

What We Learned

Community Engagement Framework Phase 1

What We Learned

This report summarizes learnings from phase 1 engagement that informs the City's first-ever Community Engagement Framework.

Project Overview

The City of Maple Ridge is developing its first-ever Community Engagement Framework in support of Council's strategic priority of being an engaged, healthy community. Community engagement for this initiative is taking place in two phases:

- **Phase 1** (Summer and Fall 2024): Input to develop the draft framework
- **Phase 2** (Winter 2025): Feedback on the draft framework

Phase 1 Engagement Objectives

To help inform the Community Engagement Framework, the objectives of phase 1 were to better understand how the community receives information, engages with the City, and how the City can improve future access to both.

Engagement Level

Engagement level is based on the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) [Spectrum of Public Participation](#).

Phase 1 - Involve: Interest holders are invited to explore, analyze, and imagine new alternatives to help reach the best possible decision.

How We Engaged

From June and September 2024, residents, businesses, and organizations were invited to provide input to support the development of the Community Engagement Framework.

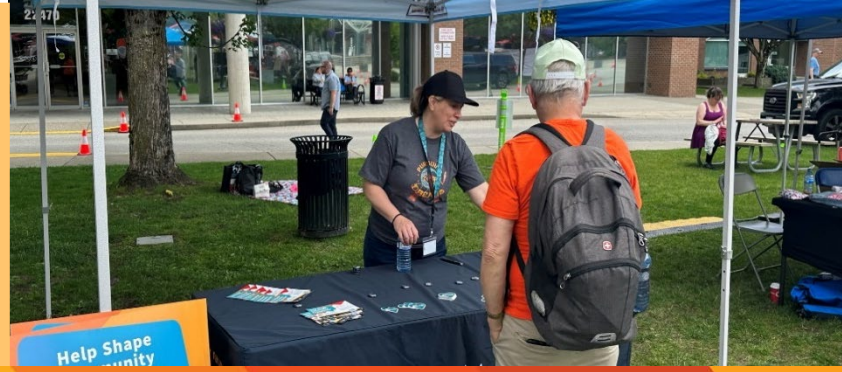
In addition to engagement best practices research input for the framework was provided by interest holders through the following channels:

- Completing an online survey (also available in print) from June 4 - July 30, 2024
- In-person conversations at local events
- Meetings with local community organizations Meetings with City staff and Council

Thank you to everyone who participated!

Promotion Channels

To ensure that all residents, businesses, and organizations had the opportunity to provide input, a variety of communication channels were used.



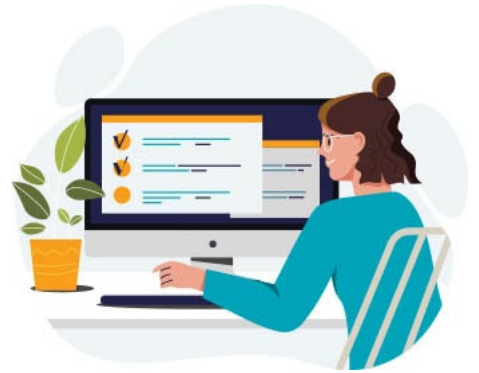
Print

- Information posted at recreation facilities, City Hall, and at local community organizations
- Newspaper advertisements



Digital

- Social media (posts on City's Facebook, Instagram, and X channels)
- [Engage Maple Ridge project page](#)
- Email promotion from Engage Maple Ridge
- City of Maple Ridge e-newsletter ([e-Connect](#))



In-Person

- Staff outreach at events
- Meetings and interviews with local community organizations

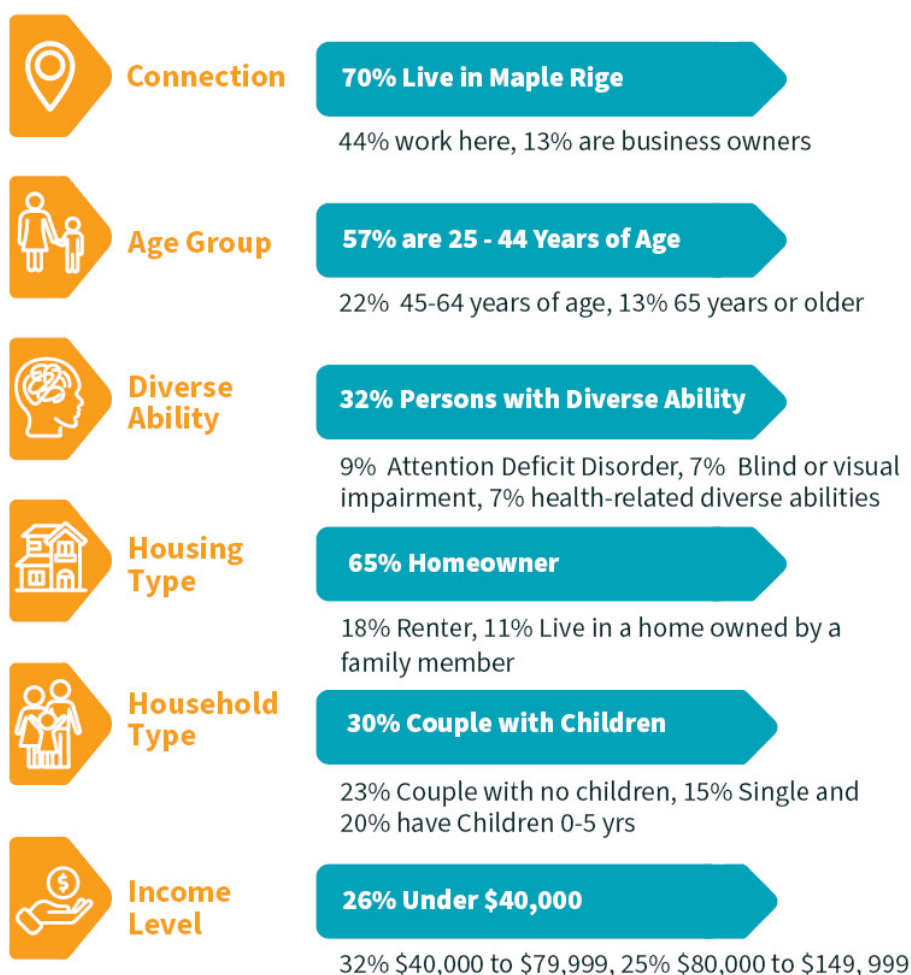


Who Participated

The City engaged with a broad range of audiences, representing diverse interests to better understand what is important when it comes to community engagement, challenges people face when trying to engage, and their preferred way to have their say.

570 Survey Respondents

Survey respondents were given the option to provide information about themselves and their connection with Maple Ridge. Here are the results from those who chose to respond:



Local Community Organizations Outreach

Building relationships with local organizations will be a continued focus for the City's engagement program. Staff gathered input by conducting in-depth interviews with local organizations that support diverse community members, including new immigrants, youth, seniors, families, and businesses.

What We Learned - Survey Respondents

Receiving Information

84% Feel There is Sufficient Information Available

Preferred Channels

Digital/Online Channels Were Most Preferred.

55%

City Website

43%

Emails from City Staff

40%

City's Engagement Website

35%

City Social Media Accounts

Most Popular Types Of Information

48%

Planning and Land Development

(e.g., maps and property information)

44%

Recreation

(e.g., facilities, parks, programs)

43%

Project Updates

(e.g., parks, transportation, housing)

41%

Financial Information

(e.g., budgets, property taxes)

39%

Special Events & Festivals

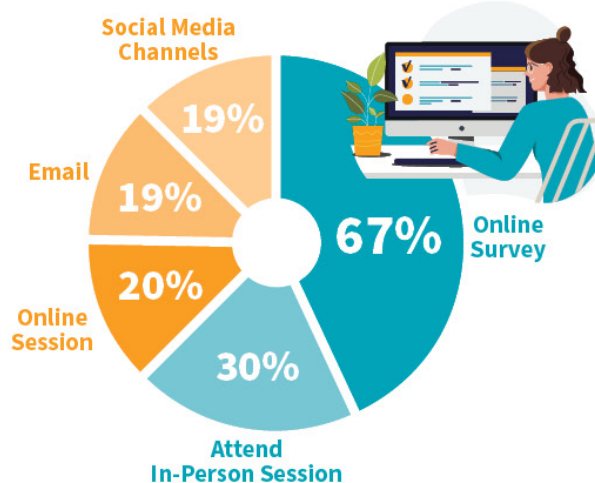
38%

Bylaw Enforcement

(e.g., regulations, traffic/parking violations)

Preferred Channels to Give Input

Online or digital methods of providing input on City initiatives are most preferred; however, it is noted that the majority of respondents shared their views through an online survey.



Engagement Values

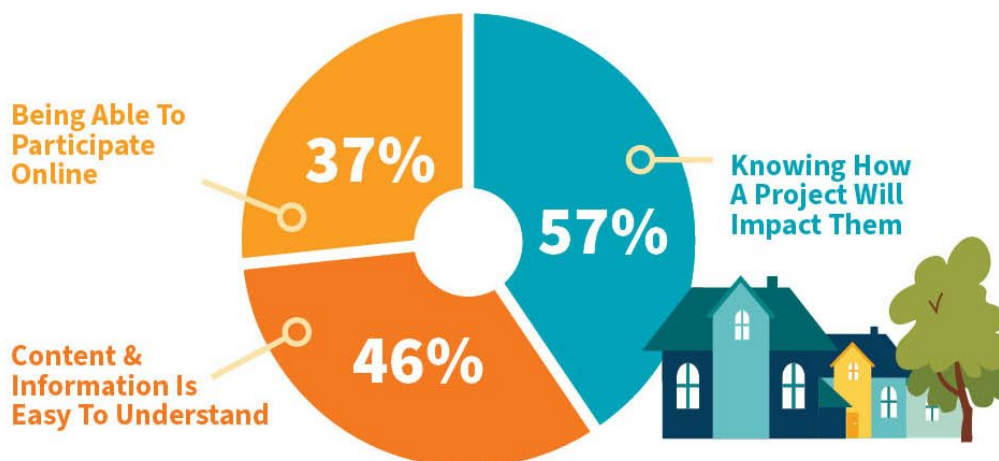
Survey respondents were asked to select their top values for engagement, selecting from:

- **Transparent and Authentic:** Be clear and open about the engagement objective and how the input will be used.
- **Clear and Timely:** Communication is clear, uses plain language, and delivered in a timely way.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of engagement tools and practices and evolve them based on data collected through various sources.
- **Accessible & Inclusive:** Information is available through a variety of channels. Barriers (e.g., accessibility, childcare, translation, location, time of day) are considered and addressed where possible.
- **Accountable:** Share engagement findings where applicable and inform people about the decisions made and the role community input played in the process.

All values are important to respondents to some degree but **Transparent and Authentic**, and **Clear and Timely** are identified as the most important.



Reasons for Participating in an Engagement



What's Working Well

The experience with City engagement in the last year has been positive.

75% Participated in a City Community Engagement in 2024

80% Are Satisfied With The Experience

What's Working Well

- **Increased efforts** to share information and engagement opportunities.
- **Digital outreach** like social media.
- **Multiple channels** makes it easier to share input.
- **Online surveys** are convenient, clear, and easy.
- **In-person** engagement opportunities are appreciated because of the ability to ask questions and get information from knowledgeable staff.

We will continue to support and expand these aspects of communication and engagement as part of our Community Engagement Framework.

What Needs Improvement

While many positive aspects of the City's engagement practices were noted, four in ten respondents identified barriers that make it difficult to participate in community engagement. The areas below are highlighted as needing improvement:

- **Greater transparency and accountability** to help the community understand how input is being used, project objectives and progress, how decisions are made, and engagement results. This helps build trust with respondents to know how their input is considered.

- **More communication**, timelier, and through a variety of channels. Some respondents reported not being aware of engagements or finding out too late. Though digital communication is preferred, some see an important role for printed communication such as advertising in newspapers, postcards in the mail, and posters.
- **More engagement opportunities** Respondents would like to see more in-depth engagement, and more consistent, ongoing engagement that builds relationships with the community.
- **Accessibility**
 - **Provide clear, easy-to-understand**, plain language materials.
 - **Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities or mobility challenges.** Make sure venues are accessible, close to transit, and have parking.
 - **Enhance language accessibility.** Have multi-lingual communication materials. Provide multilingual resources and interpretation services for engagement. Offer sign-language interpretation and closed-captioning.
 - **Flexible scheduling.** Offer engagement opportunities at more varied times (e.g., evenings and weekends) and locations so more people can attend.
 - **Help offset the financial costs of participating in engagement** so broader groups of people can attend. For example, offer childcare, free parking, transportation vouchers, and stipends (when possible).
 - **Account for the “digital divide” and keep using print or offline methods** so people who are not online or technologically savvy can still learn about projects and participate in engagement.
- **More equitable and inclusive**
 - Ensure equitable engagement from all segments of the population, especially underrepresented groups (ethnic minorities, lower-income residents, newcomers, persons with disabilities).
 - Ensure activities are inclusive of people of all ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, and abilities and avoid any form of discrimination or exclusion.

What We Learned – Community Organizations

Similar to the general public, the community organizations interviewed prefer digital methods of receiving information, such as emails from the City, weekly newsletters, or on the Engage Maple Ridge website. Phone calls and news releases were also mentioned as key sources of information. In-person meetings are seen as a useful option for both receiving information and sharing input (e.g., community services invited to engagement discussions).

Community organizations are interested in receiving information about a variety of topics, often connected to their group's mandate and clients' needs.

Preferred Channels

Digital, Phone, In-Person

Topics of Interest

- **Activities, events, amenities**
- **How government works** (responsibilities of different levels)
- **Community safety**
- **Mental health**
- **Opioid crisis/detox resources**
- **Housing** (affordable, rental)
- **Accessibility** (physical, financial, language, transportation)
- **Programs, initiatives** (Housing Action Plan, streamlining processes for businesses)
- **Specific projects** (e.g., Lougheed transit corridor)

What's Working Well

- **Increased effort** by the City to communicate and build relationships
- **Social media** is seen as a valuable and effective
- **Specific programs with the City** (Report a Concern, Functional Assertive Situation Table community safety program, Childcare Resource and Referral Program)
- **Positive, ongoing relationships** with City staff

What Needs Improvement

- **More communication is desired.**
- **Greater transparency and accountability.** Being clear about the purpose of a project, why clients' input is important, closing the loop by sharing what was learned.
- **Accessibility**
 - Clear, easy-to-understand materials in plain language (grade 4 to 5 level).
 - Improve accessibility for persons with disabilities or mobility challenges.
 - Offer materials and engagement opportunities in languages other than English.
- **Digital and non-digital formats.** Digital, paper, and in-person opportunities to reach **broader** audiences. Preference depends on the audience (e.g., sometimes youth – digital and seniors and newcomers – print and video).
 - **The “digital barrier”** was noted several times – some organizations report that their clients are not tech-savvy or have limited online access.
 - **Organizations emphasized the City meeting their clients where they are** (popular locations, activities like language classes, or tax information sessions).
 - **Suggestions include:**
 - Drop off printed materials in popular locations
 - Share information on community bulletin boards or via brochures
 - Host pop-up style events at locations frequented by target audience
 - Appoint a City liaison who clients can meet with regularly
 - Youth: Connect with at schools, via text, or during activities
 - Seniors: Advertise in publications targeted for seniors
 - Businesses: Print City welcome packages for new businesses

- **Offer incentives to encourage participation,** such as cash or gift cards.
- **Enhance language accessibility.** Offer materials and engagement opportunities in languages other than English.
- **Make engagement more equitable and inclusive.** A common theme among community organizations is that their clients need spaces where they feel welcome and safe to share their opinions, as many do not trust the government. In addition to offering inclusive spaces, building trust over time through regular contact was mentioned.

These findings have informed the development of the City's draft Community Engagement Framework. Thank you to everyone who contributed their input in shaping how the City engages with the community now and in the future.

Phase 2 Engagement

The second phase of engagement will occur in winter 2025 with the draft Community Engagement Framework being shared for further input from the community.

Summary of What We Learned – Phase 1

Top Engagement Values

- 1 Transparent and Authentic
- 2 Clear and Timely
- 3 Accountable
- 4 Accessible and Inclusive

Preferred Channels (seeking information and providing input)

Digital and online tools

Increased use of social media and online surveys seen as a positive by both the public and community organizations.

Top Improvements

Greater transparency and accountability (project goals, decision process, how input will be used).	More communication, timely, and through different channels	Expand engagement opportunities. Broader range of topics, strengthen collaboration, dedicate more resources to engagement.	Continue to offer non-digital. Maintain non-digital methods to ensure accessibility for those with limited online access or technological skills.	 A large orange arrow pointing downwards.
Make engagement more accessible. Use clear, easy-to-understand materials, offer flexible scheduling, and enhance accessibility for persons with disabilities or mobility challenges. Offer incentives.	More inclusive and equitable engagement. Actively reach out to underrepresented groups and ensure engagement reflects diverse ages, genders, cultures, and abilities.	Build Trust Create safe, welcoming environments and maintain regular, consistent engagement to foster trust, especially among individuals who may feel uneasy engaging with government.	These findings have informed the development of the City's draft Community Engagement Framework. Thank you to everyone who contributed their input in shaping how the City engages with the community now and in the future.	

What's Working Well

- Digital outreach (e.g., social media)
- Online surveys are convenient, clear, and easy
- In-person engagement opportunities are appreciated
- Increased effort by the City to communicate and build relationships

What Needs Improvement

- Greater transparency and accountability
- More communication, timelier, and through a variety of channels
- More engagement opportunities
- More accessible
- More equitable and inclusive

All values are important to respondents to some degree but Transparent and Authentic, and Clear and Timely are identified as the most important.



Preferred Channels to Give Input



75% Participated in a City Community Engagement in 2024

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Reasons for Participating in an Engagement

