

AFFORDABILITY AND CHOICE TODAY (A•C•T) STREAMLINED APPROVAL PROCESS PROJECT

Reducing Land Development Costs in Moncton, New Brunswick

**Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association
Moncton, New Brunswick**

Prepared for:

Federation of Canadian Municipalities

Canadian Home Builders' Association

Canadian Housing and Renewal Association

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

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FOREWORD

The project documented in this case study received funding assistance under the Affordability and Choice Today (A•C•T) Program. A•C•T is a joint initiative, managed by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Home Builders' Association, and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, together with the funding agency Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The A•C•T Program is administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

A•C•T, which was launched in January 1990, was designed to foster changes to planning and building regulations and residential development approval procedures in order to improve housing affordability, choice and quality.

Through A•C•T, grants are awarded to municipalities, private and non-profit builders and developers, planners and architects to undertake innovative regulatory reform initiatives in municipalities across Canada. Three types of projects are awarded grants under the A•C•T Program: Demonstration Projects, Streamlined Approval Process Projects, and Case Studies (of existing initiatives).

- *Demonstration Projects* involve the construction of innovative housing that demonstrates how modifications to planning and construction regulations can improve affordability, choice and quality.

- *Streamlined Approval Process Projects* involve the development of a method or an approach that reduces the time and effort needed to obtain approvals for housing projects.
- *Case Study* grants are awarded for the documentation of existing regulatory reform initiatives.

Change and innovation require the participation of all the players in the housing sector. A•C•T provides a unique opportunity for groups at the local level to work together to identify housing concerns, reach consensus on potential solutions, and implement action. Consequently, a key component of A•C•T-sponsored projects is the participation and cooperation of various players in the housing sector in all phases of each project, from development to realization.

All projects awarded a grant under the A•C•T Program are documented as case studies in order to share information on the initiatives and the benefits of regulatory reform with other Canadian communities. Each case study discusses the regulatory reform initiative, its goals and the lessons learned. Where appropriate, the cost savings resulting from modifications in various planning, development, and construction regulations are calculated and reported.

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

In order to make housing more affordable, representatives of the Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association (GMHBA), the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission (GMPDC), the City of Moncton and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) formed a steering committee to review and modify, where appropriate, land development standards applicable to the City of Moncton, including zoning and subdivision by-laws and building standards.

These standards impose site-servicing, land use and site-planning costs that ultimately affect the affordability of housing.

The standards in question were under the jurisdiction of the municipality. The objective was to work closely with municipal representatives to determine which standards should be modified to enhance affordability, choice and quality.

Development applications require review and approval from several civic departments. Each department applies a series of standards, which in some instances increase housing costs. The aim of the study was to assist the community in identifying problems and areas for improvement in the approval process.

The steering committee identified the following changes to development standards for further consideration:

- Reduce minimum lot size, frontage and setback requirements
- Allow interior lots
- Reduce the percentage of land set aside for public use
- Plan arterial and collector roads on undeveloped land
- Encourage clustering
- Eliminate the requirement for double catchbasins
- Allow mountable curbs on local streets
- Increase manhole spacing
- Reduce right-of-ways and pavement widths
- Provide single trenching for multiple service lines

As well, the committee proposed a public awareness campaign and the formation of a permanent liaison committee, which would include City employees and private-sector key players. This would assist the committee in identifying problem areas. One of the key responsibilities of the liaison committee would be to prepare a final list of steering committee recommendations and to provide technical assistance to City

Council. It is anticipated that some of the steering committee recommendations will be incorporated into Moncton's Municipal Development Plan and by-laws which were currently under revision.¹ Finally, the committee recognized the need for pilot studies to determine which changes would affect costs the most. GMHBA expects that the approval process will be streamlined by eliminating the need for variances.

This study will assist the community and municipality in identifying problems and areas for improvement in the approval process. The recommendations could result in reduced land-servicing costs. They could allow builders to provide greater choice in housing and to construct housing that meets current and projected housing demand. The project also fostered better communication between the key players in the provision of housing.

¹ Moncton's by-laws under revision were the Zoning By-law, the Mobile Home By-law, the Building By-Law and the Subdivision By-Law.

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.1 Purpose of the Project

In 1991, there were approximately 200 vacant serviced lots available in Moncton, New Brunswick. The majority of these lots were sized and priced for the upper end of the new housing market. These lots will meet the needs of some, but not all, of the city's population. Existing City regulations encourage the provision of large lots, but they limit the development of lots suitable for less affluent and entry-level homebuyers.

As the supply of serviced land has almost been exhausted, and development of land at the periphery of the city had already begun, it was an appropriate time to review standards related to land development.

Lots tend to be the most expensive component in the price of new homes. Land development standards regulating such elements as servicing requirements, densities and house-to-land ratio directly affect the cost of land. These standards, for the most part, are established by the City of Moncton. The objective of the project was to review the following land development standards:

- Zoning and subdivision by-laws
- Site-servicing standards (i.e. roads, sidewalks, curbs, easements)

1.2 Project Methodology

The Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association (GMHBA) formed a steering committee to review and modify regulations governing land development.

The committee comprised representatives of organizations that have a key stake in development standards. The committee included representatives of the GMHBA, the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission (GMPDC), the City of Moncton, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Atlantic Peoples' Housing, and Bryan McNamara and Associates.

After reviewing the existing standards and approval process, the project team analyzed approaches to reducing land development standards and estimated cost savings associated with each of the proposed options.

An engineering consultant was hired as a project coordinator. He was responsible for researching and analyzing present practices and by-laws in Moncton and in other municipalities. He conducted several interviews with local home builders, developers, City engineering staff and regional planning staff to determine their concerns and document ideas on modifying the development standards.

The consultant drafted a report based on the findings, including recommendations on changes to the standards and projected cost savings. The steering committee reviewed the report and approved the final version. The findings were subsequently presented to GMHBA members at one of its meetings.

A liaison committee was formed, following completion of the report, to prepare a list of the recommendations for

approval by City Council. The first meeting of the committee took place in September 1993.

1.3 Project History

In early 1991, some of the project participants came together to examine opportunities to make housing more affordable. Their objective was to review and modify the planning process, and they began looking for sources of funding. They invited an A•C•T Program staff member to present information on the program and to discuss which of their ideas would meet A•C•T objectives. A few months later, the GMHBA and CMHC met with Atlantic Peoples'

Housing to discuss means of increasing housing affordability. In May 1991, the City of Moncton was awarded an A•C•T grant, and the steering committee proceeded with initiating the project and hiring the engineering consultant.

During the last few years in Moncton, serviced land prices have risen while land costs have decreased. This project has allowed the Home Builders' Association to continue its proactive role in promoting housing affordability. We expect that some of the alternative development standards identified by the Committee will be incorporated into the City of Moncton's new Municipal Development Plan and revised by-laws.

*—Gilbert Leblanc, President
Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association*

2.0 PROJECT RESULTS

Assigning accurate cost savings to the following recommended regulatory changes would have required extensive research beyond the scope of the project. Some recommendations are based on pilot studies undertaken by large municipalities (e.g. the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton) and others are based on cost savings achieved by smaller municipalities.

The project results are presented below in the following format: present situation; committee recommendation; cost savings and benefits; and short-term results, if applicable.

2.1 Municipal Regulation Revision

2.1.1 Lot Size, Frontage and Setbacks

Lot Size

The current minimum lot size is 18 m x 30.5 m (60 ft x 100 ft), except for townhouses. Variance approvals are required for smaller lots, which is an awkward and time consuming process.

The committee identified for further consideration a drop in standard lot size to as low as 8 m x 23 m (26 ft x 75 ft) for single-family dwellings. Developers should be given the flexibility to vary lot sizes to allow for variety, ensure privacy and optimize land use. A reduced lot size for townhouses was also proposed.

Increasing density would allow raw land, servicing and maintenance costs to be spread over a larger number of units and would improve returns on investment. If minimum lot size is decreased from 18 m x 30.5 m (60 ft x

100 ft) to 8 m x 23 m (26 ft x 75 ft), the potential number of lots per street length would more than double. By constructing smaller dwellings, additional cost savings may be realized.

To date, home builders have been successful in obtaining the right to build semi-detached units on 10.5 m x 30.5 m lots (35 ft x 100 ft) (per side).

Frontage

Present sideyard clearance calls for a minimum clearance of 2.4 m (8 ft) on one side of the building and 1.2 m (4 ft) on the other. There appears to be no reason for the 2.5 m clearance regulation, other than to access the backyard.

The committee agreed that a “zero lot line,” which would allow 3 m (10 ft) on one side and zero clearance on the other side, is one option that would reduce front footage. This proposal could also be extended to allow for 2.4 m (8 ft) on one side and zero on the other.

Reduction of frontages will allow smaller lots and encourage infill development where construction has otherwise not been permitted.

Setbacks

The City of Moncton’s present minimum setback requirement is 7.5 m (25 ft). The committee proposed reducing the minimum to 3 m (10 ft).

As well as permitting more efficient land use, a reduced door-to-door separation would encourage more intimate neighbourhoods. A mixture of building designs and a variety of front

setbacks could be used to enhance the streetscape. Reduced setbacks permit construction on smaller lots and can encourage infill development.

The City recently amended the minimum setback requirement from 7.5 m to 4.5 m (25 ft to 15 ft) for some zones.

Interior Lots

Interior or “flag” lots² were currently not accepted.

The committee proposed that such lots be permitted, to further reduce servicing costs and land needed for roads. Backyards containing a second unit would be larger. The committee decided that backyard size requirements could be determined at a later date, following approval in principle by City Council.

Acceptance of interior or flag lots—when used in conjunction with the above-mentioned lot sizes, frontages and setbacks—can reduce land requirements by two-thirds. The number of dwellings per area triples, resulting in more efficient land servicing.

Amendments to the subdivision by-law to permit interior or flag lots were also under consideration.

² An interior or “flag” lot is one wherein a large lot is broken into two with two houses constructed on it, one behind the other, if need be sharing a common driveway. In any case the frontage must give necessary access to the rear lot.

2.1.2 Land for Public Use

Currently, the subdivision by-law provides that 10 percent of the area being developed must be set aside by the developer for public purposes. Other municipalities provide for less.

The committee proposed that this requirement be reduced to eight percent and that the municipal requirement to manage these lands (or the funds collected) be scrutinized to ensure local residents receive the benefits allocated to them. The committee also proposed that the GMPDC be given the authority to assess, on an individual basis, the proportion of land and funds to be provided by the developer (e.g. developer provides five percent of the appraised value in land and three percent in cash).

Reduction of land for public use would either reduce the raw land cost associated with each unit by two percent or increase the amount of land for residential units by two percent.

2.1.3 Plans for Undeveloped Land

Presently, developers are required to construct roads such that they can be used as either collector or arterial roads. There are large tracts of undeveloped land within the city limits that require planning for major arterial and collector roads.

The committee proposed that the revised zoning by-law stipulate exactly where arterial and collector roads should be located.

This would permit developers to build crescents and cul-de-sacs without the worry that they could eventually become collector or arterial roads. Servicing costs would be reduced because pavement widths would be reduced.

Collector road design standards and location are currently under review by the City, and it is expected that the new standards and locations will be available within the next year. The City is reducing its road allowance requirement for collector roads from 30.5 m to 21.5 m (100 ft to 70 ft).

2.1.4 Zoning

Residential zoning in Moncton, other than land zoned for mobile homes and rural areas, is divided into four densities:

- R-1—Single-family
- R-2—Double-family
- R-3—Single-family, double-family, or up to 12-family building
- R-4—Single-family, double-family, or more than 12-family building

Presently, the zoning by-law does not allow cluster development³ within an R-3 or R-4 lot; however, the City is considering cluster development for some situations. This would permit a combination of single-family dwellings, duplexes and/or multiple-unit dwellings on an R-3 or R-4 zoned lot, thus

³ A development design technique that locates buildings in limited areas on a site to allow the remaining land to be used for a variety of open-space purposes. The by-law does not permit clustering in any of the residential zones.

optimizing land use and varying densities.

The committee proposed that the GMPDC encourage cluster development by providing developers and builders with information about their benefits.

2.2 Engineering Standards Revision

The committee proposed several revisions to engineering standards, which fall into one of two categories: visible and non-visible.

2.2.1 Visible Infrastructure

Mountable Curbs

The Engineering Department recently approved the installation of rounded or “mountable” curbs for local streets and cul-de-sacs in new subdivisions.

The committee proposed encouraging the installation of mountable curbs. It recognized, however, that mountable curbs could lead to inappropriate driveway widths, increase curb maintenance costs and, in the case of cars parked in driveways, splashing by cleaning equipment. The committee was confident, though, that municipal staff would find solutions to these problems.

Mountable curbs allow flexibility in the placement of driveways, since one profile is used the entire length of the street, thereby eliminating cut-out operations if driveway locations cannot be predetermined. Present municipal estimates indicate that curb cut-outs for driveways cost approximately \$190 per cut-out. The

use of mountable curbs completely eliminates this cost. Mountable curbs will also reduce concrete requirements by approximately 25 percent.

Elimination of Curbs

The committee proposed that curbs should not be eliminated because lack of curbs can lead to storm water run-off and snow-clearing problems.

Pavement Width

The present standard for face-to-face curb width is 10 m (32 ft). This provides 3 m (10 ft) for parking on one side of the road and two travel lanes each 3.4 m (11 ft) in width. There are presently no exceptions, even for small cul-de-sacs where street parking may not be in great demand. The Engineering Department will consider revising pavement width standards, but it is concerned that the location of arterial and collector roads must be planned to avoid minor streets becoming future collector routes.

The committee proposed that in areas where major collector and arterial roads have already been planned or constructed, or where development agreements are in place, pavement widths on crescents and small cul-de-sacs be reduced to as low as 8.5 m (28 ft).

Present municipal estimates indicate that asphalt for a 10-metre wide street (32 ft) costs \$42 per linear foot. When pavement widths are reduced from 10 m to 8.5 m (from 32 ft to 28 ft) for cul-de-sacs a savings of approximately 10 percent is possible.

Right-of-way

Current right-of-way requirements are:

- Property line to property line (collectors)—20 m (66 ft)
- Property line to property line (locals)—18 m (60 ft)
- Property line to property line (courts, etc.)—17 m (56 ft)

Right-of-way reductions have been accomplished by eliminating sidewalks on one or both sides of a street. Traffic-loading studies have helped to determine minimum right of way standards. These changes will have a “nesting” affect on the local community. The street becomes a shared space for cars and pedestrians, speeding is discouraged, and the neighbourhood becomes safer and more intimate.

The committee proposed further right-of-way reductions on small courts and crescents to 15 m (50 ft), by reducing street widths as well as eliminating sidewalks. This would provide more land and permit an increase in either lot sizes or the number of lots.

Snow Removal

Where smaller street widths or courts and small crescents are employed, snow removal costs increase. The committee concluded, though, that the advantages of revising the standards outweigh this disadvantage and proposed that engineers seek to pioneer new methods of curb maintenance and street cleaning for narrower streets.

2.2.2 Non-Visible Infrastructure

Manhole Spacing

The present standard for manhole spacing is 152.5 m (500 ft), but modern cleaning equipment can allow it to be extended to 600 ft (183 m). To facilitate maintenance of catchbasins, the City's Engineering Department requires that catchbasins connect with the storm water sewers at a manhole. Therefore, in certain areas manhole spacing is determined by catchbasin spacing.

The committee proposed that manhole spacing (and catchbasins) be increased to 183 m (600 ft) where possible.

Present municipal estimates cost manholes at approximately \$2,500 each. Research indicates that 10 percent of the cost of manholes per foot of road can be saved by increasing the manhole spacing from 152.5 m to 183 m (500 ft to 600 ft).⁴

Fire Hydrants

The present standard for hydrant spacing is based on a 61-metre radius (200 ft), to allow safe fire coverage. According to the Insurance Company of Canada, insurance rates do not increase until a dwelling is located more than 305 m (1000 ft) away from a hydrant with a pumper connection. The required spacing of 122 m (400 ft) between hydrants does not appear to provide any advantage over a spacing of 610 m (2000 ft).

⁴ Housing & Urban Development Association of Canada, *Comparative Subdivision Servicing Study*, (Ottawa: 1979).

The committee proposed that the City of Moncton discuss with fire underwriters the possibility of increasing spacing between fire hydrants in order to evaluate cost savings.

A specific recommendation on spacing was not developed. However, municipal estimates indicate a savings of \$2,500 for each hydrant eliminated.

Curved Sewer Pipes

The committee proposed that spacing between manholes be increased to the maximum, even on curved streets by slightly deflecting straight pipes where they are joined and/or by using curved pipes.

Curved sewer pipes will facilitate maximum spacing between manholes, thereby contributing to the above-mentioned savings.

Storm Water Design

Present standards require the City to use a separate storm water system, which the committee proposed not be changed.

Service Trenching

The present standards require that each housing unit be serviced by one trench that carries water, sewer and storm water lines. The standards also require three trenches under roadways to carry the three main lines (sanitary, storm and water). The trench for sanitary lines is located in the centre of the road, with a trench on either side at a distance of 3 m (10 ft) for the other two lines.

The committee proposed that a single trench be used between lots, allowing two lots to share one trench. It also proposed narrowing the offset requirements between sewer and water mains to provide one trench for all three mains under roadways.

Present municipal estimates provide that trenching from main to property line costs \$3,000 per lot. By allowing common trenches between two or more lots (to carry individual service lines), a 16 percent cost saving can be realized. This figure could be improved significantly where interior or “flag” lots are present.

Street construction to existing standards (excluding asphalt, curb and gutter) costs \$250 per linear foot (\$820 per linear metre). A single trench carrying all three main service lines would reduce costs, although no projected cost savings data is available.

Catchbasins

Present standards require the installation of a catchbasin and a sluicelox.⁵ Each of the units are on either side of the curb (side of the road). The sluicelox is between the curb and the road and the catchbasin is between the curb and the sidewalk.

The committee proposed that the sluicelox be eliminated and that a catchbasin be placed where the sluicelox was originally located.

⁵ Sluiceloxes and catchbasins are very similar, except sluiceloxes are smaller.

Current municipal estimates for sluiceloxes were \$400 per unit. The cost savings associated with relocating the catchbasin, thus eliminating the sluicelox, cannot be quantified but is considered worthwhile.

2.3 General

2.3.1 Approval Process

Presently, the only option for builders wishing to incorporate some or all of these innovative zoning options is through a variance. The approval process for a variance is as follows:

- An application form describing the variance is completed and submitted.
- The application is computerized and a letter is sent to the applicant indicating the time of the next variance meeting.
- Variances are published in the local paper.
- City planners visit the site.
- The variance is discussed at a monthly GMPDC meeting.
- A judgement ruling is made.

Implementation of the committee’s recommendations to modify land development standards will reduce the time and effort required to obtain permits, because variances will no longer be required.

2.3.2 *Development Agreements*

The Zoning By-law for the City of Moncton has a provision for an Integrated Development Zone.⁶ Although this has some similarity to a development agreement it is, according to a consensus of those who work with it, complicated and ineffective.

The committee proposed that development agreements similar to those used by Nova Scotia municipalities should replace the Integrated Development Zone. This change would involve a lengthy process (two to three years) that would include a change in the provincial Community Planning Act.⁷

Recently, the City of Moncton recommended to the Six Cities Association and the province that New Brunswick develop agreements similar to those used in Nova Scotia. This is currently under review.

2.3.3 *Pilot Studies*

The committee recognized the importance of determining maximum cost effectiveness when making changes to zoning and or subdivision by-laws. Although information is available from other regions, local pilot studies that take into account such things as local

⁶ An Integrated Development Zone fundamentally requires that there be a mix of uses that cannot be pre-designated. Therefore Integrated Development Zones will always require a plan amendment and rezoning.

⁷ A recommendation is submitted from Council to the Municipal Branch of the provincial government, who then submit a recommendation to Cabinet for decision.

demographics, existing regulations and environmental conditions are considered to be the most convincing.

2.3.4 *Community Awareness*

Public Awareness Campaign

There has been considerable debate over affordable housing in the Moncton area. The issue has become somewhat of a battle between developers who wish to keep costs under control and local residents who may view reduced standards with suspicion. Currently, there is no major public awareness campaign to educate the public in the area of affordable housing.

The committee proposed that a campaign be undertaken to inform and educate contractors, developers and the general public. Some options include brochures, mall displays, press releases, meetings and seminars.

2.3.5 *Regulatory Liaison Committee*

The committee proposed the formation of a permanent liaison committee to be comprised of City staff (planners, engineers and work crews), lobbyist and special interest groups, and developers, builders and contractors. The mission of the group would be to continue improving the affordability and variety of housing available through strengthened communication, deeper understanding and the collective efforts of all the parties involved.

The liaison committee has been formed. It comprises developers, builders, a building supplier, the City building

inspector, a property appraiser and a CMHC representative. The role of the liaison committee is to provide technical support to City Council. The first meeting of the liaison committee was scheduled for the fall of 1993.

One of the first steps was to prepare a final list of the steering committee's recommendations for approval by Council. It was anticipated that this would be ready within one year for presentation to Council and that the recommendations would be submitted in conjunction with the preparation of Moncton's Municipal Development Plan and by-laws.

3.0 THE COMMUNITY AND THE KEY PLAYERS

3.1 Moncton, New Brunswick

Moncton is located within the Greater Moncton Planning District. According to the 1991 Statistics Canada Census data, the population in the district was approximately 110,000, with Moncton representing approximately 54,000 of that total. Moncton's annual growth rate is 1.2 percent, which places the municipality below the Canadian average. For the entire district, the rate is slightly higher at approximately two percent. Population projections indicate that by the year 1998 Moncton's population will be approximately 58,703.

There is an outward migration to unincorporated areas and areas outside of the district. Overall household income has not been increasing at the rate of inflation, and there is a high level of unemployment in the municipality (13 percent of all households receive social assistance). According to a CMHC release, the average price of a home in Moncton in the second quarter of 1992 was up 8.1 percent from the second quarter of 1991. According to July 1993 MLS listings, the weighted median house price in Moncton was \$118,000 and the average house price was \$99,621.

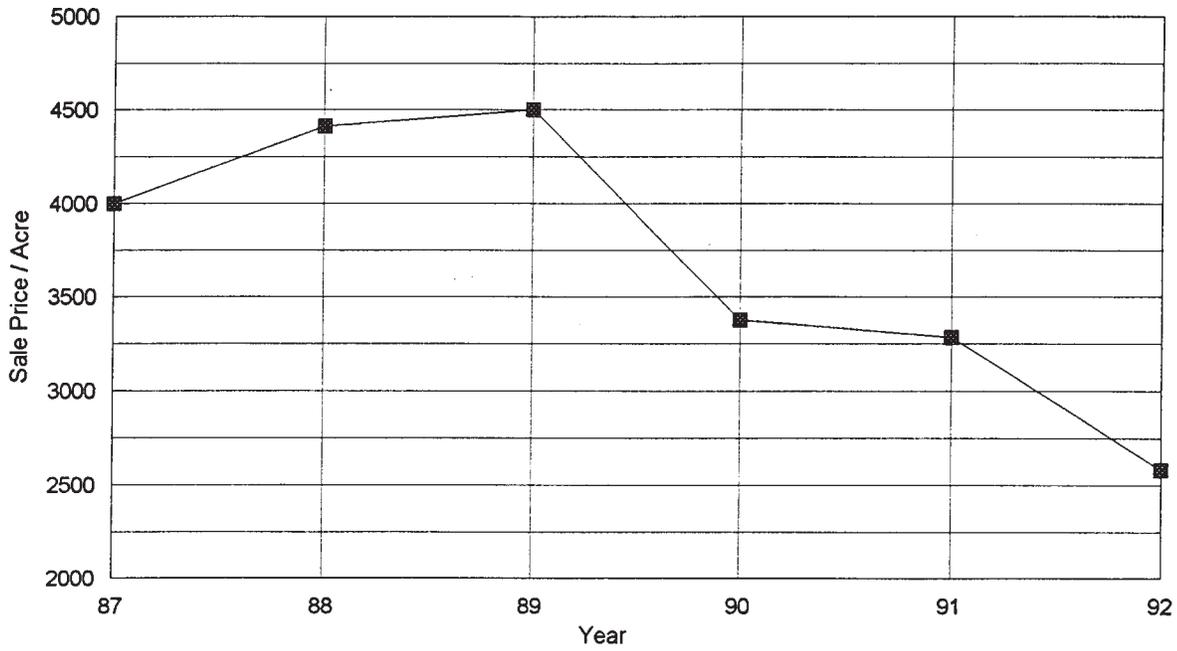
The type of development within the municipality has been primarily single-family dwellings. City building permit statistics indicate that between 1988 and 1992 the number of housing starts was 1220. Between 1988 and 1992, the number of major variances⁸ issued by the GMPDC for Moncton was 285.

A recent housing affordability background report, published by the Mortgage Insurance Company of Canada (MICC), stated that Moncton contains a relatively high proportion of singles, single parent families and other "small household" residents. It states that the City should expect higher demand for smaller units on smaller lots as baby boomers age, family size drops and the number of non-family households increases.

The cost of serviced land is increasing. According to a study undertaken by a Moncton consulting firm (Roger Beckwith, Francis Leblanc & Associates), Moncton's raw land prices have decreased about 35 percent over the past five years, while serviced land selling prices have increased by almost 50 percent over the past six years (see figures 1 and 2).

⁸ The Community Planning Act does not distinguish between major and minor variances but does allow the local permit officer to issue some variances that are of a minor nature (e.g. 51 cm, or 20 in., under the allowable setback).

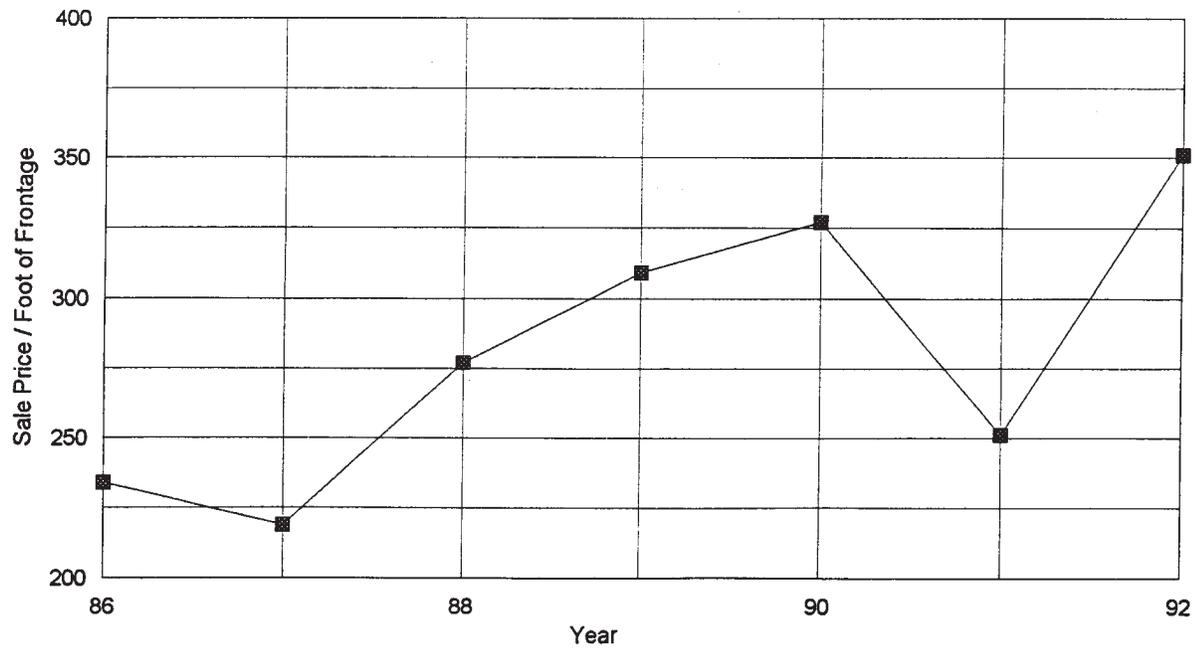
Figure 1. Raw Land Selling Price



Raw land selling prices in Moncton dropped by 35 percent from 1987 to 1992.

Source: McNamara, *Affordability and Choice Through Regulatory Reform*, p. 3.

Figure 2. Serviced Land Selling Price



Serviced land selling price increased almost 50 percent from 1986 to 1992.

Source: McNamara, *Affordability and Choice Through Regulatory Reform*, p. 3.

Land presently available for subdivision development is on the outskirts of the municipality. Existing subdivided lots are for the upscale market, with frontages of approximately 24.5 m to 27.5 m (80 ft to 90 ft). Some vacant small lots exist within Moncton, but present standards discourage infill development because the lots tend to be too small to accommodate side yard requirements and minimum lot sizes. Figure 3 presents a grid layout of the city and figure 4 shows one of the underdeveloped areas that has been rezoned.⁹

3.2 The Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association

The role of the GMHBA on the project team was to act as the coordinating agency of the project. It brought together the key players, the City and the builders. GMHBA also hired the project consultant and monitored and directed, with the assistance of the steering committee, the progress of the project.

GMHBA initiated this project because the Association acts as an informal liaison between Commission planners and engineers and the private development industry. It has also been relatively active in its attempt to bring together, on a

regular basis, key players to develop ways to reduce the cost of housing development.

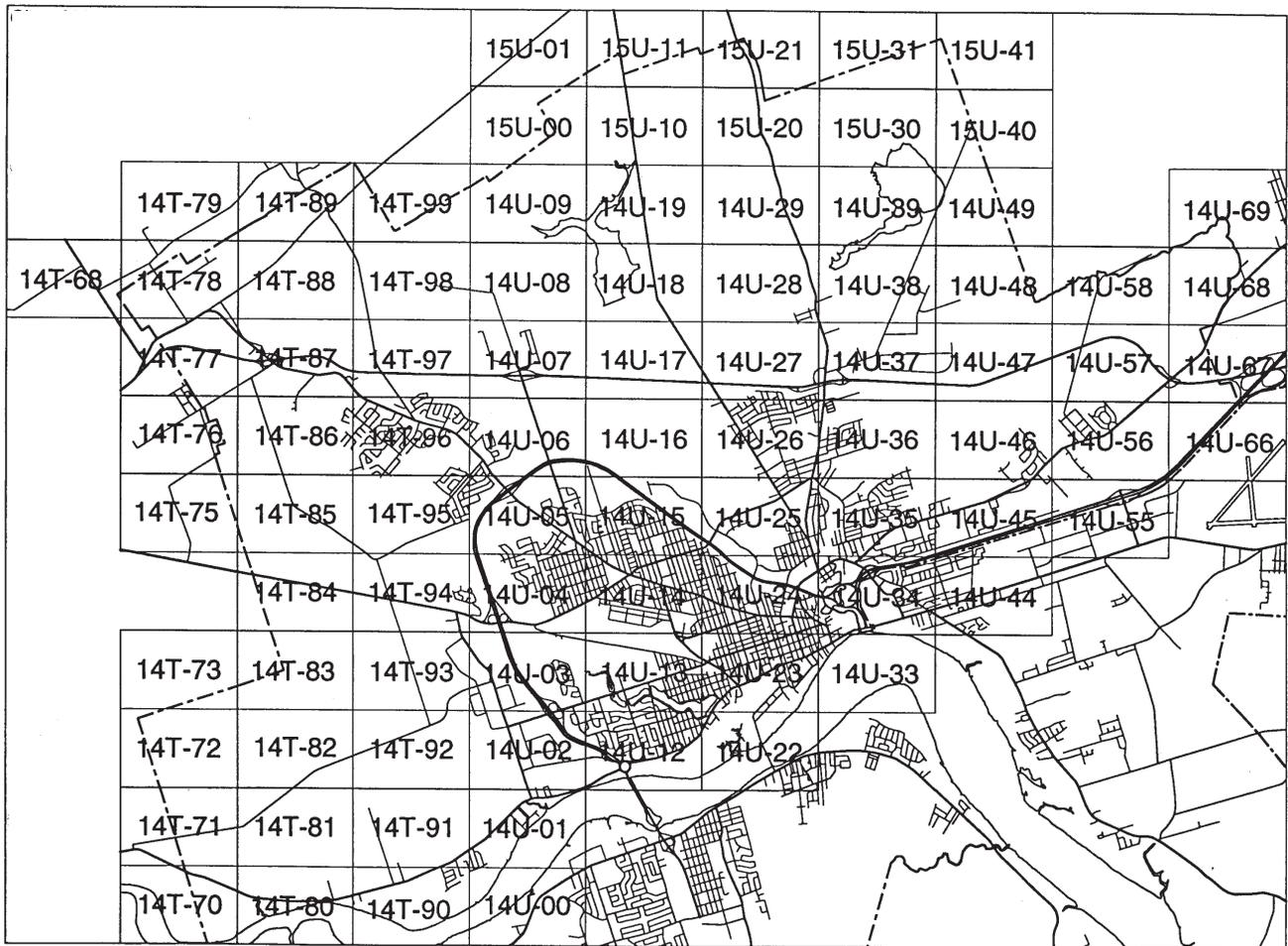
Home builders were interested in participating in the project because of the significant increase in the costs of housing in Moncton, particularly for serviced land, and the pressure from consumers to reduce the costs of new housing. In addition, in recent years the City of Moncton has been transferring the cost of installing services from the City to the developer. As land at the periphery of the city is developed, the builders want more choice in the way lots are sized and services are installed; they want to remove the regulatory obstacles to allow them to respond to the demand for smaller and more affordable housing and to reduce their costs of installing services.

It is crucial that the project be undertaken for industry rather than personal gain. Long-term benefits, and its viability, must be placed before short-term gain. It must not appear that the leader has a personal stake in the project, otherwise key players may be discouraged from participating. If the key players do not participate, the project will be stalled.

*—Gilbert Leblanc, President
Greater Moncton Home Builders' Association*

⁹ R-2 Zones—Single- and two-family residential
R-3 Zones—Single-family, two-family and up to 12-family multiple residential
R-4 Zones—Single-family, two-family and multiple residential
P and I Zones—Parks and institutions

Figure 3. City of Moncton Index Map



3.3 The Greater Moncton Planning District Commission

The GMPDC is one of seven planning commissions in the province of New Brunswick. It has 15 employees, including two accredited planners and two planners in training.

The role of the GMPDC on the project team was to comment on the proposed modifications to the subdivision and zoning by-laws. It also gathered and provided to the project coordinator information on development standards in other Canadian municipalities.

It was crucial that the GMPDC participate on the project because of its role in the formulation and application of development standards.

The GMPDC acts as an advisory body to the three area municipalities (Dieppe, Riverview and Moncton) and two unincorporated districts (Albert and Westmorland Counties), and provides planning services to each of these areas under its jurisdiction.

The City of Moncton is responsible for reviewing all applications as they relate to its Building By-law and the National Building Code (this includes technical review and assistance for the permit applications). All other review procedures (i.e. zoning, subdivisions and variances) are handled by the GMPDC. Building permits are issued by the City Building Inspection department in conjunction with the GMPDC (i.e. two signatories on the permit).

The successful completion of a project requires a leader with vision to ensure the project continues even when faced with obstacles.

—Ed Curran

Greater Moncton Planning District Commission

About half of the permit applications processed by the GMPDC are received from the City of Moncton.

The GMPDC was interested in this project because it was preparing a new Municipal Development Plan for Moncton and revising the City of Moncton's by-laws. The GMPDC also received an A•C•T grant to streamline the approval process for areas under its jurisdiction. The City of Moncton's A•C•T project complements the GMPDC's streamlining efforts as it identified ways to reduce the time required to issue permits.

3.4 The City of Moncton

The City of Moncton has approximately 735 permanent staff. Presently it has no planning department, and planning services are provided by the GMPDC. The City of Moncton was represented on the steering committee by its engineering department (and indirectly by the GMPDC).

It was important that the City of Moncton be involved because of its role in development standards. The engineering department and City Council controls the approval and development process for new public streets (with advice from the GMPDC). City Council must also approve and adopt new development standards before they can be applied.

By participating in the project, the City of Moncton could ensure that its new Municipal Development Plan and by-laws encouraged development of housing that would meet market demand. It was also interested in examining ways to reduce costs by eliminating outdated regulations.

It has been many years since a serious review of the City's development standards has taken place and the City will be reviewing the recommendations of this project with a view to adopting those that result in overall cost savings.

*—Al Cunningham
Engineering Department, City of Moncton*

4.0 REGULATORY REFORM INITIATIVES AND IMPACT ON HOUSING COST, CHOICE AND QUALITY

The project identified potential modifications to land development standards, particularly those relating to zoning, subdivision development and site servicing, that can contribute to reducing the cost of housing. Excessive and outdated land development standards can add unnecessarily to housing costs. By developing land development standards suited to the needs of moderate income households, the project team has aimed to ensure that land development costs do not restrict housing affordability, choice or quality.

Builders are discouraged from using standards other than those presently in place, because of the time and effort required to obtain approval of variances. Modification of the regulations will allow builders to build the type of housing that people want to live in and will streamline the approval process by eliminating the requirement for variances.

I believe that one of the most significant results of this project is that the City has begun to examine its development standards. It was particularly important that the project was a joint initiative, because the results were not biased--it was not just the home builders telling the City what should be changed.

*—Bob Steeves, President
Valhalla Estates Limited*

In April 1995, the Council of Riverview gave third and final reading to the new municipal development plan and zoning by-law for one of the three municipalities within the GMPDC. Although the municipality is still required to identify minimums such as lot size and frontages, the process has now incorporated more

flexible standards subject to the developer meeting certain terms and conditions.

For example, although the minimum standard for frontages in some developed areas remains at 18 m (60 ft), in new undeveloped areas, 15-m (50-ft) minimum standards for frontages have been introduced. In addition, setbacks have been reduced to 4.5 m (15 ft) in some areas and 6 m (20 ft) in other areas. Frontages have been reduced to 15 m (50 ft) for interior lots.

Consideration will be given to the use of interior lots or other innovative housing designs in areas that are opening up for development and where infill possibilities have been identified. A developer must submit a generalized area development plan whereby the GMPDC may set terms and conditions governing such standards as lot size, frontage, building height and lot coverage. This provides developers with more flexibility which is crucial to the future economic development of the community and may also result in time reductions for approvals. It appears likely that the same approach will be adopted for the other two municipalities within the GMPDC (Dieppe and Moncton).

The GMPDC will be examining development standards related to the subdivision of undeveloped land. Consideration will be given to reducing right of ways, pavement widths, curb and gutter requirements and above-ground standards. In addition, considerations for innovative ways for acquisition and protection of lands for public purposes will be examined.

The City of Moncton is currently reviewing requests for changes to right-of-way standards on an individual basis, although the general standards remain the same. The City is re-examining its use of mountable curbs because of concerns arising from maintenance requirements, people driving over the curbs and onto lawns, and the overall cost-effectiveness.

There have also been some changes with respect to non-visible infrastructure requirements. The City now allows a maximum of 183 m (600 ft) between manholes, as recommended by the project steering committee. The City has allowed curved sewer pipes in the past and will continue to allow them where possible. Single trenches may now be used to carry the three main lines, rather than having three individual trenches, pending approval of proposals on an individual basis. In addition, the City will allow a

single trench to be used for semi-detached lots, and there is a strong possibility that single trenches may be permitted between two single-family houses. Finally, the City has eliminated the requirement for sluiceboxes where possible.

The project has fostered and will continue to foster cooperation and coordination of effort between the home-building industry and the municipal government, each of which has valuable experience to bring to bear on the development of more responsive land development standards.

The steering committee did not carry out its original intention to review the development application process to identify opportunities for reducing housing costs. It is intended, however, that the GMPDC will carry out this review in its analysis of the approvals process within the mandate of its own A•C•T-funded project.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 Municipal Regulations

- 1.1 Reduce standard lot size to 8 m x 23 m (26 ft x 75 ft) for single family houses and reduce minimum lot size for townhouses (size not stated).
- 1.2 Use “zero lot line” on one side and 2.4 m to 3 m (8 ft to 10 ft) on the other side.
- 1.3 Reduce setback from 7.5 m to 3 m (25 ft to 10 ft).
- 1.4 Accept interior or flag lots (backyards containing the second unit would be larger).
- 1.5 Reduce the proportion of land that the developer must set aside for public uses (or financial equivalent) from 10 percent to eight percent and scrutinize how it is used to benefit local residents.
- 1.6 Provide flexibility in zoning by-laws for undeveloped tracts of land.
- 1.7 Encourage cluster development by educating developers and builders about benefits.

2.0 Engineering Standards

2.1 *Visible Infrastructure*

- 2.1.1 Encourage use of mountable curbs and find solutions to its negative by-products such as inappropriate driveway widths, increased maintenance costs, and splashing of cars.
- 2.1.2 Do not eliminate curbs.
- 2.1.3 Reduce road widths for crescents or cul-de-sacs in areas where major arterial or collector roads have already been planned or built or where development agreements are in place.
- 2.1.4 Reduce rights of way on small courts to as low as 15 m (50 ft) by reducing street widths as well as eliminating sidewalks.

2.2 *Non-Visible Infrastructure*

- 2.2.1 Increase manhole spacing from 152.5 m to 183 m (500 ft to 600 ft) where possible.
- 2.2.2 Determine possibility of increasing the space between fire hydrants from 122 m (400 ft) to the maximum of 610 m (2000 ft).
- 2.2.3 Increase space between manholes to the maximum by either using curved pipes or deflecting slightly each straight pipe where they are joined.
- 2.2.4 Continue with enclosed storm water design instead of road side ditches.

- 2.2.5 Use a single trench (between lots) to service two housing units rather than one trench for each housing unit.
- 2.2.6 Eliminate the use of the sluicelox and place the catchbasin where the sluicelox was originally located.

3.0 General

- 3.1 Streamline approval process by eliminating need for variances by adopting proposed by-law revisions.
- 3.2 Replace Integrated Development Zones with Development Agreements.
- 3.3 Undertake an affordable housing campaign to educate contractors, developers and the general public.
- 3.4 Establish a liaison committee comprising City employees, public interest groups and builders to improve housing affordability and choice.