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Residential Development Manual Benefits Developers and Area Municipalities Leamington, Ontario

Issue

The amalgamation of the former Ontario Town of Leamington with the Township of Mersea left the new Municipality of Leamington with two sets of bylaws and policy documents governing development, including residential.

Plan

The municipality set out to review and rationalize the various policies and regulations, clarify them and consolidate them into a single manual. Leamington anticipated a clearly documented process would aid developers in submitting quality development applications. This in turn would reduce the time spent by developers and municipal staff at the approvals stage.

The project would include consultation with the general public and with the development community to review a draft manual. There would also be follow-up evaluation to assess the impact on internal processes and customer service and to identify areas for additional improvement.

Project team

Dillon Construction
Jordan Homes
Municipality of Leamington
Development Services
Department
MPP Essex-Kent
Essex County Housing Authority
Community representatives

Results

With input from the project team, municipal departments and the public, Leamington produced a development manual in 2001.

The new manual lays out all the steps, specifications, servicing requirements, approvals (municipal and other) and agreements that must be followed or obtained before work can begin. Flow charts showing the process for different types of applications are part of the document along with sample drawings, sample agreements, standards, criteria, design sheets and municipal building bylaws.

Tracey Pillon-Abbs, a planner in Leamington's Department of

Developers tell municipal staff that the new manual is saving them money and those savings get passed on to homebuyers.

Development Services, said the new procedures have gone over well with both developers and municipal planning staff.

"The developers and builders are now more familiar with the regulations and have a clearer picture of the processes required to obtain approvals," she said. "The guidelines and expectations are all there in writing and this leads to much improved communications between developers and our staff."

"There have been about six subdivisions that have either been approved or for which approval has been sought since we began using the manual. We provided each developer with a copy of the manual at the pre-consultation

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phase and we have seen notable improvements in their applications.

They now contain the types of details we need and they have a uniform look with respect to measurements, legends, data and specifications.”

Better quality applications require fewer revisions and that results in faster turnarounds, she said.

Although the municipality has not compiled any data on turn-around times, Ms. Pillon-Abbs said developers tell municipal staff that the new manual is saving them money and those savings get passed on to homebuyers.

On the municipality’s side of the equation, staff find the manual helps them work more efficiently. For one thing, it is entirely digitized so the whole document or relevant sections can be sent to clients via e-mail as well as by traditional methods such as fax. Greater standardization in how developers organize the information in their applications also aids the approval process.

“We also use the manual as an educational tool with builders and developers, particularly any who are new to our municipality,” said Ms. Pillon-Abbs. “This in turn promotes better compliance with engineering, planning and building regulations.”

Ms. Pillon-Abbs said other area municipalities have used the Leamington manual as a template for their own. Local developers, who have projects in various locations in that part of Ontario, appreciate the growing degree of standardization that arises from having municipal development manuals based on a common template.

Related document

Municipality of Leamington Development Manual (Municipality of Leamington Department of Development Services)

The manual is available from Leamington.

Contact

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