



Building Better Homes and Communities

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Affordability and Choice Today

ACT Solutions

Evaluation Guidelines for Residential Development Central Saanich, BC

Issue

A *Housing Needs Assessment* study, undertaken in Central Saanich in 2000, indicated that 40 per cent of renters and 15 per cent of owners were spending more than 30 per cent of household income on housing. The following gaps were identified:

- ❑ affordable housing for young emerging families;
- ❑ new rental housing; and
- ❑ appropriately designed housing for independent seniors wishing to remain in the community.

The District of Central Saanich's Official Community Plan defines affordable housing as requiring 30 per cent or less of a household's gross income for rent or mortgage plus taxes. In Central Saanich, affordable housing is anything that costs less than \$200,000.

Today, there is a need for greater reliance on both the non-profit and the private sectors to assist in providing lower cost housing options, with minimal or no funding from senior levels of government.

Plan

The District anticipated that evaluation guidelines could be developed to encourage lower cost housing by providing a consistent rationale and approach for evaluating applications for residential development. The guidelines would encourage innovative housing design and development responsive to the three gaps.

Project team

District of Central Saanich
Tidman Construction Ltd.
Community Social Planning
Council of Greater Victoria
Community representative
Advisory Planning Commission,
Central Saanich
BC Ministry of Community,
Aboriginal and Women's Services
Urban Aspects Consulting Group
Ltd.

The project team also consulted with builders, non-profit housing providers, health care providers and community residents.



Central Saanich's guidelines facilitate the development of infill housing like this one in a neighbourhood zoned for single-family dwellings.

Source: District of Central Saanich

Results

The project team embarked on a detailed investigation of evaluation guidelines. After studying related documents from other jurisdictions in Canada, they prepared a draft of the guidelines and checklist based on their understanding of Central Saanich's needs.

They then conducted a workshop, attended by more than 50 people, and a series of nine interviews using the draft guidelines and checklist as a starting point. Participants included:

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Program Partners:



- ❑ builders and developers, both large and small;
- ❑ employers of low-income workers; and
- ❑ non-profit housing providers, health care workers and community representatives

The team received excellent feedback from the workshop and the interviews, prompting revisions to the draft. An open house attended by 20 people also garnered a positive response and resulted in even further revisions to the draft. In March 2003 the District's planning department presented the Evaluation Guidelines and the Checklist to Council, which endorsed the use of these documents.

The guidelines are easy to follow and spell out what is and is not encouraged in terms of density, tenure types, access to services and achieving community acceptance. Non-profit housing, seniors housing, guaranteed rental housing and designs that fit well with the existing character of the neighbourhood are encouraged. Housing types incompatible with existing neighbourhoods, inadequate parking and services that entail a significant public expense are not encouraged.

The checklist follows the lead of the guidelines and is quite specific. Questions are asked about innovative designs, access to services, possible impact on neighbourhood services and what type of consultation was done within the neighbourhood. Following suggestions made at the open house, the checklist is worded in a non-judgmental manner, using category headings ranging from "encouraged" and "acceptable" to "issues of concern" when describing housing characteristics.

Applications are filled out in consultation with District of Central Saanich staff, yet the plain wording of the guidelines and checklist make them accessible to any applicant. District of Central Saanich Advisory Planning Committee Chairman Peter Parsons said there are significant time savings because applicants are able to figure out the guidelines themselves.

"The Evaluation Guidelines and Checklist are referred to quite often at the Advisory Planning Committee," Parsons said. "People are using them, which I think is the best thing that can be said about their effectiveness."

Related reports

Evaluation Guidelines and Checklist (Planning Department, District of Central Saanich)

Interim Report: Background Discussion Paper (District of Central Saanich, December 2002)

Final Report: Background Discussion Paper (District of Central Saanich, March 2003)

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

Contact

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Brentwood House, a seniors' assisted living residence, is another example of much-needed housing facilitated by Central Saanich's Evaluation Guidelines and Checklist.

Source: District of Central Saanich

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