ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVENESS

Building the Framework

MAPLE RIDGE
British Columbia

plan h

mapleridge.ca/2650

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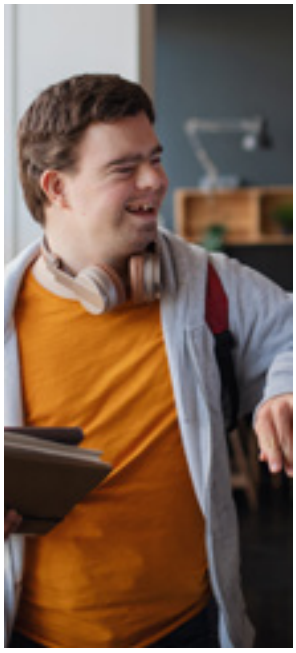
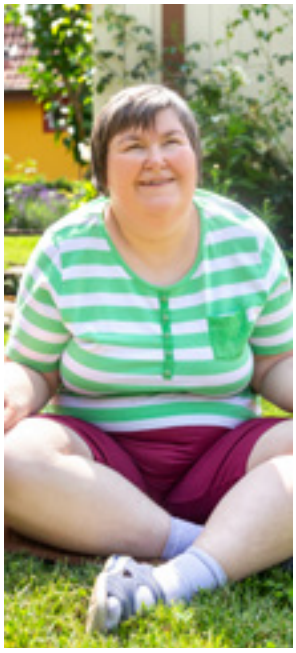




PURPOSE

The Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness is recommending the creation of a City of Maple Ridge (CMR), council endorsed Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework to guide future decisions, policies and planning practices in terms of recreation, social supports and community design and provide opportunities for social inclusion and equitable access to services and programs for priority populations. This will in turn remove barriers and increase supports for Maple Ridge residents at risk of exclusion and facing accessibility challenges and thereby improve individual and community-based health and well-being.

The purpose of this document is to outline a process to facilitate an encompassing, inclusive and safe environment for individuals at risk of exclusion within community living. Individuals within the identified populations will be encouraged to share their experiences and expertise to facilitate change. Topics to be included in discussions include, but are not limited to, persons who identify with diverse-abilities/disabilities, financial stability, Anti-racism, Indigenous Communities, LGBTQIA2S+ community, multiculturalism etc.

The role of CMR within the Framework will be to identify, remove and prevent accessibility and inclusiveness barriers in the areas of, public infrastructure, city programs and services, municipal information, regulation and policies with the goal of facilitating and leading positive leadership, advocacy and partnerships development.

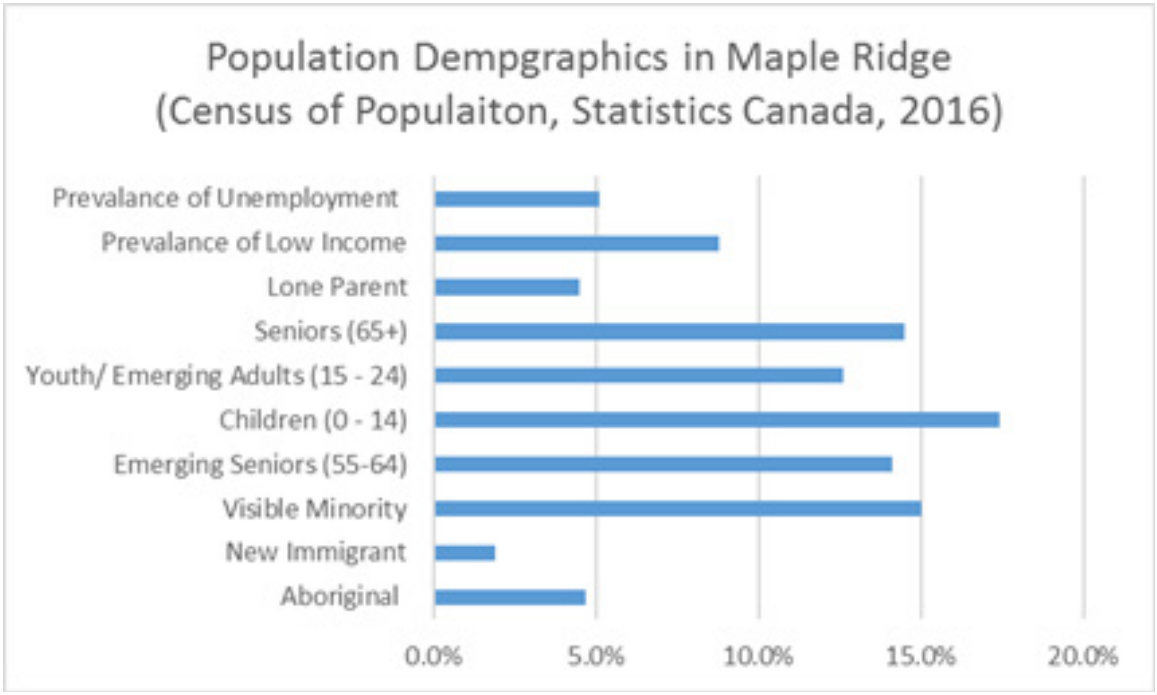
The process detailed below will include mechanisms to engage stakeholders within the community to ensure that the voice of the community is represented within the final document.

As a deliverable in the 2020 Parks, Recreation & Culture Business Plan, staff had the opportunity to apply for and successfully receive funding through the Plan H: Community Connectedness Grant. This funding is earmarked to create the Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework.

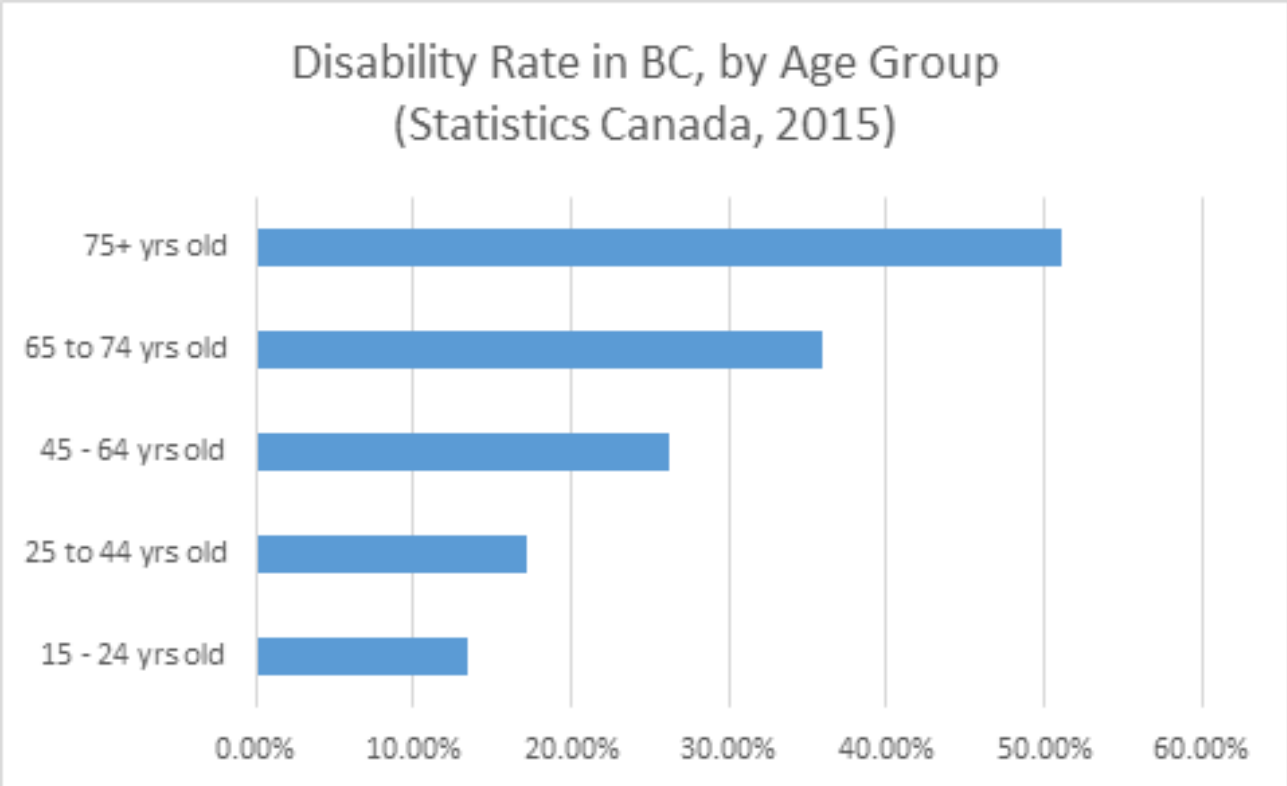
ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

Different population groups have a variety of challenges and opportunities related to community living. For example, older adults and young families benefit from age friendly public spaces, marginalized individuals and individuals with fixed and minimal incomes benefit from community based financial access programming and new comer and LGBTQIA2S+ communities benefit from welcoming and embracing environments. Understanding the unique needs of various community groups is important for improving and building a community where everyone feels and is welcomed.

The following table illustrates the City's demographic as reported during the 2016 Stats Can census and provides a community specific overview of the identified population as it relates to the Framework.



Additionally, within British Columbia there are more than 926,000 individuals who identify as living with a diverse-ability/disability. This is equivalent to 25% of the population (2017). The proportion of individuals living with diverse-abilities/disabilities increases with age from a low of 13.5% for those 15-24 yrs. of age to a high of 42% among those 65+ years and older. As our population ages, the number of people who identify as having a diverse-ability/disability along with the severity of their ability will increase. Furthermore, females reported higher rates of disability than males both overall and within each age category.



FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL & COMMUNITY COMMITMENT

At the federal and provincial level there are several laws and legislations to ensure equal opportunities for all Citizens within community participation. Examples of such laws and legislation are:

CANADA

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom
- Canadian Bill of Rights
- Government of Canada Bill C-81 - Barrier-free Canada
- Government of Canada Bill C-16 – Rights of trans gender and gender diverse Canadians
- Canadian Race Relations Foundation Act

BRITISH COLUMBIA

- BC 2024 (Making BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024)
- BC Accessibility and Inclusion Legislation (to be released in 2021)
- BC Human Rights Code

CITY OF MAPLE RIDGE

The City of Maple Ridge Council has created, adopted and implemented a number of Parks, Recreation & Culture strategies and frameworks that will help guide the development of the Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework. The strategies/frameworks that will be reviewed and cross-referenced are:

- Maple Ridge Housing Needs Assessment – (received as Information 2021)
- Dementia Friendly Communities – (2018)
- Maple Ridge Youth Strategy – (2018)
- "Walking Together" Cultural Plan – (2018)
- Maple Ridge Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (2016-2021)
- Age Friendly Community Dialogue and Action Plan (2015)

DEVELOPING THE FRAMEWORK

The Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness (MACAI) is recommending that staff in consultation with community develop an Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework for the City of Maple Ridge. The proposed Framework will guide future work to build an environment where all residents are able to fully participate in all aspects of community life.

The Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework will be built on a grassroots approach, tapping into the knowledge and experiences of our residents and stakeholders within the City. Identified populations and residents will be engaged at the onset of the Framework and will be active leaders and participants throughout its development.

CMR, working with local organizations and leveraging strong relationships with a variety of partners, will share the actions identified within the Framework and will work with individuals with living experiences to implement community based goals that will improve the lives of our citizens at the local level and will advocate for services/change at the federal and provincial level.

FRAMEWORK 01
- Goals
- Objectives
- Council Approval

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION 02
- Consulting Priority Populations
- Surveys, small group consultations
- Review & summarize council endorsed strategies & implementation plans

STRATEGY 03
- Informs City Programs, services, built enviornment & priority projects
- Council endorsement
- Implementation - Action, Planning, Budgeting

KEY PRINCIPLES

The City of Maple Ridge will build its Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework on the following key principles:

- **Diverse-ability/Disability –** The term Diverse-ability/Disability embraces the uniqueness and potential in every human being, disabled or non-disabled. Diverse-abilities/Disabilities refer to physical, cognitive, developmental, learning, and/or neurological differences, or diversity, in ability levels.
- **Inclusion –** All people have the right to engage and be included in all aspects of community life, regardless of their abilities, diverse-abilities/dabilities, or health care needs, have access to services and programs and the right to be respected, appreciated and treated as valuable and participating members of the community.
- **Accessibility –** All people have the "ability to access". Accessibility is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a diverse-ability/disability or not).
- **Diversity –** All people understand that each individual is unique, and recognizes individual differences which include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical/ emotional abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.
- **Collaboration –** All stakeholders are involved and committed to the single goal of 'creating an inclusive and welcoming community'.
- **Equality –** The term Equality is the assumption that everyone benefits from the same supports. This is considered equal treatment.
- **Equity –** Equity is giving people the individualized tools and supports they need to succeed.

CMR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Council Priorities

CMR Council has identified five strategic priorities, which align with the Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework and include: Community Safety; Inter-government Relationships; Growth; Community Pride & Spirit; and Natural Environment.

Policy Alignment

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

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Individuals with living experiences will be engaged from the onset of the project. The project will have several means of engagement for priority populations to be involved; based on the individuals' own personal needs and abilities. Individuals will have the opportunity to share their living experiences through:

- Focus groups (online or in person)
- Individual interviews
- Surveys

The following agencies/organizations were involved in the initial Plan H grant application and are committed to participating in the community engagement:

- Fraser Health – Community Health Specialist
- Fraser Health – Healthy Built Environments
- Family Education and Support Centre – Local Immigration Partnership
- Ridge Meadows Child Development Centre
- Municipal Advisory Committee on Accessibility and Inclusiveness

As the City moves forward in developing an Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework, internal staff and departments along with agencies and organizations will be encouraged to be involved in a variety of feedback forums including online and in person meetings.

A draft and final report will be shared with all CMR departments to support advancing the Framework.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The development of an Accessibility & Inclusiveness Framework will fall within a working group consisting of MACAI members, residents, community agencies and staff liaison who will meet regularly to develop a variety of community engagement tools, which will include but not be limited to:

- Community Surveys (online and paper copies)
- Feedback forums with identified target populations
- Feedback forums with community agencies/organizations
- In-person focus groups