



**2013 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Category Worksheet**

PARTNERSHIPS

Name of Local Government: District of Maple Ridge

Project/Program Title: Working Together to Create a Complete, Compact and Energy Efficient Town Centre

Project Summary Paragraph

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

The Maple Ridge Town Centre area population is expected to grow by approximately 14,700 people over the next decade - about 50% of the expected population increase for all of Maple Ridge.

While Maple Ridge has seen steady residential development in our community, development for high residential density with mixed land uses and commercial hasn't occurred at the pace required to meet that forecasted growth.

The Town Centre Investment Incentive Program (TCIIP) is a comprehensive, multi-faceted, 3-year program to encourage private investment. It was launched January 1, 2011, as a means of meeting that forecasted growth and to help achieve Council's Vision of balanced growth in a compact urban form.

The Partnerships aspect of The TCIIP is unique because it embraces the spectrum of individuals required to make the program a success, all working in harmony towards a common goal.

Project Analysis

Please answer the question in 300 words or less in 11 pt Arial font (our judges value directness and brevity). If you experience difficulty answering a particular question, consider the aspects of your program that may relate to the question and show us how they are linked.

Remember to include measurable results whenever possible.

1. OBJECTIVE

Please explain the decision-making and thought process behind your decision to take on this initiative.

Problem:

The Maple Ridge Town Centre is facing an exciting challenge over the next decade as it is anticipated that an additional 14,700 people will be moving into the neighbourhood, which is 50% of the expected population increase for all of Maple Ridge to 2021. A population increase of this size will likely mean an additional 7,000 housing units within the Town Centre; accommodating this growth will require an increase in density throughout the Town Centre. Such an increase in residential growth will generate also an increase commercial activity in this area.

Outcome:

Increased density in the Town Centre will result in the revitalization of the downtown area, provision of new and varied housing options, a population base of sufficient size to support more local businesses, and improved public transit.

Strategy:

In preparation of the projected growth in the Town Centre, the District along with senior provincial and federal government partners and TransLink, invested nearly \$100 million in facilities and infrastructure to support increased density development in the downtown area through the Downtown Enhancement Project.

Solution:

To encourage accelerated private sector investment in residential and commercial projects that would accommodate the projected growth, the Town Centre Investment Incentives Program (TCIIP) was launched on January 1, 2011. The TCIIP is a unique and comprehensive incentive program centred in Maple Ridge's downtown area. Incentives are intended to stimulate growth and density, enhance the quality of new and existing development, and to have available a diverse and affordable range of housing stock in the downtown area. Some of the incentives that are available include:

- Priority processing
- Municipal property tax exemption
- Building permit fee discount
- Reduced parking standards
- Commercial façade improvement

An important element of the TCIIP is that there are upfront incentives to support developers and downstream benefits to support property owners and tenants.

2. CHALLENGES

Please provide examples of challenges you faced in taking on this program/project and how you overcame them.

The timing of the TCIP from the initial concept to full program launch of January 1, 2011, was just a few months. More lead time and resources for implementation would have enabled more extensive internal and external consultation – a focus group with the development community would have been ideal; however, we pulled together as a team and were able to achieve what seemed impossible at the outset.

As the TCIP unfolded, we learned and made small tweaks to the program along the way, including updating the application form and marketing materials, and providing more informative descriptions on our website.

3. BENEFITS

Please provide examples of how this program/project benefited the community.

There has been more than \$77 million in residential and commercial building permit applications since the program launch, and in excess of that value in development permit applications and exploratory discussions. This investment represents 4,900m² of new commercial space and over 10,000m² of commercial improvements. Additionally, 452 residential units have been completed with another 840+ to come.

Projects constructed on vacant and underutilized land increase density and revive former brownfields create a more aesthetically pleasing landscape.

Folks are enjoying the recent expansion to Memorial Peace Park as well as other newly created parks and green spaces. One can already 'see' a significant shift in the number of people who are parking their cars to walk or ride their bikes in the Town Centre instead, meaning less GHG emissions polluting our air. This positive outlook has brought together several organizations to deliver an innovative campaign, 'Discover Maple Ridge Weekends', which invites everyone to Maple Ridge to enjoy all there is to do here.

Approximately half of Maple Ridge businesses are located within the Town Centre area. New businesses are coming to Maple Ridge for the first time, including higher end restaurants and shops. One of our higher profile applications with construction underway is for "Target" department store.

4. INNOVATION

Tell us why you consider this project/program to be an innovative and/or creative initiative.

The TCIP is unique because of the breadth of tools that are available that can be packaged together, such as priority processing, property tax exemptions, reduced development fees, reduced building permit fees, reduced parking standards, brownfield remediation support, and much more.

Revitalization tax exemptions have been available to municipalities for some time now. The TCIP is comprehensive in that it provides both both upfront incentives to support developers and downstream benefits to support property owners and tenants. This tool works well where the developer has a longer-term ownership stake in the property and will receive the financial benefit of a future tax break. For example, this worked well as an incentive in Maple Ridge for property owner/business operators; however, apartment developers are financially motivated by incentives at the front-end of the development process.

Maple Ridge Council's Vision for the Town Centre is dependent on a number of goals and objectives that cannot be met solely through the actions of the District; private partners are a critical element in achieving the Vision. The TCIP recognizes the important role that the private sector plays in providing citizens with a diverse and affordable housing stock that protects their quality of life, and in creating a strong local economy that offers employment opportunities for our citizens. The direction to create the TCIP came from Council and demonstrates Council's commitment not only to fulfilling the Vision for the Town Centre, but also to strengthening the local investment climate.

The variety of incentive tools offered through the Maple Ridge TCIP appeals to a broad spectrum of investors.

5. GOALS

What did you set out to accomplish with the program/project? How effectively did you meet your goals?

The TCIP was developed to help achieve Council's Vision. Elements of that Vision that were considered in the development of this program are consistent with the BC Climate Action Charter's objective for complete, compact and energy efficient communities. Specific goals are:

- Strong and vibrant local economy
- Planning growth around multi-modal transportation routes
- Vibrant, pedestrian-friendly, accessible downtown

- Protecting the quality of life and diversity of residential options
- Densifying neighbourhoods
- Neighbourhood plans supported by design guidelines
- Shopping, educational facilities and utility infrastructure that were developed concurrent with the new or densified neighbourhoods
- Promotion of green building and innovative technologies in residential and commercial construction and infrastructure
- Majority of residents work in the community in which they live.

To qualify for the incentive program, projects must be located within Maple Ridge's Town Centre, close to the transit hub and WestCoast Express station, and meet density minimums which will enable residents to rely less on single occupancy vehicle transportation to commute and to acquire goods and services.

One goal of the Maple Ridge Town Centre Area Plan is that half of all residential development in Maple Ridge occurs in the Town Centre. There has been more than \$77 million in residential and commercial building permit applications since the program launch in January 2011, and in excess of that value in development permit applications and exploratory discussions. This investment represents 452 completed residential units with another 840+ units to come.

6. SUSTAINABILITY

What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative? (e.g. staff time, resources, financial)

A program intake end-point helps to encourage activity, particularly if a maximum funding pool is set. The TCIP has a planned start and end date, and Maple Ridge Council recently endorsed a one-year extension of the commercial component of the program. Although there is a beginning and an end to the program, the benefits achieved through the accomplishments of the program, including tax revenue, concentrated population in the Town Centre, among others will remain longstanding well after the program's completion. For a portion of the TCIP, incentives were on a first-come first-serve basis until the funding was exhausted.

The program was developed and implemented using existing municipal resources. Incentives provided include tax exemptions that will occur in the future plus upfront tax incentives and fee reductions amounting to about \$2.9 million. To help offset the impact of lost tax revenues due to revitalization tax exemptions, Council set aside some of the District of Maple Ridge general revenue annual surplus.

7. TRANSFERABILITY

How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

The TCIP is highly transferrable and has put Maple Ridge 'on the map' for other communities to model, raising awareness of our community for its quality of life, affordability, and proactive, innovative municipal Council and staff. Other municipalities, including the District of Squamish, have taken notice of the program, and looking to their own areas to implement programs of a similar nature. An excerpt from the Squamish Chief Newspaper article published June 28, 2012:

“Maple Ridge’s downtown investment program has attracted \$33 million worth of construction to the community. It’s time Squamish took a page out of their book, Coun. Patricia Heintzman says.”

To view the article in its entirety, please visit: <http://bit.ly/Q3Mzft>.

Although many municipalities are utilizing revitalization tax exemption legislation, the comprehensive nature of the Maple Ridge TCIP, such as the priority processing, property tax exemptions, reduced development fees, reduced building permit fees, reduced parking standards, brownfield remediation support, and much more makes it unique. Many of the elements can be adapted to other communities, depending on their development needs.

The entire TCIP is available on our website, www.mapleridge.ca. A section specifically dedicated to the TCIP features all aspects of the program including an Incentives Project Map: <http://tinyurl.com/incentivemap> which enables website visitors the ability to explore projects supported by the TCIP. This mapping tool has generated a great deal of interest among municipalities and the private sector alike. This tool was developed by staff. It was inexpensive to purchase and develop, putting it within reach of smaller municipalities.

We proudly share our experience and assist other communities who have questions about the TCIP as they develop their own revitalization programs.

The following is an endorsement from Tami Fur from the BC Brownfield Renewal Strategy of the Province of BC:

*“After seeing the success of this program, the Province of BC, through the BC Brownfield Renewal Strategy, has engaged a consulting team to develop a tool to assist other local governments in BC to develop similar Investment Incentive Programs”
(February 28, 2012)*

8. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

Communities should determine what long term goals they want to achieve, and establish eligibility criteria to meet those goals. That should determine the owner/developer relationship and will influence which incentive tools will be most attractive to investors.

Some incentive components will require bylaws (e.g. revitalization tax exemption), and some have a shorter enabling timeline; consider this when determining the program intake period.

The program development team should include policy development staff, those that will be dealing with customers at the front counter (planning, building/permits, finance, information technology), and those who will be marketing the program. This will help to identify potential issues early, and will serve as implementation training.

9. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may help us better understand your submission.

Revitalization of Maple Ridge's Town Centre goes back to the Town Centre Area Plan and Development Permit Guidelines. Setting lofty expectations on an area in need of redevelopment can be risky, but Council recognized the heart and soul of our community would need high standards in order to be successful and sustainable in the long run.

Then the District, along with senior provincial and federal government partners and TransLink, invested nearly \$100 million in facilities and infrastructure to support the proposed density through the Downtown Enhancement Project. Another risky move, if development didn't come.

The final piece, was the TCIP. One barrier was the available legislative tools. A property tax exemption was relatively straightforward and built upon a 2006 bylaw, but for apartment developers, left them with no front-end financial relief. Creative use of available tools resulted in a comprehensive program that has piqued the interest of both local developers and newcomers, and have resulted in construction projects popping up all over Maple Ridge's Town Centre.

The TCIP has generated much discussion and received a lot of attention from a variety of development industry groups and individuals. The following endorsement is from Don R. Campbell, CEO, Real Estate Investment Network™:

"We deal with hundreds of cities and towns across the country and I find that the program is not only ground breaking and innovative – it is also going to be very, very effective in attracting the type and quality of investment that can

revitalize Maple Ridge's economy and physical presence. This leadership initiative will help to keep Maple Ridge as one of the top Canadian cities in which to invest. I know for a fact that this program has already been a catalyst in our clients investing in the community."
(February 29, 2012)

10. PARTNERS

- a.) Please list all the partners involved in this initiative. (no word limit)
- b.) Why did you choose to work with this/these particular partner(s)?

The TCIIIP required partnerships with a variety of agencies, including:

- BC Brownfields Renewal and FCM Green: Programs are referenced on the District website and staff contacted to discuss the TCIIIP.
- BC Ministry of Environment: Staff involved with the TCIIIP development and provided ongoing program support for developers.
- BC Environment Industry Association: The TCIIIP was showcased at a Brownfields conference in October 2012.
- Downtown Maple Ridge Business Improvement Association (DMR BIA): Provided funding to conduct the Façade Improvement Program as part of the TCIIIP. They manage this program and work with District of Maple Ridge staff to ensure projects meet municipal requirements/approvals.
- DMR BIA and Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Chamber of Commerce: Promote the TCIIIP on their websites and refer enquiries to the District.
- BC Assessment: Property valuation for taxation purposes; contacted annually to ensure property tax exemptions are included with assessed values.
- FortisBC (natural gas): Renewable energy tax exemption referrals.
- Numerous developers and investors from the private sector. Private sector investment essential to the success of the TCIIIP.

The following are quotes from two of our developer/investor partners who have taken advantage of the TCIIIP:

Wayne Bissky, Bissky Architecture and Urban Design Inc.:

"The downtown incentive program has been extremely helpful in directing and encouraging both our existing as well as potential clients to invest in properties

within the core area of our community. Having been in business here for the last 20 years, I have often puzzled over the many empty or underdeveloped downtown properties. Envisioning what they could be, I have long felt that a program such as the one council has now adopted is exactly the incentive required to create momentum within the private sector. Maple Ridge is a beautiful place with great potential but is also a unique market, requiring very specific and careful financial planning in order to tip the scales in favour of a successful development. In my opinion this program has secured a positive future for our downtown that will add long term benefits to both private investors and the community as a whole. In my opinion, achieving a fair and equitable balance between the two is wise community planning."

(February 29, 2012)

Terrance Doyle, VP Property Development & Operations Services, Great Canadian Gaming Corporation, of the Great Canadian Casino project in Maple Ridge:

"We've had the privilege of building facilities in various communities in BC and in other provinces, and we can unequivocally state that our experience with the incentives offered by the District of Maple Ridge have given us the confidence that we will deliver a facility that the community and our company will be proud of."

(February 27, 2012)