, interesting social spaces in parks and public spaces (i.e., covered/ uncovered hang out spaces, seating areas, designated graffiti walls/areas, temporary parks/parklettes).	Youth	Lead
1.3.2 Integrate child and youth-friendly principles into land use planning and development applications.	All ages / broader community	Lead
1.3.3 Encourage CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles in the design of neighbourhoods and public facilities as well as parks and public spaces.	All ages / broader community	Lead
1.3.4 Provide sufficient garbage and recycling bins throughout the City.	All ages / broader community	Lead
1.3.5 Work with community partners and local businesses to provide a range of all-ages venues, events, and activities throughout the City (i.e., concerts, open mic nights, movie nights, etc.).	Youth	Partner
1.3.6 Continue to provide safe spaces for youth (such as youth centres) throughout the community.	Youth	Lead
1.3.7 Work with local youth to conduct a City-wide neighbourhood safety audit to identify areas in need of improvement.	Youth	Lead
1.3.8 Develop and implement a mini-grants program to support youth and other community members to initiate small community projects to enhance safety, beautification, inclusivity, or social connections.	All ages / broader community	Lead
1.3.9 Work with Katzie First Nation to explore the potential to develop an Aboriginal hub or Friendship Centre to support local First Nations, especially youth, to come together to connect with different community services.	All ages / broader community	Partner
1.3.10 Continue to advocate to provincial and federal governments for funding to realize a new Civic Cultural Facility in Maple Ridge to provide a safe welcoming space for youth to gather and access resources.	All ages / broader community	Advocate

GOAL 1.4 Support accessible, walkable/bikeable neighbourhoods

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
1.4.1 Work with School District 42 and other community partners to promote cycling by providing information/presentations about safe cycling routes and rules of the road, hosting 'Bike to School' weeks, and providing free resources (i.e., headlights, reflector strips).	Youth	Partner
1.4.2 Work with community partners to develop a bike donation program to provide marginalized youth with bikes.	Youth	Partner
1.4.3 Continue to encourage and promote pedestrian-oriented development and safe, walkable neighbourhoods with sufficient lighting and pedestrian infrastructure (i.e., crosswalks, sidewalks).	All ages / broader community	Lead



“when there is no bus past 7pm, it really limits what youth can do”



Studies have shown that teenage girls who participate in sports are 50% less likely to experience a teen pregnancy than non-athletes.

*Women's Sports Foundation (1995).
Youth Risk Behaviour Study.*

Research has shown that youth who participate in creative practices such as music or art have a stronger sense of purpose and belonging, increased self-confidence, improved problem-solving skills, and higher success at school and life.

Canada Council for the Arts.



2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Social connections with friends, family and community are associated with better overall health and wellbeing. People reporting a strong sense of community belonging are twice as likely to report excellent or very good mental health (Canadian Mental Health Association). Civic engagement, volunteering and participation in social or recreational clubs also bring positive benefits. They can help individuals develop important skills and relationships, empower people to gain control to improve their lives, and provide a sense of value and purpose.

In 2011-2012, 68% of British Columbians (aged 12 and up) reported a somewhat or very strong sense of belonging to their local community (Canadian Community Health Survey, Statistics Canada). Local youth noted that Maple Ridge's "small town feel" and sense of community/connection was one of its key strengths. However, many youth also mentioned this as one of the key challenges, noting a lack of connection and negative perceptions of youth. Feeling a lack of respect or value can be very harmful for youth and for a community's social capital. For the well-being of individuals and our entire community, it is critical to find ways to recognize the contributions of youth and actively seek their ideas to provide more diverse perspectives for civic decision-making.

“In an ideal world...adults genuinely listen and youth are excited to get involved.”

GOALS:

- 2.1 Advocate for the needs of youth and emerging adults.
- 2.2 Host a Youth Forum – for youth, by youth.
- 2.3 Actively engage youth in civic issues.
- 2.4 Recognize and celebrate the contributions of local youth.
- 2.5 Support and promote youth voices in the community.

GOAL 2.1 Advocate for the needs of youth and emerging adults

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
<p>2.1.1 Identify a Youth Services Advocate to advocate for the needs of youth and emerging adults by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) Advocating to senior levels of government for funding and support for services and programs, affordable housing, education, transportation, minimum wage increase, and other opportunities that benefit youth, families, and emerging adults, emphasizing the fact that Maple Ridge has a higher proportion of children and youth than the province as a whole. b.) Identifying and applying for relevant grant programs and other funding opportunities. c.) Promoting and implementing this Youth Strategy with local youth, parents, caregivers, service providers, community partners, and local media. d.) Supporting youth to share their voices with Council and senior levels of government. 	<p>Youth, Emerging Adults</p>	<p>Lead</p>

GOAL 2.2 Host a Youth Forum – for youth, by youth

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
<p>2.2.1 Host a Youth Forum to discuss the goals, desires, and accomplishments of youth in Maple Ridge and share information about existing resources, programs, services and activities.</p>	<p>Youth</p>	<p>Lead</p>

GOAL 2.3 Actively engage youth in civic issues

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
2.3.1 Actively seek youth input on municipal decisions, including youth representation on civic committees and youth engagement targets for community engagement processes.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
2.3.2 Identify and implement tools and strategies to gather input from younger community members during community engagement processes (e.g., social media, surveys, school workshops, events at youth-friendly locations).	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
2.3.3 Actively seek opportunities to involve youth in fun, innovative civic projects such as public art, temporary parks, community gardens, and events.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
2.3.4 Create meaningful opportunities for youth and emerging adults to get implement the Youth Strategy and to provide input to Council on other civic issues or initiatives (i.e., Youth Committee).	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
2.3.5 Create youth-friendly communications (i.e., brochure, video, presentation) to explain how City Hall works and how community members can get involved in civic issues and share their voices with Council. Work with community partners to share information through schools and other community facilities.	Youth, Emerging Adults, Adults	Lead

GOAL 2.4 Recognize and celebrate the contributions of local youth

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
2.4.1 Create and promote Civic Youth Awards to recognize and celebrate the contributions that local youth and emerging adults make to the community.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead
2.4.2 Continue to celebrate Youth Week and use it as an opportunity to engage youth and other community members through positive civic projects and events.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead

GOAL 2.5 Support and promote youth voices in the community

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
2.5.1 Advocate to community partners to support the creation of a youth publication (blog, magazine, etc.) to promote local youth voices in the community.	Youth	Advocate

“Adults just assume we are up to no good”



“If the image of youth is going to change then we all have to work on changing it, including youth...we need to step up.”



3. MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS

Youth are faced with many challenges as they transition from children to adults. They face significant pressure at home, school, work, and socially, and they may not have the resources or life experience to deal effectively with this stress. Mental health and wellness is critical for people of all ages, but especially for youth as the issues they face and coping skills they develop will affect them into adulthood.

Research has shown a variety of relationships between mental health issues and substance abuse. Mental health issues may influence the development of substance abuse problems or vice versa; they may be completely unrelated; or they may be triggered by genetic, developmental, or environmental factors (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health). While there's not much that can be done at the community level in terms of genetics, the developmental and environmental support systems we create play a key role in supporting the health and wellbeing of our youth and emerging adults.

“There is quite a bit of judgement concerning mental health and substance use, especially from adults”

GOALS:

- 3.1 Support wellness, mental health & preventative substance use services for youth.
- 3.2 Improve awareness of and access to youth services.
- 3.3 Use local youth development trends to plan for youth services and programs.
- 3.4 Support the reintroduction of a safe house / youth shelter in Maple Ridge.
- 3.5 Further engage parents in supporting youth wellbeing.
- 3.6 Support relief for families dealing with mental health issues.

GOAL 3.1 Support wellness, mental health & preventative substance use services for youth

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.1.1 Continue to support and develop the Youth Wellness Centre to provide a local, integrated hub of services for youth.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Partner
3.1.2 Continue to advocate to provincial and federal governments for long-term, sustainable funding for the Youth Wellness Centre to improve access to health and wellness services for local youth.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate
<p>3.1.3 Advocate to community partners to develop and implement a preventative approach to youth wellness and resilience, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) Integrating wellness, mental health, and substance use prevention into school curriculums from K-12. b.) Identifying a youth worker or teacher in each elementary and high school to lead wellness, mental health, and substance use programs. c.) Providing meaningful information and resources to youth about wellness, stress management, mental health, substance use, and other risky behaviour, including safe drug use (i.e., what to do in case of overdose), personal recovery stories, and other information (i.e., what do drugs feel like, what do they do). d.) Promoting and integrating self-care and self-regulation (i.e., stress management, yoga, mindfulness) along with regular, open discussions about mental health and wellness. e.) Providing meaningful sexual education that is inclusive of different sexual orientations, addresses health and safety, and is non-judgmental and informative. f.) Providing meaningful education and resources on violence and cruelty, including online, verbal and physical bullying, relationship violence, discrimination, and racism. 	Youth (K-12)	Advocate

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
<p>(3.1.3 Continued)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g.) Providing free birth control and sexual health services to youth and emerging adults. h.) Providing in-school Drug & Alcohol counsellors in all high schools. i.) Providing information on confidential help lines, services, and resources for youth of all ages. j.) Focusing on early identification of mental health and or substance use issues and connecting youth with professionals outside of the school system for confidentiality. k.) Encouraging mental health training for professionals and others who work with youth (ie., teachers, coaches, service providers, etc.). l.) Developing partnerships with treatment centres to deliver classroom sessions and/or workshops for professionals. 		
<p>3.1.4 Support mental health training for City staff who engage with youth.</p>	Youth	Lead
<p>3.1.5 Advocate to community partners to develop early intervention techniques for youth facing mental health and/or substance use.</p>	Youth	Advocate
<p>3.1.6 Advocate to community partners to develop a support group for youth and emerging adults related to mental health and/or substance use.</p>	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate

“We need more education in drug use, alcohol use, and sex.”

GOAL 3.2 Improve awareness of and access to youth services

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.2.1 Work with community partners to develop and promote a Youth Wellness website as a one-stop site to support youth, emerging adults, and parents to find local resources on a range of topics including physical and mental health, substance use/addictions, financial support, housing/shelter, education, employment, etc.	Youth, Emerging Adults, Parents	Partner
3.2.2 Promote the Youth Strategy, Youth Development Wheel, and Youth Wellness website among youth, emerging adults, parents, service providers, and other community partners and organizations.	Emerging Adults, Parents, Service Providers	Lead
3.2.3 Work with community partners to promote new and existing services for youth in schools and to parents and caregivers through a variety of channels including in-person outreach/presentations, print (brochures, guides, school newsletters), and online (websites, social media).	Parents	Partner

GOAL 3.3 Use local youth development trends to plan for youth services

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.3.1 Use the Early Development Instrument (EDI) and Middle Development Instrument (MDI) results for Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows to evaluate youth needs over time and plan City programs, services and resources.	Youth	Lead

GOAL 3.4 Support the reintroduction of a safe house/youth shelter in Maple Ridge

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.4.1 Advocate to senior levels of government and other community partners for funding to reintroduce a safe house/youth shelter in Maple Ridge to help support youth in need, especially those under 16.	Youth	Advocate

GOAL 3.5 Further engage parents in youth wellbeing

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.5.1 Work with community partners to develop a support group for parents of youth to get advice and share best practices.	Parents	Partner
3.5.2 Advocate to community partners to raise awareness and engage parents on youth wellness, mental health, and substance use prevention and intervention.	Parents	Advocate

GOAL 3.6 Support relief for families dealing with mental health issues

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
3.6.1 Advocate to community partners to develop and enhance relief programs for families affected by mental health issues including a range of professional support, care support, peer support groups, workshops and other resources.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate

In a perfect world...

“there would be an anonymous place to access mental health resources”

“schools would talk to kids earlier about healthy behaviours and coping skills”

“substance use would be talked about openly, there would be free services for youth and no waitlists to talk to someone and get help”

- Youth Survey Participants



Over one-third of young adults with mental health issues reported their symptoms started in childhood¹.

But, only one in four children or youth generally seek or receive help for their mental health².

¹ Government of Canada (2006). *The human face of mental health and mental illness in Canada.*

² Statistics Canada (2003). *Canadian community health survey: Mental health and well-being.*



40% of youth surveyed in Maple Ridge said that they would access a Youth Wellness Centre that offered support with mental health, substance abuse and other services.

Youth Strategy, Youth Survey (2016).



4. TRANSITIONING TO ADULTHOOD

The transition to adulthood is an important time for youth and emerging adults. They must balance school, work, family and social life, and a variety of extracurricular activities. Once high school ends, they face an abrupt change as they enter “the real world.” The challenges they faced as youth are now compounded by new challenges such as finding suitable housing, getting into post-secondary, finding a job/career, budgeting, paying taxes and more.

Many youth in Maple Ridge are concerned about this transition and feel they lack some key “life skills”. Emerging adults noted the same issues and concerns, suggesting that the traditional high school curriculum doesn’t fully equip students with the skills and knowledge they need for today’s world.

By developing additional resources and emphasizing lifelong learning, we can help support youth and emerging adults as they make this important life transition.

“In an ideal world, youth would be given the time and support they need to grow up.”

“Our generation feels a bit screwed...no jobs, high expectations, too much stress and pressure. The costs of housing and education are so ridiculous that even if you get a great job, the weight of debt is crippling.”

GOALS:

- 4.1 Support youth/emerging adults to learn important life and career development skills.
- 4.2 Support youth and emerging adults to gain practical, real life work experience.
- 4.3 Increase access to post-secondary education for youth and emerging adults.
- 4.4 Support more affordable housing for families and older youth/emerging adults.

GOAL 4.1 Support youth and emerging adults to learn important life skills and career development skills.

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
<p>4.1.1 Work with School District 42 and other community partners to develop and implement classes, workshops and resources (in and out of schools) to teach life skills and career development such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resume writing/interviews/job applications, • work safety, • applying for post-secondary, • money management, • goal setting, • stress management, • finding housing, • tenancy laws and landlord rights, • how to do your own taxes, and, • how to start a business, etc. 	All ages / broader community	Partner
<p>4.1.4 Work with community partners to develop a volunteer learning registry to connect people who want to learn with others who can teach specific skills.</p>	All ages / broader community	Partner

“Why are we expected to be adults as soon as we turn 19?”

GOAL 4.2 Support youth and emerging adults to gain practical, real life work experience

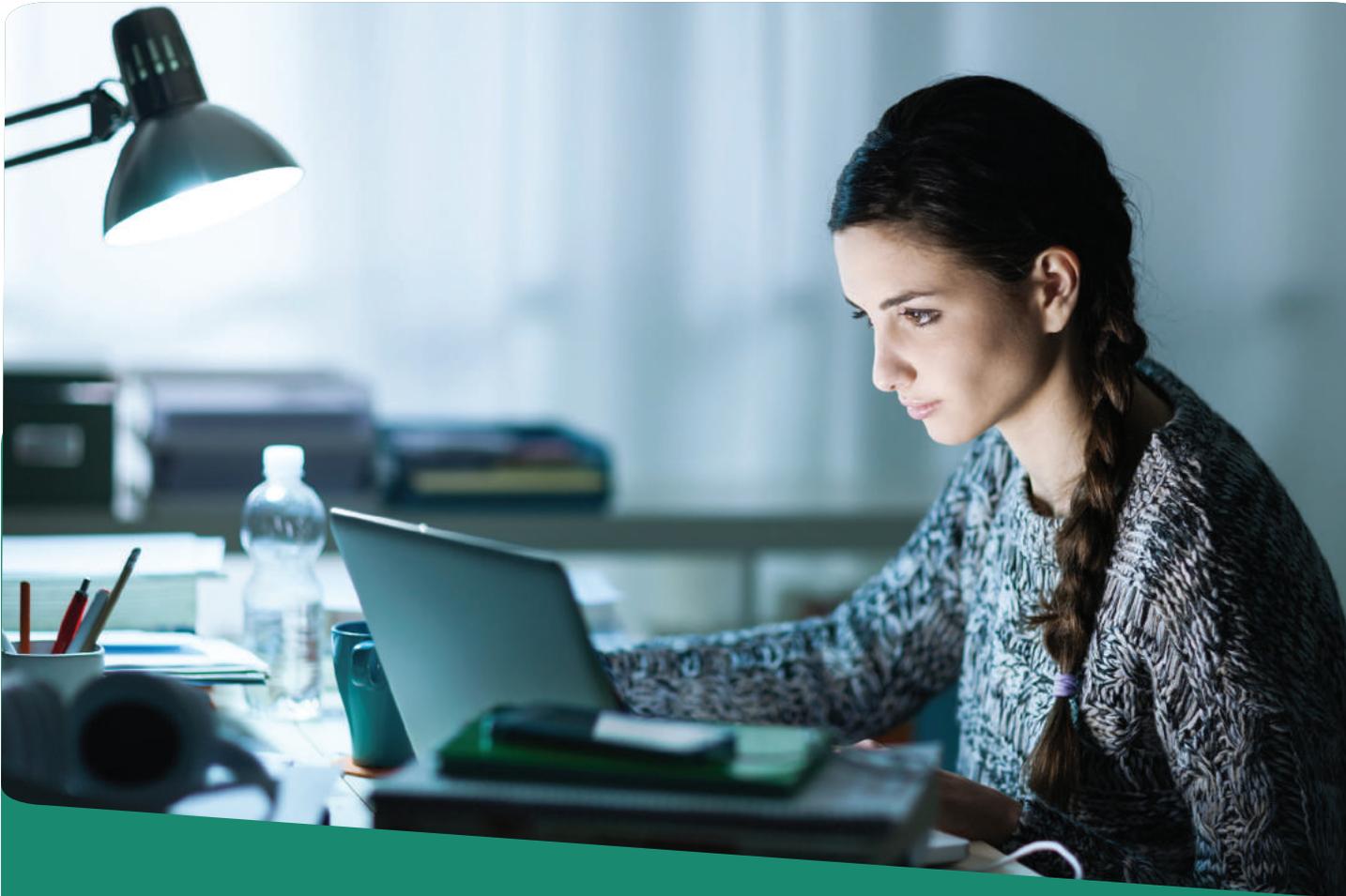
ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
<p>4.2.1 Advocate to community partners to develop a “Supporting Youth Works” program to provide more opportunities for youth and emerging adults to gain work experience and build connections in their schools and in their community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) Developing a database of local opportunities for formal work experience (for school credit) as well as jobs and volunteer opportunities for youth and emerging adults. b.) Developing job fairs oriented to youth and emerging adults. c.) Developing a career sampler program for youth to try out a series of different jobs and skill sets. d.) Developing a lecture series to introduce youth to a range of possible professions with a focus on diverse representation including women, people with disabilities, and minorities. e.) Developing a mentorship program to connect youth with local professionals to learn more about different career options. f.) Working with local businesses and community organizations to identify appropriate employment and volunteer opportunities for youth, especially those under 15. g.) Providing information on BC Employment Standards to youth and employers of youth. 	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate
<p>4.2.2 Develop and implement a youth work experience program within various City departments.</p>	Youth, Emerging Adults	Lead

GOAL 4.3 Increase access to post-secondary education

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
4.3.1 Advocate to senior levels of government to provide more financial support to post-secondary students including scholarships, grants, and free courses as well as free tuition for low-income students/families.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate
4.3.2 Advocate to community partners to develop a Maple Ridge community-based scholarship program to support local youth and emerging adults to attend post-secondary.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate
4.3.3 Advocate to the provincial government to provide free upgrading through Continuing Education for youth and emerging adults out of high school.	Youth, Emerging Adults	Advocate
4.3.4 Continue to explore a possible partnership with Simon Fraser University to create a satellite campus in Maple Ridge to help youth and young adults access post-secondary opportunities locally.	Emerging Adults	Partner

GOAL 4.4 Support affordable housing for families and youth/emerging adults

ACTIONS	AGE RANGE	CITY ROLE
4.4.1 Continue to support the ongoing maintenance and development of adequate rental units and affordable housing as per the City's Housing Action Plan.	Youth, Emerging Adults, Families	Lead
4.4.2 Continue to advocate to senior levels of governments for more funding for non-market housing, rent supplements, and other programs to support low-income households.	Youth, Emerging Adults, Families	Advocate
4.4.3 Continue to provide information on housing rights and housing assistance as per the City's Housing Action Plan, with an emphasis on reaching older youth and emerging adults.	Youth, Emerging Adults, Families	Lead



**“It feels good to be independent,
but financial and ‘adult’
responsibilities are stressful and
hard work. The real world is a
challenge and overwhelming”**

– Emerging Adult



IMPLEMENTATION

The Youth Strategy is a plan for *all* youth in Maple Ridge, for vulnerable populations but also for teens and young adults who struggle with everyday challenges, who want to have fun, learn new skills, share their voices, and be seen as partners in their own development.

While some of the challenges facing local youth (such as mental health) fall outside the City's direct influence, the City can still have significant impact on their positive physical, social and psychological development. Whether the City is advocating, partnering with other organizations, or leading initiatives, powerful change can happen over time through incremental actions. There are also many immediate actions the City can take (such as providing more youth-oriented recreation) to help support and empower local youth and emerging adults.

Implementation of the Youth Strategy will be guided by the City's Social Policy Advisory Committee but will require support and collaboration by many community organizations and service providers, various City departments, and senior levels of government, as well as local youth, parents, and community members.



The following steps are recommended to establish an implementation framework to successfully achieve the goals of the Youth Strategy:

- 1** Identify a City staff member or new hire to act as a Youth Services Advocate, integrating the role into their official job description with sufficient time and resources to provide ongoing support for implementation and youth advocacy. (see action 2.1.1)
- 2** Create meaningful opportunities to engage youth and emerging adults in implementing the Youth Strategy, such as a Youth Committee or Task Force (see action 2.3.4).
- 3** Engage staff from various City departments to identify how they can lead implementation of specific actions and/or integrate recommendations into their business planning and decision-making.
- 4** Host Social Policy Engagement Workshops with the Community Network and provincial ministries to establish a shared framework for implementation.
- 5** Engage other community partners, organizations, parents, and community members in implementing the Youth Strategy.
- 6** Conduct an annual review to evaluate progress in implementing the Youth Strategy, assess the changing needs of the community, and update the plan to ensure the actions remain relevant over time. This should involve:
 - a. An internal review of City progress, led by the Social Policy Advisory Committee;
 - b. Workshops with community partners and provincial ministries; and
 - c. An annual workshop with Council to review progress and identify ways for Council to advocate for youth and implement the Youth Strategy.

It takes a village...

The Maple Ridge Youth Strategy is a community-owned plan, created with the ideas and input from local youth, emerging adults, parents, caregivers, and service providers. Making Maple Ridge a place where youth can thrive is a shared responsibility of our whole community.

Developing the Youth Strategy is the first step of many on this journey and the actions of many partners will be needed. Together, we can create an even stronger network to support, engage, and empower the younger members of our society.

Maple Ridge



Youth Strategy

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MODUS

planning design engagement