NEW PROCESS FOR PERMIT INSPECTIONS

Kathy McCormick, Calgary Herald

Deep Shergill, right, of the Canadian Home Builders' Association — Calgary Region, presents a plaque to David Watson of the City of Calgary's planning, development and assessment department.

Industry and city win national award

KATHY McCORMICK
CALGARY HERALD

It's not always them against us when it comes to the city's administration and residential builders in Calgary.

A successful collaborative effort between the two groups has resulted in an award-winning new process for permit inspections for single-family homes.

The city's building regulations department and the Canadian Home Builders' Association — Calgary Region are the recent winners of a national award for working together to form an innovative single construction permit process.

The process is intended to reduce site inspections to avoid overlapping visits, or having to return to the site several times for the same issue.

The new system recently took a gold medal award at the Canadian Information Productivity Awards in Toronto.

"We are very proud of what we have achieved," says David Price, manager of building regulations with the City of Calgary. "This has been a very successful joint effort with real and positive results, and we continue to see benefits."

Throughout the construction of a new home, city staff were typically coming out 21 times to inspect the various systems, including electrical, plumbing, gas and the building process itself.

"Typically, there tended to be some degree of casualness associated with the timing of the various trades doing their work at a particular site," says Price. "It is certainly a difficult exercise trying to supervise multiple house sites across a dynamic city."

Various tradespeople were also focused on their particular aspect of the home building process, and some inspectors had to return to the site repeatedly.

"Our target goal was to reduce the inspections to 17, which would allow a significant reduction in inspection workload and allow some reallocation of resources," says Price.

The new system now calls for the builder or his representative to take the responsibility for issuing inspection requests, as opposed to the individual tradespeople asking for inspections for their particular sector.

"This insures that the inspections are taking place at the right time," says Amie Blanchette, director of communications and public affairs for the CHBA — Calgary Region.

"The number of inspections has now been reduced to 17 and has saved the city over 30,000 unnecessary inspections annually and over $3 million."

Homebuyers benefit "because the outcome is a reduction of deficiencies in a home, better communication and understanding between trades(people), builders and inspectors, more shared learnings, increased pride, less costs and higher standards," says Price.

The partnership evolved through "the passion that we share with each other for the future of the city," Price said at a recent celebratory breakfast.

The CHBA — Calgary Region presented the city with a plaque to commemorate the win.

"In this fast-moving business, why not share our expertise and leverage our resources so we can work together and go forward for the benefit of Calgary?," said Price.

The new initiative shows "a model of teamwork," says David Watson, general manager of planing, development and assessment with the city.

"This is the first of many initiatives we want to work on together. We want to use this as a model."

Besides the federal award, the two groups also received an honourable mention at the Municipal Excellence Awards for the Building Expectations project, a booklet for new home buyers.

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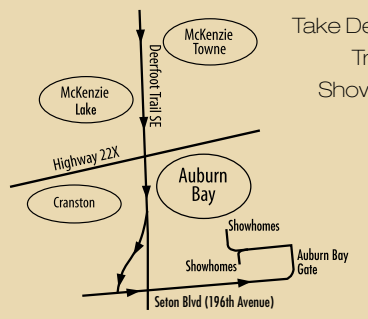

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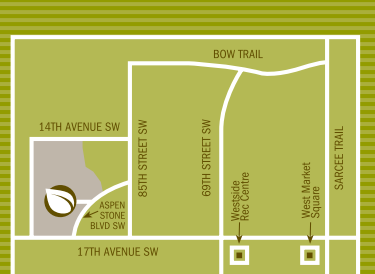

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