

City of Maple Ridge

Brand & Identity Revamp Project
Brand Strategy

Prepared for: Corporate Communications and Public Engagement City of Maple Ridge

Prepared by: Trapeze Communications | **Date:** September 22, 2023

Contents

Section 1 Introduction		3
Section 2 Background		5
Section 3 Brand Strategy		14

Section 1

Introduction

On the Verge

The City of Maple Ridge is well regarded and valued for its quality of life, natural environment and surroundings, outstanding opportunities for sports and recreation, unique neighbourhoods and a welcoming, community-minded atmosphere.

The City has a strong and rich heritage and respectfully acknowledges that Maple Ridge is located on the traditional territories of the Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations.

Maple Ridge is a place that is transforming and embracing change. The city is growing and becoming more diverse and increasingly urban. Maple Ridge recognizes that an important component to its future success is tied to the city becoming an economic “player” within the Metro Vancouver region and beyond, attracting significant new investment as well as supporting and growing existing businesses.

Maple Ridge has a transformational and values-based vision for the future and with it a new story of possibilities that is just beginning and that needs to be created and told.

Time is Right, Time is Now

One of the important work plan items on the Department of Strategic Development, Corporate Communications and Public Engagement’s current agenda is to amplify Maple Ridge’s story by reinvigorating the

Section 1

Introduction

City's brand and visual identity to convey strong leadership, innovation and pride in service. Further, there is recognition that moving forward, the brand needs to more strongly differentiate Maple Ridge and more readily reflect a city that is on the move, growing and changing.

What is a Brand?

The term *brand* is widely used and largely misunderstood. It's often an idea or a feeling that comes to mind rather than a logo or tagline. It is the summation of peoples' perceptions; what they think and how they feel. Therefore, a brand is essentially a combination of reputation and perception. As described by Jeff Bezos - "A brand is what other people say about you when you're out of the room."

What is a Brand Strategy?

A brand strategy is a strategic process of perception management, managing the gaps between how the brand is perceived and how you want to be perceived.

A Brand Strategy for Maple Ridge

The cornerstone of any successful city brand is the development of a consistent and coherent strategy that is aligned with the city's strategic vision and the desired perceptions that you wish to convey to the world! This document will outline a strategy for the City that will serve as a foundation for establishing the Maple Ridge brand.

Section 2

Back ground

Overview

When you are a fast growing, mid-sized community in a region of large, well known cities such as Vancouver and Surrey, distinguishing and promoting yourself or just being heard, can be challenging. Particularly when you are largely unknown beyond your regional borders and to some degree misunderstood within the regional context, like the City of Maple Ridge.

A city's brand is fundamental to its identity, shaping how it communicates and markets itself both at home and beyond. City branding at its core is all about bringing a diverse set of stakeholders together, building local community and pride and external awareness.

Branding and identity is not just the logo although it is an important and highly visible element. The opportunity that awaits Maple Ridge is to determine an effective strategy and establish a unique set of characteristics that distinguishes and differentiates the city from other municipalities in the region. It is about forging a competitive stance that will resonate with audiences and encourage people to live, work, invest and visit.

This project is a unique opportunity to redefine the City's brand, capture its essence and spirit, create a dynamic and more modern visual identity system and to provide staff with a more manageable and practical set of guidelines and templates from which to work going forward.

Section 2

Back ground

Context and Perspective

For the purpose of understanding the recent history of the City's brand as well as critical elements that will influence its future direction, we have examined a number of relevant documents and studies that provided context and perspective for brand strategy development. In particular, the Official Community Plan and Council Strategic plan have been central to the brand strategy development. The vision, strategic pillars and guiding principles provided this project with a future-focused and comprehensive foundation to help point Maple Ridge's brand in the right direction.

Official Community Plan (OCP)

The OCP outlines the long term vision for growth and development for Maple Ridge. High level highlights from the plan include:

Mission Statement

To promote a safe and livable community for our present and future residents.

Vision Statement

The City will strive to protect its Community Values into the future as it becomes more vibrant and prosperous offering residents a strong local economy, stable and special neighbourhoods, thoughtful development, a diversity of agriculture and respect for the built and natural environment.

Section 2

Back ground

Key Principles

A number of key principles were identified to reflect the community's vision for the future that protects and fosters the characteristics that make Maple Ridge unique while at the same time setting a course for future growth and development. These guiding principles covered a range of topics including: protecting and promoting the natural environment/environmental values, supporting active living, the importance of economic development, responsible growth and preserving the strong sense of place and the community's unique identity.

Illuminata Marketing Brand Review

The re-examination and re-imagination of the Maple Ridge brand was first raised in 2016 and the city contracted the services of Illuminata Marketing to conduct a brand review. This was a comprehensive study that assessed perceptions by residents as well as people from across the Metro Vancouver region.

The findings of that report revealed that the Maple Ridge brand was not clearly defined in people's minds and there were mixed perceptions as well as divergent opinions expressed during the public engagement process.

What also emerged from the research was the apparent gap between the City's vision and perceptions amongst the community. Additionally, "nature", "outdoors" and "beautiful" were attributes of Maple Ridge that resonated across all audiences.

Section 2

Back ground

City of Maple Ridge Economic Development and Tourism Strategies

The Economic Development Strategy painted a positive picture of Maple Ridge as an entrepreneurial and manufacturing leader in Metro Vancouver. The strategy also outlined the goals, objectives and initiatives needed to deliver on that vision.

Tourism is a key plank in Maple Ridge's broader economic strategy and is vital to the city's growth and a catalyst for business opportunities and employment.

Many of the goals and objectives of the economic development and tourism strategies will be supported by the City's brand initiative and it is recommended that that alignment be further explored as part of this project. Re-imagining of the City's brand will aid in showcasing a modern perception of all industries and their place in Maple Ridge and the Vancouver Metro Region. We need to tell a more current and complete story about Maple Ridge and give people a compelling reason to live, work, invest, locate a business or visit your community.

Corporate Communications and Public Engagement Plan

In 2022, Tavola Strategy Group developed a corporate communications and engagement strategy that created a narrative to help the City more effectively communicate with all stakeholder groups on various issues and initiatives.

Section 2

Back ground

One of the key recommendations in the plan was to create “...a strong brand that builds optimism and momentum for a positive future and instills confidence in the City’s ability to deliver.” This in turn will help generate greater awareness of the City’s vision, leadership and context for change.

2022 Maple Ridge Citizen Survey

The City of Maple Ridge has been conducting citizen surveys to assist in its strategic planning. The 2022 survey conducted by Sentis Research was used to help inform the 2023 - 2026 Council Strategic Plan.

The key highlights from the survey include:

- Majority of residents are satisfied with the quality of life in the City.
- Access to the outdoors and recreational activities and/or facilities and parks are what residents most like about living in Maple Ridge
- Homelessness/poverty, growing crime and traffic congestion were listed as what residents least like about living in Maple Ridge
- Safety, more shopping and restaurants and protecting and promoting greenspaces and environmentally sensitive areas were listed as key priorities for the future

Section 2

Back ground

Council Strategic Plan 2023-2026 - A New Chapter for Maple Ridge

Council's Strategic Plan sets the priorities, tone and direction for the current term of office. The focus for the next four years includes:

- Building an innovative and resilient community that is the example in the region
- Reinforce the social bonds upon which the community will grow and prosper
- Nurture all aspects of the community including the environment and local economy

Of particular note is the Vision Statement, that sets a new tone for the city and creates an attitude that can impact on the desired character and image for Maple Ridge:

Maple Ridge has unparalleled access to nature and is as distinct as its neighbourhoods. We don't fit a mold. We are authentic, bold, adventurous and ambitious about the future.

Section 2

Back ground

2023 Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan

The Master Plan will guide how services (facilities and programs) are delivered over the next decade. The City undertook extensive public engagement as part of the planning process. Key findings include:

- Parks, recreation and culture opportunities are highly valued by residents;
- Strong satisfaction levels with parks, recreation and culture
- Recognition that Maple Ridge is growing and evolving and the importance of engaging new residents in activities and focus on equity and inclusion;
- Continue to build the cultural capacity and vibe of the community.

March 2023 Discussion Groups

As part of the Brand and Identity Revamp Project, a series of three discussion groups were held with City Staff and Management, representatives from the business community and local residents to better understand perceptions and attitudes regarding the city's image and reputation as well as gain insight to the attributes that help define Maple Ridge. The following is a summary of key takeaways from the groups:

- Generally, a sense of community pride and optimism for the future were reflected in the discussions.
- At the same time, there is a need and opportunity to boost civic pride and confidence.

Section 2

Back ground

- When it comes to perceptions and attributes, the natural environment/ outdoors/recreation is at the top of the list. It's a source of pride, point of differentiation and a primary reason why people choose to live in Maple Ridge.
- Lifestyle or quality of life was also cited as an important feature as was affordability.
- Family-oriented or family friendly was a defining feature for many people.
- There was frustration on the part of some participants, that they have been waiting for some time for the city to transform, address its challenges and deliver on its promises. While there was skepticism, there was also anticipation and support for real change.
- The current logo or identity does not inspire any strong attachments or emotions and the consensus was that the logo is not representative of the city and its place in the future.
- There was widespread support for the revitalization of the Maple Ridge brand. People inherently understand that it is needed and critical to the city's future success. There is a need to find a sense of common identity, interconnectedness and shared beliefs and values.

Section 2

Back ground

Summing Up

Maple Ridge is a city in transition - from an unknown (outside of Maple Ridge) semi-rural community on the far edges of Metro Vancouver to a more modern and progressive city with a clear vision and direction for the future.

Maple Ridge has an ambitious and aspirational vision for the future, to drive economic development and stimulate job creation, build new partnerships within the Metro Vancouver region, the province and beyond, preserve and protect its natural environment (from parks and green spaces to agricultural land), and oversee responsible growth. While the city is becoming more urban, it also holds dear its core values and maintains the quality of life and strong sense of a family-centric community.

There is universal support that the time is now to move forward with the refresh of the City's overall brand, ensuring it is reflective of today's Maple Ridge and where it is heading in the future.

The rebranding initiative will help boost civic pride and positive attitudes and feelings towards Maple Ridge. This rebranding project will help inspire and establish a new voice, tone and attitude in how we position, talk about and visually represent the City of Maple Ridge across all audiences to build civic pride.

Simply put, the brand will define the new spirit for Maple Ridge.

Section 3

Brand Strategy

“A brand - clear, compelling and unique - is the foundation that helps make a place desirable as a business location, visitor destination or a place to call home. Development of a brand strategy for a city leverages the features of that place to provide a relevant and compelling promise to a target audience. It’s not an ad campaign or a tagline. Rather, the branding strategy is a deeper, more emotionally shared vision that influences actions.”

- CEOS FOR CITIES

Section 3

Brand Strategy

The Value and Importance of Branding

A strong and dynamic brand for Maple Ridge will:

- Change perceptions and enhance the City's reputation.
- Nurture civic pride and public engagement.
- Enhance the City's ability to catch the attention of regional and provincial audiences and build new partnerships and relationships.
- Attract new residents.
- Support and complement efforts to enhance economic development and tourism strategies.
- Anchor the City's marketing and communications and public engagement initiatives by establishing a clear and consistent identity and tone of voice.

Target Audiences

- Residents
- Local employers and businesses
- Newcomers and prospects - people and businesses who have recently moved to Maple Ridge or are considering it
- All levels of government - regional, provincial, national
- City leadership and staff
- Investors and partners
- Visitors

Section 3

Brand Strategy

Brand Foundations

The core elements for the Maple Ridge brand are based on key attributes or characteristics that have been identified previously through various research and related initiatives as well as the most recent public engagement process associated with this specific project.

Maple Ridge has many positive attributes, but not all of them will be included in the brand strategy. It doesn't mean that they are not valuable or important. However, we can't be all things to all people all of the time. To be effective, a brand strategy should have a limited number of priority and relevant elements to ensure a focused message.

The following attributes will differentiate Maple Ridge and resonate most with residents and other key audiences. The language represented is not meant to be used word-for-word in various marketing communications channels, rather it is simply a directional guide for consideration.

These foundational elements will form the basis of a new brand narrative for Maple Ridge.

Section 3

Brand Strategy

1. City on the Move.

While Maple Ridge is B.C.'s fifth oldest City, our new journey as a community represents an exciting period of growth and opportunity.

The city's bold vision is helping to shape its future as it looks to attract residents, talent, business partners, investment, and visitors. Maple Ridge has strong economic fundamentals supported by an entrepreneurial, innovative and creative spirit and "can do" attitude. Diversity is integral to a strong and inclusive economy and the city's changing demographics means Maple Ridge can better compete in today's global economy.

No longer the "drive past" community on the outskirts of Metro Vancouver, Maple Ridge is taking its rightful place as a key player in the regional economy. Through growth in manufacturing, technology, and other industries including but not limited to independent and home businesses, the city is creating a strong economic base that will provide jobs and opportunities at home. New and exciting initiatives will positively transform Maple Ridge in the future.

Maple Ridge is going places. Be part of our exciting future. The best is yet to come.



Section 3

Brand Strategy

Rationale

- Promotes the idea that Maple Ridge is open for business and has tremendous economic potential.
- The city is no longer content to sit on the sidelines, rather it looks to assume a leadership role in Metro Vancouver and beyond.
- Entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well, adopting a new, get 'er done attitude.
- Directly supports the City's vision and economic development strategy.

2. Driven by Community.

Maple Ridge residents love where they live. No matter what stage of life you're in, the city has much to offer and provides a quality of life that is the envy of other municipalities near and far.

There is a strong sense of caring and a spirit of volunteering and giving back to the community. You'll discover the city is open, welcoming and inclusive. A place where cultural diversity and Indigenous relationships are celebrated. The city offers the promise of a safe and family-friendly place to get a fresh start, put down some roots and to grow and prosper.



Section 3

Brand Strategy

Imagine access to great neighbourhoods, affordable and diverse housing, green spaces, public spaces, recreational opportunities, reliable services and infrastructure, thoughtful community planning and meaningful employment. This is at the heart of the city's vision as we aspire to be a truly sustainable community. Living in Maple Ridge means that you can fully enjoy, participate and benefit in the civic, economic and cultural life of the city.

At the heart of Maple Ridge is a deep sense of belonging with many unique neighbourhoods that have strong historical roots.

Rationale

- A promise of a desirable lifestyle and livable, welcoming community.
- Welcomes and encourages people to live and work in Maple Ridge.
- Supports inclusivity and diversity.
- Promotes Maple Ridge as a caring and sustainable community that supports healthy living and well-being for a diverse array of residents.
- Speaks directly to one of the city's key strategic priorities (Livable Community).



Section 3

Brand Strategy

3. Bold by Nature

Maple Ridge has a special relationship with its natural environment and surroundings. It is a source of civic pride, connection and distinguishes us from other cities. Nature enhances our overall health and well-being as a community.

Residents and visitors alike can enjoy an active lifestyle and experience an abundance of nearby forests, lakes, multi-use trails, parks, green spaces, and a wide range of sports and recreational facilities.

The city's agricultural roots have evolved to represent a new era and approach to farming and the importance of food security and community self-reliance.

As responsible stewards of the City's natural and environmental assets and infrastructure, Maple Ridge is dedicated to protecting our natural surroundings that we value and appreciate and building a more sustainable and resilient city for the benefit of all.

Our natural environment is also a source of inspiration that helps us to think boldly and creatively as we tackle the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Nature provides many diverse and life-enhancing contributions to the people who live and visit Maple Ridge.



Section 3

Brand Strategy

Rationale

- The natural environment, access to outdoors and a vast array of recreational pursuits is a key differentiator for Maple Ridge.
- The City serves as a convenient gateway to nature, wilderness and mountains.
- Celebrates the extraordinary natural assets such as Golden Ears Provincial Park, Alouette Lake and Kanaka Creek Regional Park.
- A genuine point of pride for residents and businesses alike.
- A key factor in choosing Maple Ridge and attracting prospective residents and visitors.
- Commitment to protecting the natural environment and green values.

Together, these three attributes tell a powerful and defining narrative for Maple Ridge.

Brand Narrative

A narrative for Maple Ridge will help articulate a concise and streamlined story that acts as a platform for all marketing communications and helps reshape perceptions. This is for internal use only and not public-facing.

The city has many positive and defining attributes, but three qualities previously referenced, when combined together create a story that is powerful and uniquely Maple Ridge:

Section 3

Brand Strategy

Introduction

The City respectfully acknowledges Maple Ridge is located on the traditional territory of the Katzie First Nation and Kwantlen First Nation who have been the stewards of this land for at least 10,000 years.

As British Columbia's fifth oldest municipality, Maple Ridge was officially incorporated in 1874 and will be celebrating its 150th birthday in 2024. Today, Maple Ridge continues to become increasingly diverse with a thriving local economy to create prosperity and opportunities for future generations. A hopeful vision is what propels this vibrant community to be a great place to raise a family with a quality of life that is second to none.

City On The Move.

The City of Maple Ridge has strong economic fundamentals supported by an entrepreneurial, innovative and creative spirit and "can do" attitude. Maple Ridge is an important regional hub that links Metro Vancouver to the Fraser Valley. Through growth in manufacturing and technology industries as well as independent and home businesses, the city is creating a strong economic base that will provide jobs and opportunities at home.

Driven by Community.

Maple Ridge residents love where they live. The city offers a quality of life that is the envy of other municipalities near and far. There is a strong sense of community and belonging in Maple Ridge - one that is open, welcoming and inclusive. A place where cultural diversity and Indigenous relationships

Section 3

Brand Strategy

are celebrated. It offers the promise of a safe and friendly place to grow and prosper and raise a family. Access to unique neighbourhoods, affordable and diverse housing, green spaces, public spaces, recreational opportunities, reliable infrastructure, thoughtful community planning and meaningful employment is at the heart of the city's vision to be a livable community. At the heart of Maple Ridge is deep sense of belonging with a strong spirit of volunteerism.

Bold By Nature.

Maple Ridge takes great pride in its stunning, natural environment. Residents and visitors alike can enjoy an active lifestyle and experience an abundance of nearby forests, lakes, multi-use trails, parks, green spaces, and a wide range of sports and recreational facilities. As responsible stewards of the City's natural and environmental assets and infrastructure, Maple Ridge is dedicated to building a more sustainable, climate-resistant city for the benefit of all.

Brand Report

Engage Maple Ridge Brand Survey

The City of Maple Ridge also undertook public engagement to capture public feedback on the three broad brand themes that came out of the focus groups. This step confirmed that the focus groups and survey data, gathered earlier in the project cycle resonated with the community and the importance to stand out from other City brands was notable. As part of the survey the themes were provided different names so as to focus respondent's input on the concepts in each theme rather than the tagline-like theme category names. No new themes emerged from the survey data.

Section 3

Brand Strategy

The brand narrative theme tied to nature resonated the most with the respondents and generated the most positive comments around the value of nature, specifically the trees, watercourses, and the parks and trail network.

Respondents spoke about importance of protecting this aspect of our community and the benefits that it brings to life along with ensuring nature was included in the branding which aligns with Council's priority around the environment and sustainability

The sense of belonging theme received thoughtful comments about how the City is the place that we call home, where we interact with neighbours and where entrepreneurs can grow their business and raise their family. People spoke about affordability, and their concerns about the challenges around affordability. Comments around the variety of housing forms and the importance of being connected with neighbours dominated the feedback.

The third foundation of a growing and thriving City brought comments that were consistent with the focus group respondents. The need for shopping, amenities and infrastructure to meet the demands of our growing City were a consistent theme. People spoke about the pace of change, and the importance of ensuring that there are opportunities for people to live and work in the community along with the need to be inclusive given the changing demographics. Comments included ensuring that there is intentional growth, best use of lands and a diversity of business types.

Section 3

Brand Strategy

Positioning Statement

A brand positioning statement is a brief and holistic summary that creates a unique impression in the minds of your audiences. Consider this your USP (unique selling proposition) or elevator pitch that reveals how you want people to think about and perceive Maple Ridge. At the same time, this statement needs to define what the city stands for and what it believes. And to be powerful and effective and drive your brand forward, it must also be single minded as opposed to trying to be all things to all people. What is the most important thing that we want our audiences to take away, to remember and to help create the desired perceptions and associations with the city's brand? It sits at the heart of your story and helps create a strong emotional bond with your audiences.

While your natural environment and quality of life are important and distinguishing factors, it's not what will set you apart and change the conversation regarding Maple Ridge. Therefore, we believe *opportunity* is key to how we position the city going forward:

The City of Maple Ridge - bold by nature, driven by opportunity.

Section 3

Brand Strategy

Positioning Rationale

- Reflects and celebrates the special relationship that the City and its citizens have with the natural environment
- It's a positive, uplifting, and confident statement
- Directly supports the city's vision and 'yes we can' culture
- Offers the promise of opportunities - whether that is to start a business, buy a home, raise a family, enjoy a fresh start, become part of a community, pursue a certain lifestyle, etc.
- Opens the door to new partnerships and collaboration with business and across government
- The opportunity for experiences - sports, nature, recreation, culture, history, events, education, volunteering
- It is active and serves as an invitation to be part of something and to realize one's dreams and aspirations
- Works across all audience segments - residents, newcomers, business owners, investors, visitors
- Presents a fresh and more compelling premise and attitude for marketing communications

Section 3

Brand Strategy

Personality and Persona

A brand's personality or persona is applying human characteristics to the brand to bring it to life and allow it to connect on a personal or emotional level with your audiences. The City of Maple Ridge needs to find its mojo and get some swagger back. We promise not to be boring!

We are:

- Bold
- Ambitious
- Genuine
- Responsible
- Welcoming
- Proud
- Collaborative
- Optimistic
- Forward-thinking
- Compassionate

Tone and Manner

The City of Maple Ridge will engage and communicate with its audiences in a direct and transparent manner. It will be genuine and helpful. Informative and motivating. How we say it will be as important as what we say. We will say what we mean and we will mean what we say.

Bringing the Brand Strategy to Life - What's Next

In the next phase of this project, the task will be to create a new logo or visual identity system that captures the essence of Maple Ridge brand through colours, fonts, shapes and images.

The logo must reflect a bold and modern image that reflects the openness, imagination and spirit of a dynamic city that makes opportunities happen.

ΤΡΑΠΕΖΕ

Thank you.