



Building Better Homes and Communities

www.actprogram.com

Affordability and Choice Today

ACT Solutions

Cedar Valley Development Process Streamlining

District of Mission, BC

Issue

To accommodate rapid growth in coming years, the District of Mission, in BC's Fraser Valley, is urbanizing 405 hectares of an area called Cedar Valley. The District already had a comprehensive development plan for the area based upon sustainable development principles. To achieve cost savings for Cedar Valley developers (and ultimately housing consumers), Mission wanted to streamline its development approval process.

Plan

The project team hired a consultant, Jon Ellis and Associates, to work with staff, external agencies, community representatives and the local Development Process Select Committee to prepare a series of recommendations for municipal staff and Council. Guided by the project team, the consultant was to recommend changes to approval procedures for rezonings, subdivisions, development permits and development variances.

Project team

District of Mission
Fraser Valley Home Builders' Association
B. C. Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services
Stave Valley Salmonoid Enhancement Society
Mission Development Process Select Committee

Results

The Ellis report, titled *The Cedar Valley Approval Process Review Report*, was completed in October 2004. Municipal staff implemented a number of measures based on the recommendations and have since seen positive results.

In a development cost survey, issued in 2005 by the National Association of Industrial and Office Properties, the District got an "A" rating for reducing approval times by 25 per cent since the previous survey in 2003. This improvement occurred during a period when permit applications rose to three times the level they were in 2000.



This compact single family home, on a narrow lot with rear lane access, was part of an affordable housing initiative approved using Mission's streamlined procedures.

Source: District of Mission

Improvements enacted by the District include:

- ❑ Land use applications and explanatory information is now available on-line at the District's website (www.mission.ca)
- ❑ The District implemented a process of electronic referrals for applications that require acceptance by external agencies, such as hydro, gas suppliers, school districts and so on. At the time of referral, the District now sets a time limit for response. If comments are

It could work for you!

Program Partners:



not received by the specified date, the District assumes the agency has no objection to the proposal.

- ❑ The planning department has assigned an assistant whose sole responsibility is liaison between applicants and the District. This person is the primary contact for clients throughout the approval process, responsible for routing application referrals, and tracking compliance with turn-around targets. Concurrent with creation of the liaison role, the District began monitoring referrals to external agencies more closely.
- ❑ In a similar vein, each land use application is now assigned to a specific staff person, regardless of the application type. Previously, rezoning and subdivision applications were processed by different people even though they could relate to the same project.
- ❑ Where public evaluation is needed, the District initiated two measures to ensure the system is open and fair:
 - 1) Public information meetings are the first step in the community consultation process. They precede the formal process of public hearings and allow those involved to clarify points at issue in a less formal setting.
 - 2) Community Review Groups are structured groups, such as ratepayers associations, who represent people most directly affected by a development proposal. The District identifies groups affected by individual applications and formally seeks their input and consent before such applications are approved.

The District rejected one significant recommendation from the review. It proposed fast-track approvals in return for payment of a higher fee. Staff countered that they do not have the resources or capacity to create this type of process without adversely affecting processing times for other applications and distracting them from other work.

Brett Dwyer, director of planning for the District of Mission, said the process review done by Ellis and Associates was a worthwhile exercise. It helped District staff identify and implement measures to reduce the time and cost consumed by the land use approvals process. Improvements recommended specifically for the development of Cedar Valley have been implemented for all land use permit applications in the municipality.

Related reports

Cedar Valley Approval Process Review (Jon Ellis & Associates, District of Mission, British Columbia, 2005)

Cedar Valley Approval Process Review: Implementation Report (District of Mission, British Columbia, March 2006)

These reports are available from the ACT website. See "ACT projects & solutions".

Contact

Brett Dwyer
Director of Planning
District of Mission
bdwyer@mission.ca
604-820-3752

Affordability and Choice Today

Got a housing regulatory issue? ACT may already have a solution! Find out about ACT regulatory reform projects carried out across Canada:

www.actprogram.com

ACT Administration

c/o The Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Tel: 613-241-5221 ext. 242
Fax: 613-244-1515
E-mail: info@actprogram.com

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements recognizes ACT as a top global best practice for improving the living environment.

ACT is sponsored by CMHC.

2006