

# HOW TO

## bring an exceptional lifestyle to your doorstep

**W**hat would it be like to walk out of your home or business and know every day that you'd made the right decision in moving to the place? There are few locations in the world where it's possible to accomplish this. One of the reasons is that the goals of business, industry and development often conflict with residential and personal aspirations.

Maple Ridge, however, is committed to being a place where active, growing businesses and industry coexist with all the standards and values of work-life balance, health and beautiful surroundings.

Located within an hour's drive of Vancouver, this municipality of just under 75,000 has long been seen as a bedroom community serving commuters who work in other cities. Currently, 65 per cent of the workforce commutes outside of Maple Ridge on a daily basis. But Maple Ridge intends to change this.

"Maple Ridge remains largely undiscovered by many Lower Mainlanders," says Sandy Blue, manager of economic development. "There's a skilled workforce here, and we offer an unparalleled lifestyle with an abundance of affordable, available land. And because it isn't built out, we have the rare opportunity here to shape our future."

Part of the "fabric of the community," according to Blue, is "a very consultative municipal staff approach. So much so, that the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has referred visiting delegations seeking best-practice models to us."

It's all part of the long-term Vision 2025 strategy of Council: creating a vibrant, dynamic and healthy

community for the future.

"Community consultation is robust and transparent," Blue explains. "We work hard to give every citizen the opportunity to be informed and to say their piece."

An example: Maple Ridge uses a citizens' survey to ask people how they feel about access to information and whether the municipality is going in the right direction in areas such as transportation, parks, leisure and cultural services. This information is used to help inform council.

"People care deeply about the community," Blue emphasizes, "whether it's a new road, a neighbourhood centre or development of the Town Centre Area Plan." For example, people are interested in the impact that future development will have on the 800 kilometres of riding, biking and hiking trails in the district.

At the same time, Maple Ridge recognizes the importance of supporting industry and business and creating high-value jobs so that as few residents as possible have to commute. Building permits have risen from more than 112,000 in 2003 to almost 170,000 in 2007. "With plans to increase downtown density, there's still plenty of room for residential and commercial alike, and we also have industrial land available."

In that regard, the Economic Advisory Commission has identified four priority sectors that will contribute to the growth of the job market. The highest-priority sector actively targeted by Maple Ridge is high-tech, which includes film production, new media and gaming.

Advanced manufacturing, education and tourism are other areas that are being cultivated to draw and keep residents.

Over the past decade, Maple Ridge has been one of the fastest-growing municipalities within Metro Vancouver, and the population is

expected to exceed 108,000 by 2031.

With the much-anticipated completion of two major bridge projects in 2009, TransLink estimates that 400 new businesses will move into the area because of improved access to major transportation routes.

Those looking to raise families in Maple Ridge will find more value for their purchases. A November 2008 report by the Greater Vancouver Real Estate Board pegs the benchmark price for a detached house in Maple Ridge at \$421,000, as compared with the same in Greater Vancouver at \$666,000.

And those wondering about big-city services such as health and transportation can put their concerns aside. Ridge Meadows Hospital is located in Maple Ridge, and the region is served by the Abbotsford International Airport, only 30 minutes away. Moreover, a full range of post-secondary institutions are nearby.

Maple Ridge has a strong commitment to building a sustainable community and was the first in Canada to participate in the Smart Growth on the Ground program.

Through Maple Ridge's innovative "Counteract your Carbon" program, tax-deductible contributions will help fund municipal projects such as the energy-efficient expansion of Fire Hall #1.

"Council has 20 sustainability targets," Blue explains. "We consider the economic, social and environmental impact of all projects. Not as an afterthought: it's absolutely the way business is done here."

Ernie Daykin, the new mayor of Maple Ridge, has been a lifelong resident of the city.

"Maple Ridge is a wonderful community. We enjoy the best of both worlds," he has said. "We offer all the urban amenities yet maintain a strong rural lifestyle. We are the envy of many." **H2**