

The Recreational Roadway Park System and Wildlife Corridor Master Plan

Developed for the Yennadon and Silver Valley areas of Maple Ridge

Developed by:

Alouette Valley Association

Silver Valley Neighborhood Association

Recreational Roadway Park System and Wildlife Corridor

Maple Ridge is one of the fastest growing areas in the Lower Mainland and is suffering from an identity crisis. There is constant tension with the need to preserve the best of the old rural way of life while accommodating the doubling and tripling of the current population. This summary is meant to offer at least a partial solution to this tension in the Yennadon / Silver Valley Area of Maple Ridge.

Currently 132nd Avenue from 216th Street to 232nd Street is a major recreational corridor for equestrians, cyclists, pedestrians, runners, dog walkers, and wildlife. This resource is quickly becoming lost to the area because it is not designed to compete with the increase in traffic brought on by development. Rather than lose this resource, this proposal suggests that it can be enhanced and it can become a cornerstone of a future thinking vibrant new community.

We propose designating certain roads as recreational multi-use facilities that not only service cars but whose prime mission is the service of people. We believe that this is a unique opportunity to enhance the lives of the people of Maple Ridge and attract a number of economic benefits to the area.

Bike Riding – Jogging

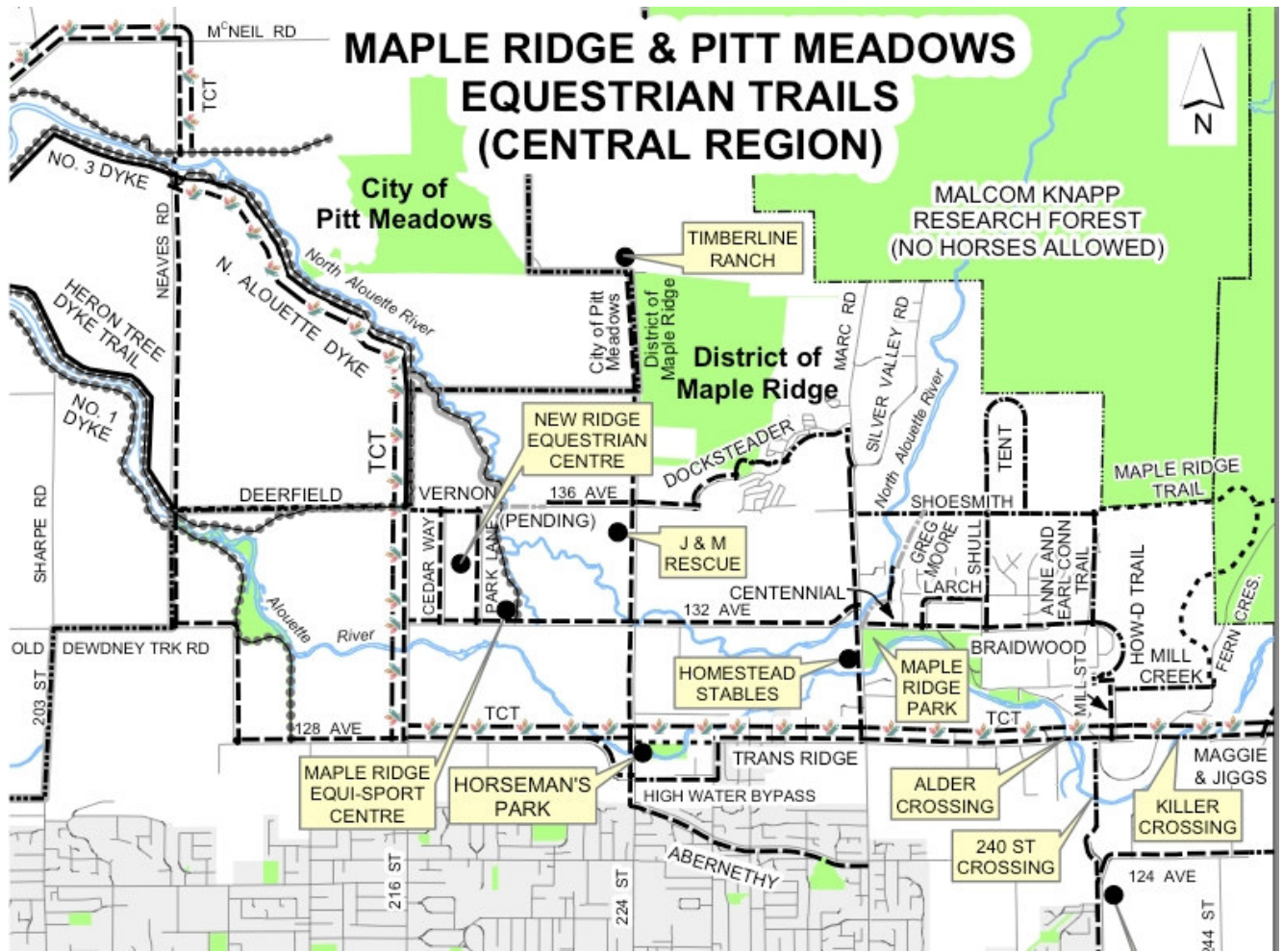
Bike riding and jogging have become increasingly popular, with participants enjoying the flat scenic routes perfect for the activity. With a designated cycling/jogging multi-use trail system the area will attract many more participants.

Equestrian in the Area

Equestrian has long been a hallmark of Maple Ridge and the Yennadon area has for many years been the center of that activity.

The area is the ideal center for equestrian activity because it already links a large network of some of the best equestrian trails in BC and already has a number of businesses that service the industry.

Below is a map provided by Haney Horseman showing just how well developed the trail network is in the area.



Problems Faced

Traffic speed and volume in the area is increasing and cyclists, joggers and hikers are no longer comfortable or safe pursuing these activities.

There are several hundred horses resident on the acreages of Yennadon. Owners of these horses are forced to trailer them to trails and exercise facilities because they no longer feel safe on the roads. Several horses have had to be destroyed because of incidents with cars and it is just a matter of time before a rider is seriously injured or killed. 132nd Avenue is a designated “shoulder horse trail” but is not really safe for use as such.

Facilities

As the population is increasing the parks and existing facilities are becoming overburdened and new parks are not being built to serve the needs of the growing number of new residents. The OCP shows numerous parks designated in the Silver Valley development area. For whatever reason, these parks are not

being built and the need for inexpensive recreation is not being met. Maple Ridge Park is already packed to overflowing in the summer.

New Thinking on Road Design Roads for People

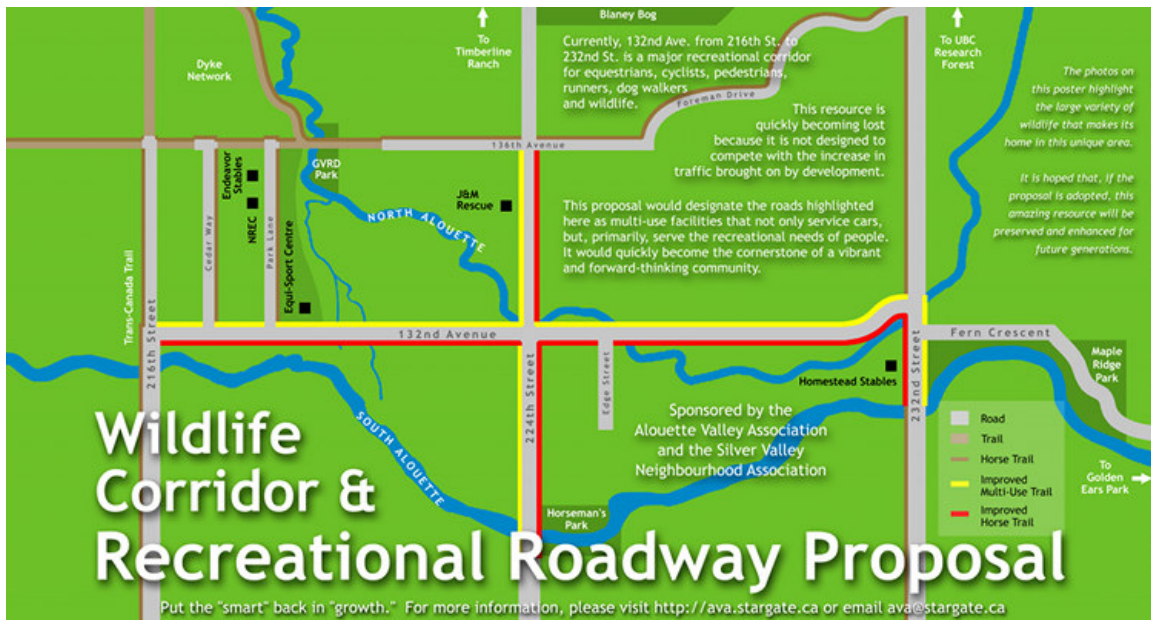
In many parts of the world people are starting to rethink the ways that roads are being used. The idea that roads are only for cars is beginning to give way to a movement that recognizes the wastefulness of this concept. In Holland the pioneering “Woonerf” concept is demonstrating how roads can be people friendly. In The UK the concept of “Quiet Lanes”, where horses coexist with cars, is becoming increasingly popular.

We need to consider how to change our roads in order to enjoy the benefits of these concepts. We recognize that in considering these changes we need to take into account the total reliance that we in North America have on our cars.



Recreational Roadway Park System

- To designate a section of roadway as recreational multi-purpose
- To “calm” the traffic in this area to ensure safety for all users
- To allow dedicated equestrian trails and bicycle lanes aligned with the roadway
- To provide linkage for parks, trails and dikes
Maple Ridge Park, Horseman’s Park, Equestrian Centre Blaney Bog
- To attract people and tourists to enjoy the beauty and attractions of the area
- People, wildlife and recreation first, cars second



Proposed Recreational Roadway Park System

Economic Benefits

Industry

What type of community do we want?

There was some debate during the recent elections about increasing our tax base by building industrial parks and shopping centers. What was missing was a discussion of the type of industry we want to attract to our community. We firmly believe that to sustain long term Smart Growth in our community we need to attract knowledge based industry. Manufacturing jobs typically pay up to \$18/hour whereas high tech jobs start at \$25.00/hour. Manufacturing jobs are disappearing everywhere in North America whereas, even given the current economic slump, high tech workers are still in demand.

Average salary increases in the BC technology sector are currently the highest in North America, according to the annual survey by the HR Tech Group (as of Sept 2008). Companies surveyed showed an average technology wage increase in 2008 of 4.5 percent, which led the Canadian average by almost a full percentage point. It is also higher than the US technology sector's average salary increase of 3.7 percent. One of the largest areas of growth was in the field of clean energy.

Maple Ridge has the ability to attract these industries because it has many of the vital ingredients already in place to make it happen.

- 1) a relatively pristine environment of great natural beauty
- 2) affordable housing (relative to the rest of the Lower Mainland)
- 3) transportation links (coming soon)
- 4) broadband access
- 5) a thriving arts community
- 6) the chance to build a recreational network

"Knowledge workers prefer places with a diverse range of outdoor recreational activities (e.g., rowing, sailing, cycling, rock climbing) and associated lifestyle amenities."

See Appendix A for an in depth article by Richard Florida, a professor of regional economic development at Carnegie Mellon

Tourism

Equestrian tourism is a well-developed niche of the modern travel industry in Great Britain, Ireland, Romania, France, the United States, Spain and some others. It comprises a horse-riding adventure along with history, culture and scenic beauty experiences in spectacular locations. The role of equestrian tourism cannot be overestimated in each country's tourism industry in terms of its recreational impact and health-healing effects, environment-conscious education and nature preservation. Maple Ridge already has in place all of the prerequisites to develop this industry.

Recreational Activities in the Area

- Horseback Riding
- Jogging & Walking / Dog Walking
- Cycling - Recreational & Competitive
- Hiking
- Wildlife Viewing
- Rafting - Tubing
- Canoeing
- Kayaking
- Skateboarding
- Wheel Chair Users

Cycling, Running and In-Line Skating

Cycling is one of the fastest growing recreational activities and with the price of gas predicted to increase in the future, it is also becoming a more popular way of commuting. It is even predicted that in 2009 more bicycles will be sold than automobiles. 132nd Avenue provides an important link between west and east Maple Ridge for cyclists looking to safely bypass the downtown core and thereby have a continuous route. With the rapid urbanization of the Lower Mainland, the rural roadways of Maple Ridge, including 132nd Avenue, are seen as the best road riding in the region. This corridor is used extensively by teams and clubs for training, school activities, and as a way to link the dykes to the west with the trails to the east in Golden Ears Park. 132nd has also been identified as a major link for a bicycle race course. Race The Ridge, Maple Ridge's premier cycling race, is applying to use part of 132nd Avenue for its 2009 event.

Cycling Economic Potential

- Race the Ridge - \$100,000
- Test of Metal Squamish - \$1m est. spinoff \$4 to \$5 m
- Pumpkin Cross at MREC
- Training Grounds for Teams
- Mass Group Rides e.g. Seattle to Van.
- Extension of Trans Canada Trail
- Community-Wide Recreation Loop

Like cycling, 132nd area is a very popular destination for runners. It is also used by Run the Ridge and by the famous Haney-to-Harrison road race. If this area was protected, it could also be a part of an in-line skating circuit linking up to other roadways in the area. As a protected recreational corridor, this area will draw additional recreational users including in-line skaters and become even more attractive to recreational event organizers.

Equestrian

In looking at other areas with an equestrian component it has become increasingly apparent how large an economic driver this activity can become. With foresight, Ridge Meadows can easily build on its existing assets and realize the economic benefits that other areas enjoy. Despite the unsafe conditions on the roads in the Alouette Valley, the area continues to be a magnet for equestrians from around the province, not only for trail riding ,but for showing, combined eventing, and horse boarding. Maple Ridge is already well known as an equine friendly community. The Recreational Roadway plan would ensure that our important equine heritage would continue to thrive despite the challenges presented by development. The plan would provide a significant and desperately needed recreational resource for all the new Ridge-Meadows residents.

Equestrian Economic Activity

- Annual economic impact on BC economy is estimated as \$771m (Horse Council BC study 1998)
- Fraser Valley has 5262 active participants in equestrian sports. (BC Activity Reporter, PSO membership 2008-2009)
- Equestrian sport participation within Fraser Valley ranks 7 out of 60 overall provincial sport organizations. (BC Activity Reporter, PSO 2008-2009)
- HCBC membership in Ridge-Meadows is 674
- Spinoffs - Horse centres, shows and events, hauling, horse sales, truck and trailer sales, veterinary services, farrier services and equine bed and breakfast,.
- Attract Large Equestrian Events
 - “The Mane Event” Equine Education and Trade Fair in Chilliwack attracts 35,000 people during the 3-day event @ \$15.00 per person
 - Host Western Gymkhanas and Games
 - Host Cross Country Events
 - Host Horse clinics and symposiums – world renown horse trainers

Ecological Benefits

The area in question boasts two important salmon bearing rivers, the North and the South Alouette. These important rivers support a wide variety of wildlife and acts as a wildlife corridor for many species.

Development has already severely impacted the ecology of these rivers. Frequent flooding has destroyed salmon spawning area in many parts of the North Alouette.

Road run-off is the combined product of road drainage and pollution resultant from road traffic. The result is a complex liquid mixture of chemicals and organic material. The level of toxicity exerted by the mixture is determined by a number of factors including the traffic level, drainage specifications, the road surface and weather conditions. Pollutants include metals, hydrocarbons, petroleum products, de-icing salts, sediment, and organic material among others. These are resultant from numerous sources including the road surface material, fuels, maintenance materials, vehicle loads and the vehicles that use the roads.

If we want to keep our rivers healthy we need to reduce the traffic that produces the road run-off.

Wildlife Tourism

- People come from all over the Lower Mainland to view our wildlife
Salmon spawning, birds (among them wintering eagles) and large animals such as deer, bear beaver and cougars can all be seen in the area
- Many Red and Blue Listed species make their home the Alouette Valley
- Blaney Bog is of particular ecological significance
- Recreational fishing is very popular
- The South Alouette is used by hundreds of people in the summer for river rafting and tubing. They enjoy the wildlife and the area natural beauty while floating down the river.

Implementation

How can horses, joggers, cyclist and walkers co-exist comfortably on the same street?

To accomplish this we need to reduce the speed of the traffic to 40kmph, build a horse friendly shoulder on one side of the street and a multi-use trail on the other side of the street. To provide enough room the street will need to be narrowed to accommodate the expanded shoulders. Narrowing the street will serve as the principle speed reduction technique. It is felt the 10 foot travel lane for cars in either direction would accomplish this goal. Chicanes, centre islands and neckdowns would be ideal solutions for street calming and traffic separation.

Additional calming methods may be needed such as speed bumps.



Chicane Example

Chicanes, lateral shifts, and chokers are all curb extensions installed away from an intersection to create a narrow two-lane gap or a single lane. Chicanes shift traffic alternately from side to side of the street to create an S-shaped path of travel. Lateral shifts are curb extensions that cause travel lanes to bend one way and then back the other way. Chokers are midblock curb extensions that narrow the street by expanding the sidewalk or adding a planting strip and often are installed at midblock crossings.

Funding

Although this project may look at first glance to be potentially expensive in fact we believe it to be quite achievable and a very efficient use of taxpayers dollars. The project has the benefit of solving many problems and would achieve multiple economic spinoffs. In particular the project would solve many of the problems faced by Parks and Rec. in trying to keep up with the growing demand for facilities in Ridge Meadows. The concept of a linear parks could be achieved without having to buy, build and maintain new parks.

The largest expense would be paving the multi-use trail this should however be easy to fund from grants. Chicanes are relatively cheap to build and will be maintained by local residents.

Potential Funding Sources

- Local Motion
- CIPP
- Translink
- Corporate Donations
- NPA Donations
- In-kind Neighbourhood Donations
 - Landscaping of chicanes, donation of land, planning etc.

Stake Holders – Community Support

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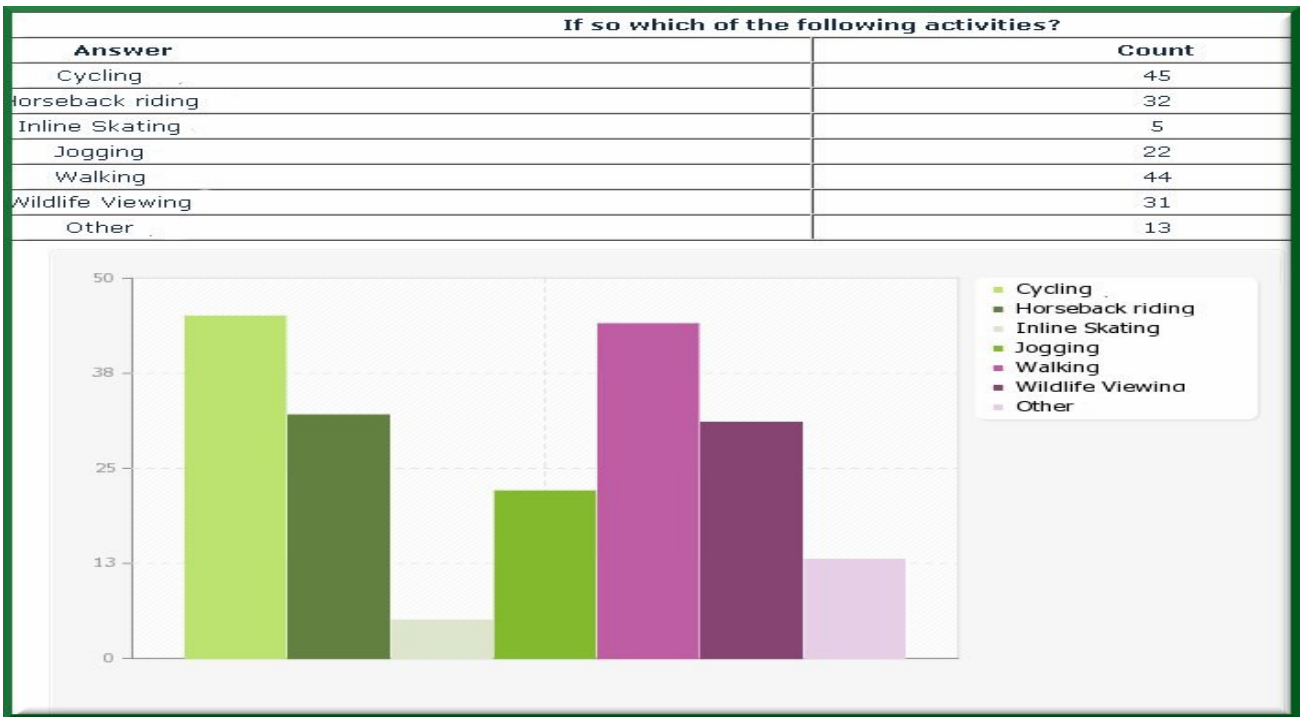
AVA (Alouette Valley Association) and the S.V.N.A. (Silver Valley Neighborhood Association)

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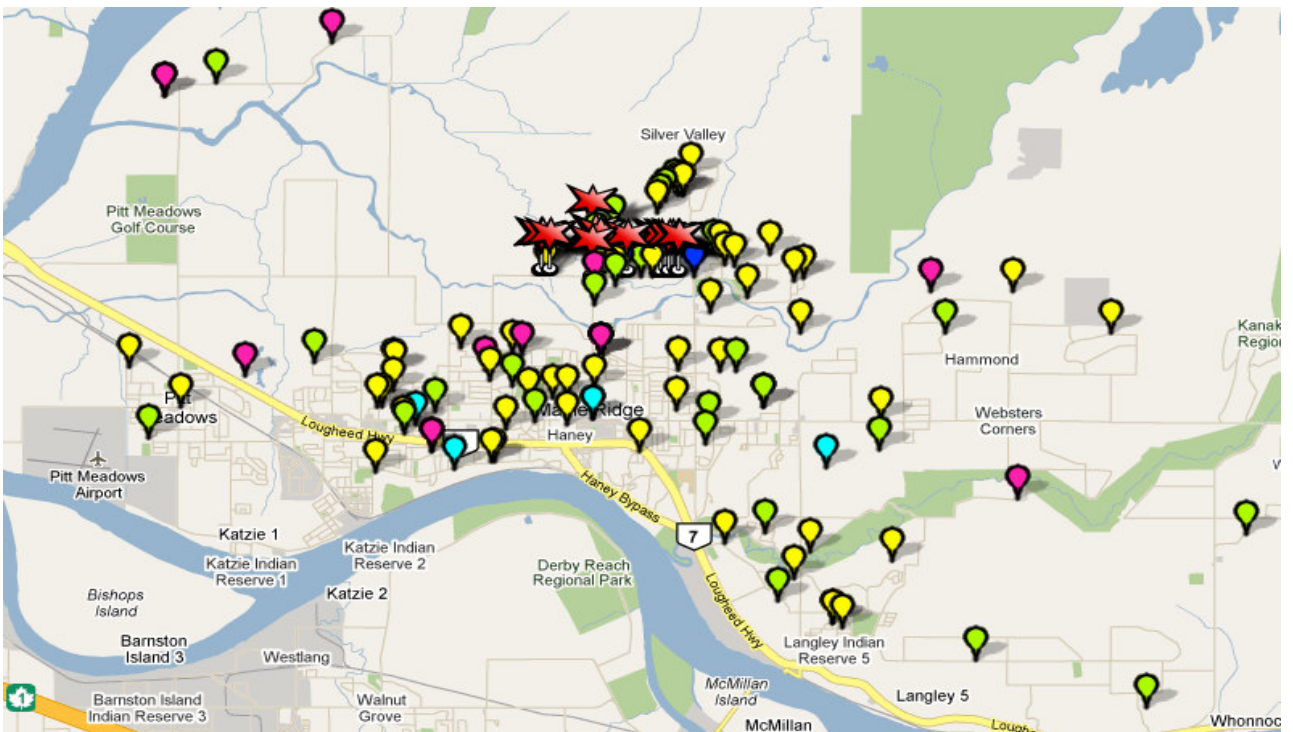
- Horse Council of BC
- Haney Horsemen
- Ridge-Meadows BAC
- ARMS - to be ratified by board
- Local Environmental Groups
 - Alouette Field Naturalist
 - Pitt Polder Preservation Society
 - Ceed
- Trethewey Edge Dyking District
- Equ-Sport Centre
- Iron Mountain Movement

Neighbourhood

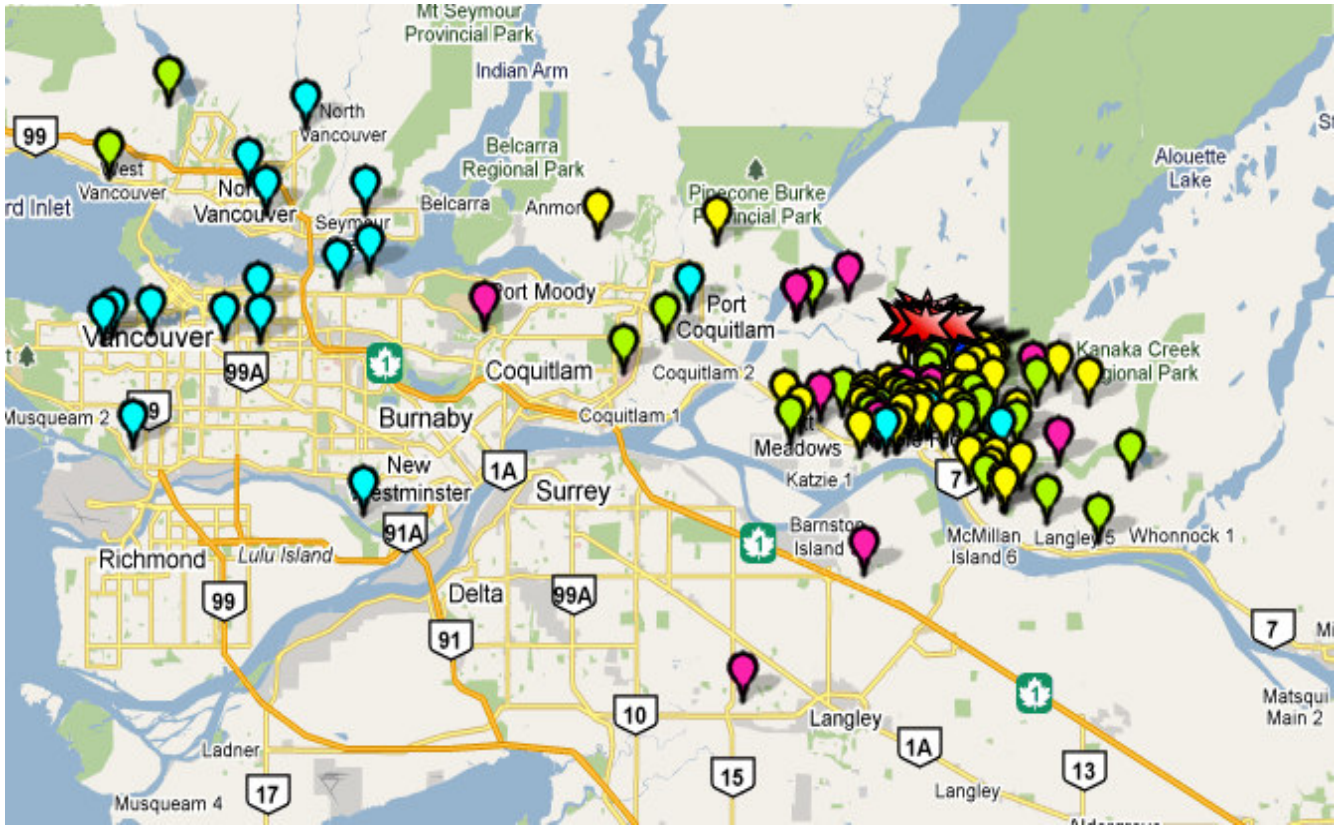
- Survey of Neighbourhood shows 97% support
- Residents demonstrate their support by erecting signs on their properties and to reduce traffic speed
- Silver Valley residents support because of the need for local recreational resources



Activity survey respondents- 50 invitations



Ridge Meadows Support



Lower Mainland Support

Council Comments

The following comments are based on the question put to council and mayoral candidates during the recent election.

“Recreation Area

The Lower Alouette valley could become a great resource for Maple Ridge if it were turned into a designated recreational area similar to what has been accomplished in South Surrey. The area could attract tourists, green business create employment and increase tax revenues.

To do this 132nd Ave and 224th St. north of Horseman Park would be changed into recreational streets, linking the major resources of the area with Horse, Bike and Jogging Trails right on the roads.

The roads would be narrowed and traffic calming measures would be installed along with lower speed limits. Maple Ridge Park, Blaney Bog, Horseman Park, the Equestrian Center and Dyke System could *easily be joined by this network.*”

Ernie Daykin

You are right this area does have a great potential for recreational activity for Maple Ridge residents. We are in the midst of our Parks Master plan review and there may be a good opportunity to include some of this in that work. Also the Economic Development office can be an advocate and resource to work on this. I will do what I can to support and advocate for this proposal.

Craig Speers

I love this idea! It fits with the focus I think this community should concentrate on. Recreational tourism is a package of things within a defined area such as the Alouette Valley. It could include things like mountain Bikes, horses, zip lines, interpretive centers, camping, specialized touring, historical tours, water sports and many other assets that a tourist can enjoy

Farming and tourism don't eat up our most precious resource, our environment. Certainly I would support a concept like this

Cheryl Ashlie

I believe we have to look at the whole economic plan for Maple Ridge and build on existing networks that can enhance business and employment opportunities. If what is suggested above, works within an overall plan and stays true to the Official Community Plan on all levels, then I think it is worth exploring. I believe we have to protect all of the areas that you have listed, because they are truly assets that could and do bring people to our community, but I do not know enough about the suggested changes to the road infrastructure to say it is the best route to go — no pun intended. We can only make good decisions by making sure we explore all of the suggestions from our community. Tourism certainly generates good economic spin offs, so we need to enhance the opportunities.

Judy Dueck

Our Parks Master Plan is currently under review and this strategy should be presented and reviewed during this process.

Linda King

yes, although the costs of doing it would have to be considered. This proposal should be presented as part of the Parks and Leisure Services review which is currently underway.

Sample Comments From Survey Respondents

- Maple Ridge needs to address the growing communities needs. Council is responsible to the future generations to protect the natural resources in the area and preserve the lifestyle.
- The new horse trail from 136th Avenue to the Equestrian centre is getting lots of use. However, I am hearing from my equestrian friends that it is still very dangerous to ride on 224th Street to get to 136th Avenue to get to the trail. We definitely need traffic to slow on 224th street before a horse or rider is killed. OUTSTANDING ideas.
- Excellent proposal. Greatly needed to preserve and utilize our spectacular neighborhood safely! Excited to pursue it further. With this corridor, I hope that the eastern portion of 132nd Avenue will not encourage speeders who are coming from 232nd Ave to now have a tendency to accelerate after coming through the 'S' curve by the North Alouette River. This is usually the area where vehicles accelerate and many times pass other vehicles by our address. If you didn't know, our property has numerous wildlife that use our property as a corridor to the river. We have had 2 fawns (one recently) hit by a vehicle. It died the following morning in our meadow. Over and over we have vehicles stop and view deer on either side of 132nd Ave. I also feel more, visible signs should be posted for vehicle traffic in particular.
- I as well as many others would benefit greatly if this proposal were implemented.
- A very well thought out article
- Sooner the better
- Even if we don't achieve a full recreational roadway, we really must aim for traffic calming measures in this area. This will save the lives of many animals, and cut down on the noise and the road racing.
- It's an excellent idea. We will come to the area more often if the plan comes true.
- Anything that will cause people to go the speed limit will be a big help.
- I recently visited St. Jacobs, Ontario where all the shoulders on the roadways have been widened to accommodate horse and carriage traffic (Mennonite area) – I thought it would be a wonderful idea for here as well!
- The safety issue around horses on the road is paramount. But in general, opportunities for equestrian sports are an increasingly important feature of Maple Ridge. Enhanced equestrian facilities (like MREC) also attract people from outside Maple Ridge and generate economic spin-offs.
- Improve road surface where needed on dykes, (TCT N. Allouette) allowing a least a strip to be more suitable to unshod horses. Connect to Pitt Lake and all of the way around to Fraser River Greenway to include north end of Pitt Meadows. Northlands, Blue Moon, Maple Meadow, Crescendo, and many private equestrian facilities would be able to join your network and lobby group. A multi use path would be sufficient to connect the dyke network already in place.
- Excellent work and ideas
- We think this is a great idea.
- I believe this idea is very innovative and is an example of how various needs can be balanced with a little creative thinking. I sincerely hope this proposal is successful.

- I think that this proposal is a huge step in the right direction and way of the future-I think this would help Maple Ridge stand out as a forward thinking community dedicated to improving the quality of life for it's citizens, while in balance with great care for our environment and precious wildlife.
- I live in the new development of Silver Ridge and am appalled at the speed of traffic in our neighbourhood (Foreman Drive) as well as 136th, 132nd and 224th. I would love to see speed reduction and perhaps speed bumps put in to deter these high speed drivers. Although I live in this newly developed area, my family was attracted to it because of the diverse natural beauty surrounding us. I have not be happy with the extensive tree removal and continual changes to the building plan since we moved here from Burnaby 2 years ago. Thank you and I support your endeavors fully and completely!
- use to live in maple ridge and got the hell out when I had the chance
- I drive along 132nd avenue everyday and I am fed up with the large number aggressive drivers that tailgate and drive way too fast ie. 80-100 km/hr is the norm. The majority of drivers still do not slow down for horses and in one case I even had a driver pass me as I was slowing down for a horse on the opposite side of the road and this driver almost hit the horse as he passed. I have never seen a speed trap on this road in the last 4 years which surprises me because during rush hour hours they could ticket almost every driver that uses 132nd, that in itself is frustrating- no one enforces the speed limit. I have also been on my bicycle and drivers are too inpatient to wait to pass so its like taking your life into your hands. On a final note I have had a deer cross in front of me at least 3 times in the last year (and one time a bear) and if I were going 80km I would have hit them too because they just run in front of you , luckily I was not going too fast and was able to stop. I like driving down 132nd everyday . I still see beauty in all the properties and the wildlife that you do see as well as the horses and the new foals that are born every year. If you are going too fast you miss all these things.
- We do not live near the area, but certainly the idea is a good one. However, we suggest caution in developing a zipline, as parking, effect on the environment and location should be carefully considered.
- I board my horse next to the EquiSport Centre. Even though it is so close, I lead my horse to get to the dyke as the traffic has become too dangerous. I have had cars "aiming" at me purposely to scare me when motioning to them to slow down and boat trailers brushing my legs. For many years I used to ride from 232 st to the Centre with no problems. The days of riding up to Golden Ears Park has now ended for us as 132 has become a racetrack for cars. I fully support a recreational road. Keep in mind that (shaving) trucks can still come in. Speed bumps will not be good for horse trailers, etc. Hopefully, it would also save some of our wonderful wildlife we have in the area.
- I find it very increasingly unsafe to ride from my Horse board facility down 216th, or 224th to 132nd avenue, down to any horse trails in any direction. I am overwhelmed by thousands and thousands of cars racing past me unsafely, near misses, horse spooking, getting clipped with mirrors, motorcycles racing noisily past me, men squeeling tires in their trucks, noisy dirt bike motorcycles racing on the road, speeding gravel trucks, drunk drivers high and racing back from the Lake and so on. It has become increasingly unsafe to ride along the road and it makes me feel scared actually when I do attempt it. A friends horse was hit by a

new driver in her car on 216th and 132nd all because the new driver did not slow down and pass wide. Instead she hit the horse. NOW since the new bridge is open everyone is using this area to Race home trying to avoid going through town. Sorry, but WE THE FARMS AND HORSE BOARDS FACILITY WERE HERE FIRST!! what were they thinking when they let all that excess traffic race by all the horse board facilities on old dewdney trunk road, 128th ave. 132nd, 216th and 224th??? I can't even ride in our riding ring on the farm anymore because of the traffic noise of people racing off from the stop sign (3 feet from our ring now) constantly spooks my horse and I have gotten injured from a spooked horse from noisy vehicles tearing off from the stop sign past me. Drive thru traffic should not be allowed in that area (local residents only) and if they want to bypass town they should have to take 124th through town to abernathy then, instead of racing noisily past all the farms and horse board facilities. It is just getting to be too much!

- There's a a multitude of new developments that are being implemented at the end of 236th Avenue that has a large pond and I believe blaney creek. It would be nice if this green area was somehow integrated with these plans to create a trail network between the Alouette Valley and Silver Valley

Appendix 1

Smart Growth

Quality of place and the new economy

Open space preservation, access to nature, and other “quality-of-place” amenities may be keys to Maple Ridge’s future economic development. In essence, that is the argument of the following article by Richard Florida, a professor of regional economic development at Carnegie Mellon University’s Heinz School of Public Policy and Management. The article is taken from a summary of a report that Florida prepared in January 2000 for the R. K. Mellon Foundation, Heinz Endowments, and Sustainable Pittsburgh.

By Richard Florida

The rise of the new economy has radically altered the ways that cities and regions establish and maintain their competitive advantage. In the new economy, regions develop advantages based on their ability to quickly mobilize the best people, resources, and capabilities required to turn innovations into new business ideas and commercial products. The nexus of competitive advantage has thus shifted to those regions that can generate, retain, and attract the best talent.

This report summarizes the key findings of a year-long study of the role of talent in the new economy. The study looked specifically at how quality-of-place—that is amenities, lifestyle, and environmental quality—affect the ability of regions to attract talent and to generate and sustain high technology industry. To do so, it examined the performance of regions across the country on these dimensions, explored what leading regions are doing to be successful, and conducted focus groups with young knowledge workers in technology-based fields to better understand how they choose places to live and work.

The key findings of the study confirm that amenities and environmental quality matter in the attraction of talent and development of high technology regional economies, as follows:

Quality-of-place—particularly natural, recreational, and lifestyle amenities—is absolutely vital in attracting knowledge workers and in supporting leading-edge high technology firms and industries. Knowledge workers essentially balance economic opportunity and lifestyle in selecting a place to live and work. Thus, quality-of-place factors are as important as traditional economic factors such as jobs and career opportunity in attracting knowledge workers in high technology fields. Given that they have a wealth of job opportunities, knowledge workers have the ability to choose cities and regions that are attractive places to live as well as work.

The availability of job and career opportunities is a necessary but insufficient condition to attract the young knowledge workers. Knowledge workers favor cities and regions with a “thick labor market” which offers the wide variety of employment opportunities required to sustain a career in high technology fields. Quality-of-place completes the picture.

Leading high technology regions also rate very highly in terms of quality-of-place with high levels of amenities and environmental quality. Austin, Texas; Seattle, Washington; the San Francisco Bay area; the greater Boston region; and Washington, D.C. score consistently high across virtually every quality-of-place measure—natural amenities, lifestyle amenities, and overall environmental quality. There is a strikingly strong correlation across the board between regions that are home to large concentrations of knowledge workers, amenities, and the environment. In this regard, amenities and the environment are part of a total package of factors required to become a successful technology-based region with a large pool of knowledge workers.

Leading high technology regions have aggressively pursued strategies to bolster their environmental quality, natural amenities, and lifestyle offerings to attract and retain talent. Austin and Seattle have placed high priority on recreational amenities such as bike paths, mountain bike trails, parks and recreational areas, and accessibility to water for rowing and sailing. These regions have cultivated thriving music scenes and are also known for their youth-oriented cultures that are open and supportive of diversity. Both regions are among the national leaders in smart growth and sustainable development. Leading high technology regions have also supported the development of extensive lifestyle and recreational amenities around major university districts where knowledge workers reside.

Knowledge workers prefer places with a diverse range of outdoor recreational activities (e.g., rowing, sailing, cycling, rock climbing) and associated lifestyle amenities. Access to water and water-based recreation is of particular importance to these workers. Knowledge workers prefer regions where amenities and activities are easy to get to and available on a "just-in-time" basis. Due to the long hours, fast-pace, and tight deadlines associated with work in high technology industries, knowledge workers require amenities that blend seamlessly with work and can be accessed on demand. They favor cities and regions that offer a wide range of experiences, and are somewhat less concerned with "big ticket" amenities such as "high" arts and culture or professional sports. Knowledge workers also express a strong preference for progressive regions that are youth-oriented and supportive of demographic diversity.

The findings of this report suggest that cities and regions have a great deal to gain from developing a quality-of-place strategy designed to attract knowledge workers and from embedding it in ongoing economic development and competitiveness efforts. In doing so, the report indicates that the region should consider the following actions:

- * Make quality-of-place a central feature of regional economic development strategies.
- * Integrate amenities and natural assets into all aspects of regional economic development, talent attraction, and marketing efforts.
- * Invest in outdoor, recreational and lifestyle amenities as a component of regional economic development and talent attraction efforts; for example, the creation of climbing walls, mountain bike trails, bike paths, roller-blading areas and the like. Sponsor outdoor competitions and events to the region such as triathlons, bike races, rowing competitions, and similar efforts that attract the attention of knowledge workers. Orient waterfront improvements to encourage recreational activities such as rowing, sailing and windsurfing, particularly by improving access.

* Develop a comprehensive amenity strategy for university districts and integrate them into economic development strategies. Establish more user-friendly transit connections between university districts, downtowns, and centers for high-technology enterprise through light rail, mass transit and bike lanes for commuting.

* Encourage smart growth and sustainable development on a regional basis, particularly sustainable use, preservation, and revitalization of natural assets. Equip neighborhoods and communities with tools to preserve open space and to create recreational amenities. Work with developers to provide more examples of successful residential and commercial developments that feature amenities, particularly in reconverted brownfield sites in urban areas.

* Create mechanisms for harnessing the knowledge and ideas of all citizens at the neighborhood, local, and regional levels for improving the quality-of-place around the environment and amenities. Develop vehicles for involving young people in the regional amenity and lifestyle agenda as well as in the broader economic development agenda. A quality-of-place strategy is relatively inexpensive and involves marshalling resources (parks, waterfronts, etc.) that are already in place. It also is strongly place-based and as such confers direct benefits on broad segments of the local population and industry, in contrast to conferring large subsidies to non-residents or outside industry. For example, elderly populations express support for bike trails and paths especially around the university district, as they will take commuting cyclists off the sidewalks. Amenities will also benefit disadvantaged neighborhoods and populations, as well as attracting knowledge workers.

Quality-of-place is the missing piece of the puzzle. To compete successfully in the age of talent, regions must make quality-of-place a central element of their economic development efforts.