

Major Event Development and Attraction Plan Report

THAT Council receive the “Major Events Development and Attraction Plan” dated June 11, 2025, for information

Report Purpose and Summary Statement:

This report summarizes key findings and strategic recommendations from the Major Event Development and Attraction Plan (MEDAP). The plan provides a coordinated, long-term framework to guide Maple Ridge in attracting, developing, and supporting major events that strengthen community pride, enhance quality of life, and generate tourism and economic benefits.

Commissioned in late 2024, MEDAP aligns with Council’s priorities of supporting a Diversified, Thriving Economy and advancing community vibrancy. The plan positions Maple Ridge as a regional destination for authentic, sustainable, high-impact events.

Strategic Alignment:

Engaged, Healthy Community; Diversified, Thriving Economy

To: Mayor and Council

Major Event Development and Attraction Plan Report

BACKGROUND

Major events play a central role in Maple Ridge's economic development and tourism strategy. Building on successes such as the BC Summer Games, Our Neck of the Woods (ONOTW), Canada Day, Celebrate the Night, the MEDAP provides a clear roadmap for expanding the City's event portfolio.

The plan establishes a five-year strategic direction grounded in community engagement, market trends, and best practices from comparable event-hosting municipalities. Implementation of the plan will help Maple Ridge prioritize investment, strengthen partnerships, and enhance its brand as a regional hub for major events.



ANALYSIS

Community and Market Context

Recent major events demonstrate strong community engagement, organizational capability, and economic potential. In 2024 alone:

- BC Summer Games: 3,100+ participants, 1,700 volunteers
- ONTW: 15,000 attendees celebrating arts, culture, recreation, and local talent

To support continued growth of major event development and attractions, the City undertook a comprehensive planning process including:

- 322 resident survey responses
- Workshops with event organizers, Council, senior leadership, and industry partners
- Review of tourism and economic development plans
- Benchmarking against regional event-hosting communities

Feedback confirmed strong community appetite for expanded event programming, emphasizing music, cultural festivals, food and agriculture, sport tourism, and outdoor adventure.

Purpose and Objectives

The MEDAP plan provides a coordinated approach to:

- Expand Maple Ridge’s major event offerings
- Strengthen civic pride and belonging
- Support local businesses, tourism, and hospitality sectors
- Build capacity for event producers and community groups
- Guide infrastructure and service-level decisions
- Attract regional partnerships and private investment

Definition of Major Events

Major events are defined as those that:

- Attract large audiences (thousands per day or over multiple days)
- Generate significant social, economic, and reputational impact
- Draw regional visitors and support local spending

Benefits of Major Events

Social Benefits: Strengthen community identity, foster cultural exchange, promote volunteerism, and encourage civic engagement.

Economic Benefits: Increase tourism, support local businesses, create jobs, stimulate entrepreneurship, and enhance Maple Ridge’s regional profile.

Environmental Benefits: Promote appreciation of natural assets and embed sustainable practices in event design and delivery.

Strategic Pillars

Eight strategic pillars guide Maple Ridge’s future major event development:

1. **Facilitate the Fun:** Strengthen support for external event producers and the creative economy.
2. **Maximize Maple Ridge:** Activate venues citywide and across seasons to broaden participation and reduce pressure on the downtown core.
3. **Build for Big Moments:** Invest in infrastructure and amenities to support large events.
4. **Grow What Works:** Enhance and evolve existing well-loved events.
5. **Keep It Real:** Prioritize authentic, place-based programming aligned with Maple Ridge’s brand.
6. **Make It Last:** Establish sustainable funding models and long-term resource planning.
7. **Set the Bar:** Introduce consistent evaluation criteria and service standards to improve event quality.
8. **Reap Returns:** Strengthen tourism promotion and business engagement.

Major Event Opportunities

Four opportunity areas emerged as the most authentic and viable for Maple Ridge:

1. **Outdoor Adventure & Recreation**
 - Trail and mountain races, gravel cycling, and water-based sports

- Adventure and wellness festivals
- Multi-day outdoor recreation events
- 2. Music, Culture & Film
 - Expansion of ONOTW and Caribbean Festival
 - Creation of a Maple Ridge Film Festival (800+ film productions filmed locally)
 - Indigenous-led cultural programming in collaboration with Katzie and Kwantlen First Nations
 - Multicultural and performing arts weekends
- 3. Food & Agriculture
 - Annual harvest or farm festival
 - Farm, brewery, and restaurant food tours
 - Culinary competitions and expanded farmers' markets
- 4. Sport Tourism
 - Regional and provincial tournaments at Telosky Stadium, Albion Sports Complex, and Planet Ice
 - New partnerships with sport organizations to attract recurring sport events

Existing Event Venues

Maple Ridge benefits from a strong foundation of event-ready locations including Memorial Peace Park, The ACT Arts Centre, Albion Fairgrounds, Port Haney Wharf, sports complexes, and multi-purpose recreation facilities. Several venues have strong potential for further enhancement.

Key Findings

Community and stakeholder engagement identified three priority improvement areas:

- Infrastructure: Upgraded or new event-ready spaces and amenities
- Marketing: Stronger promotion, regional visibility, and brand storytelling
- Resource Support: Clearer processes, dedicated staffing, and tools for event organizers

Residents emphasized the need for more events, better communication, improved parking and transit, enhanced washrooms and indoor spaces, and increased accommodation options.

Economic & Tourism Potential

Major events contribute to:

- Increased visitor spending
- Job creation and support for the event supply chain
- Enhanced tourism profile
- Local business engagement
- Talent attraction

Infrastructure & Resource Needs

To expand its event portfolio, Maple Ridge should:

- Enhance indoor and outdoor event venues
- Improve municipal coordination through a dedicated Major Event Liaison

- Increase support for vendors and business activation
- Pursue long-term solutions for accommodation capacity

SWOT Summary

Strengths: Strong community support; proven hosting experience; diverse venues; natural assets; strategic regional location.

Weaknesses: Limited accommodations; infrastructure gaps; constrained transit; lack of formal internal event coordination structure.

Opportunities: Growing regional demand; tourism potential; business partnerships; sustainable event design; brand storytelling.

Threats: Rising production costs; funding limitations; capacity strain; public safety risks; economic uncertainty.

Top 10 Priority Actions

1. Host an Annual Event Development Forum
2. Establish a Major Event Liaison role
3. Adopt standardized event evaluation criteria
4. Introduce a new signature event within three years
5. Launch Expressions of Interest (EOI) for event concepts
6. Activate venues across all neighbourhoods
7. Strengthen Maple Ridge's brand integration
8. Support local businesses through targeted programming
9. Enhance event-ready venue features

Limitations

- Limited hotel supply constrains multi-day events
- Infrastructure improvements require phased investment
- Event growth must balance neighbourhood impacts
- Staff capacity must increase to support an expanded event portfolio

Advisory Committee Feedback

The Diversified Thriving Economy Advisory Committee emphasized:

- Cost-effective upgrades to existing facilities
- The need for expanded accommodation capacity
- Opportunities to refresh and reposition long-standing events
- Successful licensing models from ONOTW as a best-practice example

Interdepartmental Implications

Implementation will require cross-department collaboration including:

- Economic Development
- Parks and Facilities
- Recreation Services

- Planning, Engineering & Transportation
- Communications
- RCMP, Fire, and Bylaws

Financial Implications

MEDAP recommends:

- Establishing or reallocating resources for a Major Events Liaison
- Phased capital planning for infrastructure upgrades
- Pursuing grants and sponsorship
- Applying cost recovery models where appropriate
- No immediate new funding is requested at this time. Staff will return with future budget proposals.

CONCLUSION

Major events contribute significantly to Maple Ridge's identity, vibrancy, economy, and tourism appeal. With strong community support and a growing demand for inclusive, high-quality events, Maple Ridge is well-positioned to expand its event portfolio strategically.

Adopting the MEDAP will enable the City to advance a coordinated, sustainable, and impactful approach to event development, strengthening community life and enhancing Maple Ridge and its partners' competitiveness as a regional destination.

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Attachments: (A) Maple Ridge Major Events Plan

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Major Event Development and Attraction Plan Strategy Report.docx
Attachments:	- Maple Ridge Major Events Plan final.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 13, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

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