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AFFORDABILITY AND CHOICE TODAY

**DISCUSSION PAPER ON
REGULATIONS RELATED TO
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, CHOICE, QUALITY AND
INNOVATION**

December 1989

A-C-T is a regulatory reform initiative sponsored by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation which is being carried out by:

- **the Federation of Canadian Municipalities**
- **the Canadian Home Builders' Association**
- **the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association.**

This project was partially funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, but the views expressed are the personal views of the author(s) and the Corporation accepts no responsibility for them.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Affordability and Choice Today (A•C•T) is designed to stimulate regulatory reform action in residential construction, and has as its objectives to promote housing choice, affordability, quality and innovation. A•C•T is an initiative of the National Tripartite Group. The National Tripartite Group is composed of: the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA); the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA); and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is providing financial support to the initiative.

A discussion paper was prepared during the development and design of the A•C•T program plan. The discussion paper provides background information on regulatory reform issues facing people concerned about housing choice, affordability, quality and innovation, and discusses initiatives undertaken to address these issues.

The following is a summary of information gathered through a review of regulatory reform literature related to the housing industry. Interviews were also conducted with people identified by the National Tripartite Group, and representatives of non-government associations, industry, and provincial and municipal government. In addition, several group/committee meetings were held.

The areas targetted for regulatory reform action include: land development standards; the land development approval process; the building approval process; the inspection process; and residential renovation. In examining each area, a set of universal issues became apparent. These include the need for: increased familiarity with innovative housing and materials; cooperation between the building industry and government; and public consultation.

A short summary of each regulatory reform area follows.

LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Land development standards are established in municipal and provincial land use plans, municipal by-laws and land development agreements. The provisions of land development standards stipulate the type of land use, site-planning requirements and site-servicing requirements.

The purpose of land development standards is to provide for the orderly development of land within the province, region and municipality and to ensure that communities are adequately serviced. Over time, land development standards have contributed to housing quality. However, there is no system in place to monitor the impact of these standards on housing cost.

There are two, overall regulatory reform objectives related to land development standards. The first is to ensure that land development standards result in

housing types, forms and tenures that meet the needs of the community. There are three steps involved in this process. First, present and potential housing needs must be identified; second, a review of municipal land use plans must be carried out, to ensure that policies which allow for the housing needs of the community are in place; municipalities must then review and revise land development standards (especially those contained in zoning by-laws), to ensure that these standards meet current and future community housing needs.

The second objective is to ensure that land development standards are cost-effective. Municipalities and developers can work together to develop and implement a system to monitor and evaluate the costs and benefits of current and potential land development standards. The results of this cost-benefit analysis can then be used to develop a range of standards which can be incorporated into zoning by-laws and land development agreements.

The processes to meet these objectives will involve the following players: municipalities with support from the provinces; the building industry; non-profit housing associations; special needs groups; and the general public.

THE LAND DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS

The land development approval process is established by provincial legislation and, in some cases, by municipal by-laws. The purpose of the land development approval process is to ensure the orderly development of land within a municipality. This includes ensuring that proposed developments conform with provincial and municipal land use plans, land development standards and zoning by-laws.

The length of the land development approval process affects both housing cost and housing choice. Delays increase developers' and builders' costs, and these are passed on to the consumer. Delays in the approval process caused when innovative housing types, developments or materials are proposed can contribute to the building industry's preference for conventional housing developments.

One objective of regulatory reform, with respect to the land development approval process, is to reduce the time between submitting a land development application and receiving its final approval. Efficiency must be balanced with careful attention to each application. In some instances, the public should be consulted during the approval process. Also, a fair and expeditious means for the public and the building industry to appeal government decisions must be in place.

Another objective is to establish approval processes and procedures which do not preclude innovative approaches to housing design and construction.

A list of examples are presented below.

1. A service-oriented application and information kit, which would include a list of all required permits and approvals; an outline of the application procedure; application forms; contacts; and all other relevant information, could be developed.
2. A central application and information centre, where information and applications for all permits and approvals necessary for land development could be found, could be established. A pre-application review and check could be carried out prior to application submission.
3. A tracking system to monitor the progress of an application through the subdivision approval process could be developed. Integral elements of this system would include: contact names; establishment of response time frames; and a standard team review process. A computer system could be developed to increase the efficiency of this process.
4. Allocation of staff resources could be reviewed and revised if necessary. This process would involve: identifying and eliminating or minimizing the effect of bottlenecks in the system; and identifying and developing materials to meet the training and education needs of government staff and members of the building industry.

These approaches would involve the following players: approving authorities in consultation with other provincial and municipal departments involved in the land development approval process; the building industry; government appeal bodies and the general public.

THE BUILDING APPROVAL PROCESS

The purpose of the building approval process is to ensure that plans for proposed buildings comply with building regulations. The building approval process may also be used to administer other by-laws, including: zoning; heritage protection and design control. As with the land development approval process, the building approval process affects both housing cost and housing choice. Delays in the process result in increased costs which are passed on to the consumer. The objectives and suggested regulatory reform activities in this area mirror those of the land development approval process.

The players in this area will be: municipalities; the building industry; government appeal bodies and the general public.

THE INSPECTION PROCESS

Chief municipal building officials are responsible for administering various building by-laws and codes. This includes responsibility for: issuing permits; inspecting sites and construction; and enforcing by-laws and codes. Before a building permit is issued, the materials, type of construction and design of the proposed structure must meet building code requirements and municipal by-laws. Once the permit is issued, several types of inspection are required, including: structural, electrical and plumbing inspections.

The objectives of regulatory reform are to ensure that the inspection departments allocate staff resources effectively, that standards are applied consistently, and that the inspection process does not inhibit innovation. Bottlenecks in the inspection process must be identified and addressed. This may involve increasing the number of staff; cross-training inspectors to allow them to conduct inspections in more than one discipline; reviewing and revising the scheduling system (possibly computerizing); and ongoing training and education of staff.

Municipal and provincial building officials and members of the building industry are the players in reforming the inspection process.

RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION

Many of the regulatory issues already discussed apply to residential renovation. However, renovation brings its own set of peculiarities to the regulatory system. In most jurisdictions, the building code for new construction is applied to renovation, despite the fact that a building constructed to previous regulations will not likely meet all the provisions of the current code. The inflexibility of the building code can reduce the economic feasibility of a renovation project, because it requires that the older dwelling be brought up to the new standard.

Residential renovation involving a change-of-use of the existing land and/or dwelling usually requires rezoning of the property, a process which has the potential to be time-consuming. Presently, most residential renovation must go through the same approval process as does new housing, even if the cost of renovation activities is much lower.

The objective of regulatory reform is to ensure that the approval process and building codes and standards do not add unnecessary costs to residential renovation.

One suggested approach is that municipalities and provinces develop a residential renovation building code. Comprehensive guides explaining the use of this code would be developed. Specially-trained staff would be assigned to handle renovations which would speed up the approval process for these types of projects.

The players in these regulatory reform activities would be municipal and provincial government officials, the National Research Council and members of the building industry.

INNOVATIVE HOUSING AND MATERIALS

Changing demographics and lifestyles require new approaches to housing. "Granny flats", manufactured housing, made-to-convert housing and accessory apartments are examples of housing types and forms which meet a variety of housing needs in communities across the country.

The planning and approval process in most municipalities is designed to manage applications which are consistent with the approved planning principles, objectives and policies of the municipalities. In principle, this approach makes sense, but "standard" policies may inhibit the use of innovative designs and materials. For example, approval for innovative projects may take longer than for conventional developments. Delays will occur when the people involved in the policy development and approvals process are unfamiliar with new approaches, specific plans or materials--they will require additional time to evaluate them. Often underlying the lack of familiarity with innovative approaches is the perceived risk of trying something new.

One of the objectives of regulatory reform is to familiarize municipal and provincial officials, politicians and members of the building industry with innovative yet appropriate housing and building practices. Training and education and demonstration projects are ideal tools for meeting this objective. Municipalities and provinces can create guidelines for the approval and use of new materials. Training and education to inform both industry members and government officials on the application of the guidelines would need to be carried out. Demonstration projects provide concrete examples of new and different approaches, and can be used as part of training and education activities.

Players in this approach would be: municipal and provincial government officials; members of the building industry; special needs groups and the general public.

INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Both the building industry and municipalities share an overriding objective--to supply housing to meet market demand. This requires providing a variety of types, forms and tenures of housing at a price people can afford. The impact of reforms to regulatory content and process is widespread. The building industry and government need to share information, exchange ideas and discuss options. This process could be facilitated by: establishing building industry/government liaison committees which would meet on a regular basis; and conducting joint, building industry-government training sessions.

The key players would be municipal officials and building industry members.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION

Discussions with industry and government representatives indicate there is a need for a broadly based, public information/education program to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of housing issues and options. The public is concerned about the impact of new and different forms of housing on the characteristics of neighbourhoods. Public education will provide people with the basic information required to evaluate housing projects and policies and their potential impact on the community. The quality of information obtained from public consultation is directly related to the quality of information provided to the public. Public input should be sought: in the development of municipal and neighbourhood land use policies and plans; in the revision of zoning by-laws; and in the planning of specific housing projects.

Players in these activities are representatives of: municipal governments, the building industry, special needs groups, and the general public.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	3
2.1	INTRODUCTION	
2.2	RESIDENTIAL LAND USE PLANS AND ZONING BY-LAWS	4
2.2.1	Identifying Housing Needs	4
2.2.2	Reviewing Municipal Land Use Plans	4
2.2.3	Reviewing Zoning By-laws	5
2.2.4	Players	5
2.3	LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	6
2.3.1	Reviewing Standards; Cost-Benefit Analysis	6
2.3.2	Incorporating a Range of Land Development Standards into Zoning By-laws	7
2.3.3	Players	8
2.4	INCREASING HOUSING DENSITY	9
2.4.1	Developing Design Guidelines	9
2.4.2	Consistency with Zoning By-laws	10
2.4.3	Demonstration Projects	11
2.4.4	Players	11
3.0	LAND DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS	12
3.1	INTRODUCTION	12
3.2	PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS	14
3.2.1	Developing a Service-Oriented Application and Information Kit	14
3.2.2	Central Application and Information Centre	14
3.2.3	Players	15
3.3	DEVELOPING A TRACKING SYSTEM FOR APPLICATIONS	16
3.3.1	Assigning Responsibility for Tracking System	16
3.3.2	Identifying Contact Persons	16
3.3.3	Establishing Time Frames	16
3.3.4	Establishing a Standard Team Review Process	17
3.3.5	Developing a Computer Tracking System	17
3.3.6	Players	17

3.4	ALLOCATING STAFF RESOURCES IN THE REVIEWING AND APPROVING AGENCIES	18
3.4.1	Addressing Bottlenecks	18
3.4.2	Identifying Staff Training and Education Needs	19
3.4.3	Players	19
3.5	INNOVATIVE HOUSING APPROACHES AND THE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL PROCESS	20
3.5.1.	Review of Approval Process	20
3.5.2	Specific Approval Stream	20
3.5.3	Staff Training and Education	20
3.6	PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS	21
3.6.1	Information Exchange	21
3.6.2	Players	21
3.7	APPEAL PROCESS	22
3.7.1	Setting Appeal Criteria	22
3.7.2	Allocation of Resources	22
3.7.3	Mediation	22
3.7.4	Players	22
4.0	BUILDING APPROVAL PROCESS	23
4.1	INTRODUCTION	23
4.2	PRE-APPLICATION REVIEW	24
4.2.1	Developing a Service-Oriented Application and Information Kit	25
4.2.2	Establishing a Central Application and Information Centre	26
4.2.3	Players	27
4.3	DEVELOPING A TRACKING SYSTEM FOR APPLICATIONS	
4.3.1	Assigning Responsibility for Tracking System	28
4.3.2	Identifying Contact Persons	28
4.3.3	Establishing Time Frames	28
4.3.4	Establishing Standard Team Review Process	29
4.3.5	Municipal Computer Tracking System	29
4.3.6	Players	30
4.4	ALLOCATION OF STAFF RESOURCES IN REVIEW AND APPROVAL AGENCIES	
4.4.1	Identifying and Addressing Bottlenecks	31
4.4.2	Identifying Staff Training and Education Needs	32
4.4.3	Players	32

4.5	INNOVATIVE HOUSING APPROACHES AND THE BUILDING APPROVAL PROCESS	33
4.5.1	Review of the Approval Process	33
4.5.2	Specific Approval Stream	33
4.5.3	Staff Training and Education	33
4.6	PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS	34
4.6.1	Information Exchange	34
4.6.2	Players	34
4.7	APPEAL PROCESS	35
4.7.1	Appeal Criteria	35
4.7.2	Allocating Resources	35
4.7.3	Mediation	35
4.7.4	Players	35
5.0	INSPECTION PROCESS	36
5.1	INTRODUCTION	36
5.2	ALLOCATING STAFF RESOURCES WITHIN INSPECTION AUTHORITY	37
5.2.1	Identifying Problem Areas	37
5.2.2	Increasing Staff	37
5.2.3	Reviewing Inspection Scheduling System	38
5.2.3.1	Conducting Random Inspections	38
5.2.3.2	Computerizing Information and Scheduling	38
5.2.3.3	"On-line" Inspections	38
5.2.3.4	Cross-Training Inspectors	39
5.2.4	Players	40
5.3	DEVELOPING A CONSISTENT INSPECTION PROCESS	41
5.3.1	Discipline-Specific Training Sessions	41
5.3.2	Staff Involvement	41
5.3.3	Players	41
5.4	NON-STANDARD BUILDING MATERIALS AND THE INSPECTION PROCESS	42
5.4.1	Developing Guidelines for the Use of Equivalents	42
5.4.2	Information Dissemination	42
5.4.3	Players	43

6.0	RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION	4 4
6.1	INTRODUCTION	4 4
6.2	IMPROVING THE APPLICABILITY OF THE BUILDING CODE AND BUILDING STANDARDS TO RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION	4 5
6.2.1	Developing a Renovation Building Code	4 5
6.2.2	Developing a Guide to Residential Renovation Codes	4 6
6.2.3	Players	4 7
6.3	RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION AND THE APPROVAL PROCESS	4 8
6.3.1	Analysis of Approval Process With Respect to Renovation	4 8
6.3.2	Possible Approaches	4 8
6.3.2.1	Assigning Staff Specifically to Residential Renovation	4 9
6.3.2.2	Exempting Minor Works from the Approval Process	4 9
6.3.2.3	Separate Approval Streams for Small- or Low-Value Projects	4 9
6.3.3	Staff Education and Training	5 0
6.3.4	Players	5 0
7.0	FAMILIARITY OF INNOVATIVE HOUSING AND MATERIALS	5 1
7.1	INTRODUCTION	5 1
7.2	TRAINING AND EDUCATION NEEDS	5 2
7.2.1	Identifying Training and Education Needs	5 2
7.2.2	Demonstrating Innovative Approaches	5 2
7.2.3	Players	5 3
8.0	INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS	5 4
8.1	INTRODUCTION	5 4
8.2	ESTABLISHING LIAISON COMMITTEES	5 6
8.3.1	Identifying Contact Persons	5 6
8.3.2	Initial Committee Meeting	5 6
8.3.3	Identifying Opportunities for Industry-Government Co-operation	5 7
8.3	JOINT INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT TRAINING SESSIONS	6 0
8.4	DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS	6 1
8.5	PLAYERS	6 1

9.0	PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND EDUCATION	6 2
9.1	INTRODUCTION	6 2
9.2	THE ROLE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND CONSULTATION	6 3
9.3	THE TIME TO INVOLVE THE PUBLIC	6 3
	9.3.1 Policy Changes and Official Plan Review	6 3
	9.3.2 Zoning By-Law Review	6 4
	9.3.3 Specific Projects	6 4
9.4	THE NEED FOR ONGOING PUBLIC EDUCATION AND CONSULTATION	6 5
9.5	DEFINING THE PUBLIC	6 6
9.6	GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION AND CONSULTATION	6 6
	9.6.1 Ensure that the Public is Adequately Informed	6 7
	9.6.2 Identify and Address Public Concerns	6 7
	9.6.3 Maintain Regular Contact with the Public	6 7
9.7	THE ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES AND BUILDING INDUSTRY	6 8

APPENDICES

A	Land Development Standards
B	Manufactured Housing
C	Land Development Approval Process
D	Building Permit Approval Process
E	Inspection Process
F	Residential Renovation
G	City of Ottawa Procedures for Staff Reports to Planning Committee and Council which Require Industry Input
H	List of People and Organizations Contacted

BIBLIOGRAPHY

LIST OF EXAMPLES

LAND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS	page
Identifying Housing Needs - Ottawa, Ontario	4
Review of Municipal Land Use Plans - Montreal, Quebec	5
Review of Zoning By-Laws - Ottawa, Ontario	5
Cost-Effective Land Development Standards	
Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing	6
Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs	7
Range of Standards - Toronto Home Builders' Association	7
Increasing Housing Density	
Infill - CMHC	9
Manufactured Housing - Encinado, California	9
Demonstration Project - Hamilton, Ontario CHBA/CMHC	11
Design Guidelines and Zoning By-Laws	
District of North Vancouver, British Columbia	10
St. John's, Newfoundland	10
Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs	11
 BUILDING APPROVAL PROCESS	
Building Permit Information Brochures - District of North Vancouver, British Columbia	25
Central Application/Information Centre - Ottawa, Ontario	26
Computer Tracking System - St. John's, Newfoundland	29
"Certified Professional Program" - Vancouver, British Columbia	31
Staff Training and Education - Vancouver, British Columbia	32
 INSPECTION PROCESS	
Computerized Inspection Scheduling System	
Ottawa, Ontario	38
Toronto, Ontario	39
Cross-Training of Inspectors	
New Brunswick Department of Labour	39
Ottawa, Ontario	40
Training Courses - Ontario Ministry of Housing	41

LIST OF EXAMPLES (continued)

INSPECTION PROCESS (continued) page

Continuing Education Program for Inspectors - Vancouver, British Columbia	4 1
---	-----

RESIDENTIAL RENOVATION

Renovation Code - Province of Ontario	4 5
Percentage Rule - United States	4 6
Renovation Guidelines - United States Department of Housing and Urban Development	4 6
Advisory Service - Ontario Ministry of Housing	4 7
Specialized Renovation Staff - Seattle, Washington	4 9
Exempting Minor Works - Ottawa, Ontario	4 9
Separate Approval Streams - Ottawa, Ontario	5 0
Renovation Inspection Manual - San Francisco, California	5 0

INNOVATIVE HOUSING AND MATERIALS

Granny Flats/Garden Suites	5 3
----------------------------	-----

INDUSTRY-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Liaison Committees	
BILD Committee - City of Ottawa	5 7
Urban Development Institute	5 8
Joint Training Sessions	
CHBA - B.C.	6 0
Urban Development Institute	6 0
Demonstration Projects - CHBA/CMHC Demonstration Home	6 1

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CHBA CANADIAN HOME BUILDERS' ASSOCIATION

CMHC CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

1.0 Introduction

Affordability and Choice Today (A•C•T) is designed to stimulate regulatory reform action in residential construction and has as its objectives to promote housing choice, affordability, quality and innovation. A•C•T is an initiative of the Tripartite Group. The Tripartite Group is composed of: the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA); the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA); and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is providing financial support to the initiative.

This discussion paper was prepared during the development and design of the A•C•T program plan. This paper provides background information on regulatory reform issues facing those concerned about housing choice, affordability, quality and innovation, and initiatives undertaken to address them.

The following is a summary of information gathered through a review of regulatory reform literature related to the development and building industry. In addition, interviews were conducted with people identified by the Tripartite Group, representatives of non-government associations, industry, and provincial and municipal government. The majority of the interviews were conducted by telephone. In addition, several group/committee meetings were held.

In order to make the best use of study resources, it was decided at the onset that the A•C•T initiative should focus on problems which are of importance to all parties and on which significant progress can be made in a reasonable length of time. Thus, the research focussed on: defining regulatory reform issues; identifying examples of municipal initiatives to address the issues, the key players involved, the tools used and the benefits of regulatory reform.

The areas targetted for regulatory reform action include: land development standards; the land development approval process; the building approval process; the inspection process; and residential renovation. In examining each area, a set of generic issues became apparent. These include the need for: increased familiarity with innovative housing and materials; cooperation between the building industry and government; and public consultation.

The regulatory issues of rent controls; lot levies; and assisted housing have purposefully been excluded from the scope of this study. The issues of rent controls and lot levies are contentious in some parts of Canada. Many studies of these issues have been conducted, and they have had little effect. Neither of these topics could adequately be addressed by the A•C•T program. In addition, lot levies are a municipal financing issue and, as such, cannot be dealt with by structures designed to foster a streamlined approval process, or demonstration projects.

The suggestions put forth in this paper will indirectly benefit assisted housing projects. However, regulatory reform is not designed to address the affordability problems of those in "core need". If houses could be produced at even half the current costs (which could not be achieved through regulatory reform alone), the "core-need" population would still require financial assistance for housing.

There are many regulations which indirectly affect the production of housing (which are not always under the control of a municipality). These include regulations concerning, environmental protection; natural resource protection; provision of transportation; provision of fire protection; protection of agricultural lands; and the avoidance of municipal bankruptcy, for example. These regulations are not included as key issues in the study; but processes are suggested to ensure that the requirements of these regulatory areas are coordinated expeditiously.

The majority of regulation in the development and building industry is contained in provincial legislation. The province, in turn, delegates authority to municipalities. Given this situation, certain issues will not be relevant in some municipalities--some may not have arisen, and others will have been addressed. Also, specific processes and procedures will vary from municipality to municipality (e.g., the number and types of permits required prior to building a house). The purpose of the research was not to document comprehensively and compare the issues and regulations across the country. Rather, the paper aims to provide a generic picture of the issues and an overview of approaches which have been taken, or could be taken, to address them.

Documenting potential action on regulatory reform and results is an ongoing process--this paper only presents a few of many possibilities. This discussion paper is intended to provide municipalities and the building industry with a list of regulatory reform issues and approaches which can be used to address their specific concerns. It is hoped that the ideas presented will help to stimulate a dialogue among representatives of the building industry, government and the public. This could lead to the initiation and identification of additional regulatory reform activities.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Each chapter begins by clarifying the issue area. Then the objective(s) of regulatory reforms are identified and steps/actions suggested for achieving the objective(s). Where possible, examples of relevant regulatory reform initiatives are provided. Next, the players involved in the achievement of each objective are listed. The appendices include background information on each issue area and a list of people and organizations contacted. A bibliography is also included.

2.0 Land Development Standards

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of land development standards is to provide for the orderly development of land within the province, region and municipality and to ensure that communities are adequately serviced. Land development standards are established in municipal and provincial land use plans, municipal by-laws and land development agreements.

There are three types of land development standards--land-use, site-servicing and site-planning standards. Land-use standards concern the type of use of the land and dwelling (residential, commercial, etc.), and building density and height. Site-servicing standards usually include standards related to roads, storm drainage, water supply, sanitary sewers and utilities. Site-planning standards usually include standards related to: the location of standard buildings, facilities and services. Appendix A provides more background information on land development standards.

There are two objectives in reforming regulations related to land development standards. One objective is to ensure land development standards result in housing types, forms and tenure that meet the needs of the community. Very few municipalities have systems in place to monitor the relationship between the housing needs of their community and their land development standards.

A second objective is to ensure that the costs of land development standards do not outweigh their benefits. Currently there are no processes in place to evaluate regularly the impact of land development standards on the capital cost or maintenance cost of serviced lots.

Much of the discussion about land development standards focuses on decreasing lot sizes and increasing housing density. Thus, there is also a section on devising acceptable ways of designing higher density housing and neighbourhoods.

The following section presents each objective and the steps which can be taken in order to meet these. In addition, some examples of relevant regulatory reform initiatives are presented.

2.2 Residential Land Use Plans and Zoning By-laws

Objective: *to ensure that residential land use plans and zoning by-laws allow for housing types, forms and tenures that accurately reflect the housing needs of communities.*

There are basically three steps involved in this process: identifying housing needs and existing and potential demand for housing in the municipality; reviewing and revising municipal land use plans; and reviewing and revising zoning by-laws. The following is a discussion of each step:

2.2.1 Identifying Housing Needs

Before any action is taken, it is important to identify clearly the demand and need for housing within the municipality, both existing and potential. This requires that municipalities prepare and analyze a profile of the housing stock and population trends within the municipality. With this information they will be able to prepare a long-term projection of housing requirements based on an analysis of the housing and economic markets. Much of the information required to conduct these activities is available, at no- or low-cost, from Statistics Canada.

In addition, municipalities need to consult with the public and special needs groups specifically to assist in identifying and confirming housing issues and needs.

Example

As part of a comprehensive review of its Official Plan, in 1986-87 the City of Ottawa undertook eight background studies. Studies included: an inventory of existing lands, housing profiles and densities, existing growth potential in the residential sector, existing commercial and industrial floor space, population projections, detailed demographic projections, employment projections, income projections, and industrial land markets. This information was used to develop a profile of existing housing stock, residential development potential and future residential housing demand. The research findings clearly indicated a number of housing issues will likely surface within the next five years (e.g., housing costs may not allow first-time home buyers to enter the housing market).

Next, a number of alternative approaches to addressing the issues were explored. This process involved extensive public consultation through the use of issue papers, discussion papers and public meetings. Public response to these papers is now being used to prepare policy recommendations for the Planning Committee and City Council which, when approved, will form the basis of the revised Official Plan.

2.2.2 Reviewing Municipal Land Use Plans

Once housing needs are identified the provinces and municipalities can conduct a review of land use policies. This includes those formalized in the official land use plans and unofficial policies which have been adopted over time. With this information, provinces and municipalities are in a position to

develop policies which allow for a range of housing types, tenures and forms. As part of this process, provinces and municipalities need to consult with parties who will be affected by land use plan revisions (other government agencies, non-profit and profit builders, developers, planners, public groups, etc.).

Example

The City of Montreal has recently reviewed and revised its housing and land use policy. The new policy contains a number of measures targeted towards reducing housing costs and increasing house choice in tenure, type and form. These include: measures for helping people to stay in their own neighbourhoods, for example, through encouraging home sharing and renovations; measures to support the growth of the housing stock, for example, through reviewing regulations; and measures to maintain the existing housing stock, for example, through reviewing the National Building Code and its impact on renovation activity. This review involved extensive public consultation, led by the City's planning, housing and public works departments.

2.2.3 Reviewing Zoning By-laws

The next step in the process is for municipalities to review and revise zoning by-laws to meet current and future community housing needs. Similar to revising land use plans, this will involve a comprehensive review of zoning by-laws and revisions keeping in mind the findings of the first step--identifying the housing needs of the community. To prevent problems in implementation, municipalities should consult with parties who will be affected by zoning by-law revisions (builders, developers, planners, public groups, etc.).

Example

The City of Ottawa is undertaking a comprehensive review of residential categories of zoning by-laws. The City's comprehensive zoning by-law was adopted in 1964 and is comprised of 18 residential zones. Since 1964 there have been approximately 500 site-specific amendments to these zones. The City has recently completed a comprehensive review of its Official Plan, and changes to zoning by-laws will be required before some of the new residential policies can be implemented. The cost for the review is \$400,000 (over two years). The cost will be shared by the Ontario Ministry of Housing and the City of Ottawa.

2.2.4 Players

- Municipalities take the lead in identifying housing needs and reviewing land use plans and zoning by-laws.
- Consultation between the municipality and the business community, community associations, special needs groups, the building industry, and the general public.

2.3 Land Development Standards

Objective: *to ensure land development standards are cost-effective in both the short-term and the long-term.*

2.3.1 Reviewing Standards; Cost Benefit Analysis

In order to meet this objective, reasons why the standards exist in their current form need to be identified. Then a system needs to be developed and implemented for monitoring and evaluating the costs and benefits of current and potential land development standards, especially those standards for which the reasons and/or conditions have changed.

The specific activities involved are:

- municipality and building industry identifying aspects of land development standards that are a concern/priority;
- province and/or municipality identifying reasons why land development standards exist in their current form;
- province and/or municipality identifying initial costs and benefits of present and alternative land development standards;
- province and/or municipality identifying maintenance costs of site servicing infrastructure; and
- province and/or municipality updating the cost and benefits of land development standards every five years.

Examples

Numerous studies target land development standards as a potential area for cost savings. A report prepared by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing¹ examined the effect of lower site servicing and spatial standards on the costs of four subdivision designs for typical urban sites.

Among the changes to the site-servicing standards studied were:

- elimination of all storm service connections to individual lots;
- the placement of sanitary service lines in the same trenches as the water service lines with one trench for every two units; and
- reduced road widths.

Among changes to the spatial-standards studied were:

- reduction in lot depths and/or widths;
- reduction in road allowances; and
- creation of common amenity and park spaces.

The estimated savings resulting from the proposed standards varied from \$6,300 in smaller communities to \$8,200 in metropolitan areas (these are 1983 dollars). Of the savings, approximately 28 percent result from changes to the engineering

¹ Government of Ontario, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Urban Development Standards, a Demonstration of the Potential for Reducing Costs. January 1983. Second edition.

standards and 70 percent resulted from changes to site planning standards--particularly increases in density.

A helpful tool for both municipalities and developers would be a set of guidelines for assessing the impact of alternative development standards and plans.

In 1986, the Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs examined each element of subdivision design (waterworks, sanitary sewers, storm drainage, etc.) and the basic or generic principles involved in its design. Then, some modifications to the current standards were suggested. Next, the construction costs of suggested and traditional subdivision standards were compared. Annual maintenance and operational costs of the two designs were also compared, using data obtained from three Alberta Municipalities. (The findings are presented in Residential Subdivision Servicing and Design Practices, 1986.)

A separate booklet contains assessment forms for each subdivision element which could be used by municipalities. The forms include a range of current standards, a brief analysis of possible cost-saving measures to consider, and a suggested standard. The use and regular review of these forms by municipalities can provide valuable information on the costs of land development standards, allowing municipalities to decide whether to maintain their current standard or adopt a new standard on any of the elements described.

2.3.2 Incorporating a Range of Land Development Standards into Zoning By-Laws

Land development standards are specified in zoning by-laws and land development agreements. Thus it is necessary to ensure that the information garnered from the cost-benefit analysis of the standards is incorporated into these documents. Municipalities can work together to assess the impact of land development standards on land development costs. In addition, municipalities can work together to standardize site planning and engineering standards in adjacent municipalities.

Specific activities include:

- municipalities developing a comparison of land development standards of adjacent municipalities;
- municipalities, builders and developers working together to develop a range of land development standards to be used within adjacent municipalities; and
- municipalities incorporating a range of land development standards into land use plans, zoning-by-laws and land development agreements.

Example

Municipalities are concerned about the effect of reduced standards on maintenance costs. However, some reduced standards are already tested. The Toronto Home Builders' Association "1988 Affordable Homeownership Charrette" found that by combining the most cost-effective standards from the various municipalities in Greater Metropolitan Toronto, servicing cost savings of

10-15 percent can be achieved. Examples cited of some of the more economical site servicing standards currently used in Metro Toronto include: common trench construction for storm and sanitary sewers; curvilinear sewers, which reduce the number of manholes required; polyethylene service connections on water mains; curbs on roads only when top course paving is placed; and sidewalks on one side of the street except on arterial roads--no sidewalks on cul-de-sacs or short crescents.

Another approach is to develop a range of standards, rather than rigid specifications. The objective of this approach is to allow the developer to reduce capital costs while ensuring municipalities can minimize operation and maintenance costs. The use of a range of standards increases flexibility while providing municipal staff and developers with clear guidelines for permitted design features.

2.3.3 Players

- Municipalities take the lead in cost benefit analysis.
- Consultation between the municipality and the land development and building industry regarding priority areas and implementation.

2.4 Increasing Housing Density

Objective: *to devise acceptable ways of designing houses and neighbourhoods while increasing the number of residential units per hectare.*

Many suggestions concerning land development standards relate to increasing housing density. When density is increased it is especially important to consider the effect on the interior layout of the dwelling, appearance of the neighbourhood, the use of community services, and the quality of life of potential occupants and existing neighbours.

2.4.1 Developing Design Guidelines

The first step is for municipalities, non-profit housing organizations, developers, builders and planners to work together to develop design guidelines for moderate- to high-density and infill housing projects. Part of this work will involve reviewing models which already exist.

Example

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has published a series of advisory documents which demonstrate the application of recommended standards for residential site planning. One of the documents focuses on infill development (New Housing in Existing Neighbourhoods: Advisory Document, CMHC, 1982). The documents discuss the factors influencing the development of infill and design guidelines to help resolve typical planning and design problems.

Unattractive, poorly planned, manufactured home developments prompted the enactment of provisions that severely limit or prohibit manufactured housing. In general, the appearance of manufactured homes has improved; some are virtually indistinguishable from site-built. Others, however have retained the look of the traditional single-section mobile home--with a long, narrow body and little or no roof pitch or roof overhang. Recognizing that manufactured homes are an affordable housing alternative, some communities have developed design guidelines for manufactured housing. (see Appendix B for more detailed information on manufactured housing).

Example

In Encinado, California, general appearance controls apply to manufactured housing. The following provisions apply to manufactured homes permitted on individual lots in the single family residential zone.

- The unit must be installed on a foundation system in compliance with all applicable requirements of the Uniform Building Code to the satisfaction of the building department director.
- The home must be covered with an exterior material usually used on conventional dwellings to the satisfaction of the planning department.
- The roof must be constructed of shingles or other material customarily used for conventional dwellings to the satisfaction of the planning department.

These provisions are similar to those of many other communities in California, where state law prohibits the exclusion of manufactured housing from residential neighbourhoods but allows local governments to set standards for roof and siding materials and roof overhang.

2.4.2 Consistency with Zoning By-Laws

Once design guidelines are adopted, municipalities need to ensure that design guidelines are consistent with zoning by-laws. If they are not, zoning by-laws need to be revised accordingly.

Examples

The District of North Vancouver is preparing design guidelines which reflect the concerns of the public and the unique needs of the sites. (Much of the residential construction occurs on the side of a mountain.) This has involved an extensive study by consultants directed by a committee composed of industry and government officials. Specific issues examined in the study included: appearance of bulk; building envelope; site servicing and site planning standards; infill; streetscape; sloping lots; and floor-site ratio. The study recommendations are currently being reviewed by Council and staff. Then the zoning by-law will be reviewed and revised to incorporate the appropriate recommendations.

As part of the revision of zoning by-laws to reflect design guidelines, municipalities can consider including innovative zoning techniques in order to increase the flexibility of zoning by-laws with respect to density (e.g., density bonuses, conditional/contract/floating zones, accessory apartment ordinances, housing in mixed use developments, etc.).

Example

The City of St. John's, Newfoundland, has provisions within its zoning by-laws for "contract zones". Contract zones are zones for which the land development standards are negotiated under contract, rather than through a by-law. In St. John's, contract zones primarily apply to infill developments and the conversion of single family homes to up to four units. Based upon the current density of the zone, and the nature of the development, a builder may apply to council for an additional extra unit, thus increasing the present density.

In the Greater Vancouver Regional District, many municipalities allow for density bonuses within their zoning by-laws. A density bonus usually allows for increased density in exchange for the provision of certain amenities or housing types (e.g., covered parking, open space, affordable housing, solar orientation).

Municipalities can make provisions for specific types of housing, such as manufactured housing, in zoning new subdivisions (e.g. make provisions for mobile home parks, along with some design guidelines).

Example

The Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs is currently undertaking a study to review site planning and design guidelines as they apply to mobile homes. The Ministry is considering mandating municipalities to pre-zone for manufactured housing, and wants to ensure that the appearance of developments with manufactured homes maintains community standards.

2.4.3 Demonstration Projects

Once the design guidelines are implemented builders can work with architects, planners, etc. to develop demonstrations of higher density housing (and neighbourhoods) that would meet current and future housing needs. Alternatively, demonstration projects could provide a test of potential design guidelines.

Example

In 1989, the Hamilton Home Builders' Association, with the cooperation of CMHC and the City of Hamilton designed a "made-to-convert" demonstration home for the 1989 annual Canadian Home Builders' Association Conference. The objective of the home was to demonstrate the potential for designing and building new residential units with the built-in capacity to be converted from a duplex to a 2,000 square-foot single-family dwelling--and back again. Alternatively, the home could be converted from a single family home, to a home with an accessory apartment.

From the outside, the house looks like a basic two-level stone and wood house, but its split-level entrance can be easily converted to open into two separate living spaces. Considerable attention was paid to designing the interior to make the best use of each 1,000 square-foot area.

This is just one example of how density can be increased in neighbourhoods. In this case, a single-family dwelling neighbourhood appearance could be retained. In fact, the Hamilton Home Builders' Association and the City of Hamilton are examining the possibility of including similar house designs in a new subdivision in Hamilton.

2.4.4 Players

- The building industry, especially professional planners, architects, builders in consultation with municipalities would take the lead in developing design guidelines and demonstration projects.
- Municipalities would take the lead in ensuring zoning by-laws maintain consistency with the design guidelines and in developing innovative zoning techniques.

3.0 Land Development Approval Process

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the land development approval process is to ensure the orderly development of land within a municipality. This includes ensuring that proposed developments conform with provincial and municipal land use plans, land development standards and zoning by-laws. While the process varies among provinces and municipalities, most systems have provisions for:

- ensuring citizen participation;
- solving special development problems or technicalities;
- requiring financial contribution towards community infrastructure through development agreements;
- allowing both municipal councils and the province to examine applications from the perspective of the efficient and economical provision of municipal services (e.g. water, sewer, electricity, roads, parks, etc.);
- recognizing interests of the broader community; and
- appealing decisions.

Some local municipalities are the approving authority for local land development, in other cases it is the province and/or regional municipality. In all instances, the application is circulated to the local municipality for review and comment.

The land development approval process affects both housing costs and housing choice. The length of the land development approval process directly affects developers' costs: delays result in significant costs in lost time and opportunity, in interest and tax payments on land, and in slow responses to quickly changing markets. Developers need to recover their costs; these costs are transferred into the price of lots and thus into the cost of houses.

The length of the land development approval process can also contribute to developers' preference for conventional housing developments--especially if the quickest way to obtain approval is to be non-controversial and adhere to existing land use plans and zoning by-laws. This is unfortunate when existing land use plans and zoning by-laws are unresponsive to the housing needs of the community.

Thus the overall objective of regulatory reform with respect to the land development approval process is to reduce the time between submitting an application until final approval is received. This can be accomplished through a number of changes at each stage of the approval process. First, some work needs to be done prior to the application being submitted to ensure it is complete, including allowing the approving authority to review the application prior to submission to identify potential problem areas.

Once the subdivision application is accepted by the approving authority, developers and officials need to be able to track its progress. This involves ensuring that staff resources are allocated effectively in the approving and reviewing agencies. In addition, the progress of the application should be predictable to assist both industry and officials in planning their activities.

Approving authorities recognize the need for public review of development proposals. The issues surrounding land development are becoming increasingly complex; and the public is showing more interest in reviewing proposals. This creates a challenge for governments and developers to find a balance between efficiency and consultation.

One of the objectives of REACH is to increase housing choice. This means encouraging and permitting innovative approaches to housing developments. Established approval processes and procedures need to be reviewed and revised to ensure that non-standard development approaches and designs are not being unduly delayed.

Once a decision is made about the application, most provinces have a means for appealing government decisions. (Sometimes there is more than one type of approval required per application, for example, official plan amendment, rezoning and subdivision. Usually the decision on each approval can be appealed.) While it is important to provide for fair appeal of government decisions, it is also important that the process proceeds expeditiously.

The following section presents six land development approval process objectives which address the points raised above, and the steps or actions which can be taken to meet them. As in the previous section, examples of regulatory reform initiatives are included.

3.2 Pre-Application Process

Objective: *to have the subdivision application form submitted with all the appropriate information; and to allow the approving authority and the local municipality to comment prior to submission of the subdivision application.*

These two objectives can be met through two main areas of activity: the development of a service-oriented application and information kit; and the development of a central application and information centre. These activities could be carried out concurrently. An application and information kit would be a key tool/service of a central application and information centre, thus it will be discussed first.

3.2.1 Developing a Service-Oriented Application and Information Kit

Most provinces and some municipalities have prepared a guide to the subdivision approval process for potential applicants. However, the guides tend to be either extremely technical or very brief and superficial. Also very little information is provided about the approval criteria for each type of approval required or the process of rezoning or amending land use plans.

A complete application and approval information package could be distributed to developers when they inquire about the development approval process. The information package should include a list of all required permits and approvals, together with an outline of the application procedure, application forms, names of contacts and other relevant information.

Part of the process of developing an information package is identifying the types of information required and a suitable format. In addition, application forms can be reviewed and revised if necessary to ensure that all the required information is requested at the time of submission. It may also be helpful to standardize application forms for the various approvals, for example, land use plans and zoning amendments.

The development of the information kit and revisions to application forms should be done in consultation with the building industry. In addition the building industry associations need to coordinate information sessions for developers to ensure they understand the requirements of the subdivision application process.

3.2.2 Central Application and Information Centre

The centre would be an office where information and applications for all permits and approvals necessary for land development could be found and inhouse staff would be available to assist applicants. One of the objectives of centre staff is to ensure that the application is complete prior to submission. One of the easiest ways to do this is to develop a standard checklist for use by the

approving authority and applicants, which identifies the presence or absence of required information. Both the approving authority and the applicant should have a copy of the checklist; the application is not accepted unless the checklist is complete.

The centre would be responsible for providing developers with information relating to land use plans, zoning by-laws, and the development approval process, in addition to providing the names and telephone numbers of officials the developer might need to contact to track the progress of the application.

The approving authority and the local municipality should also offer the opportunity for formal pre-application reviews, to identify any obvious deficiencies and potential problems as early as possible in the application process. Also, it would be useful for applicants to approach government officials to ensure the application is complete prior to submitting it. These latter two activities do not require a central application and information centre, however, in some cases it would be the ideal place for this activity to occur (i.e., where the local municipality is the approving authority).

3.2.3 Players

- Approving authorities in consultation with other provincial and municipal departments involved in the land development approval process and the building industry.

3.3 Developing a Tracking System for Applications

Objective: *to have in-house review of the subdivision application which is predictable and trackable.*

In order to meet this objective a tracking system needs to be developed to monitor the progress of an application through the subdivision approval process. This will include: establishing people responsible for the application in each of the agencies involved in the review process; providing the applicant and approving authority with contact names; and developing time frames for responding to proposals. It may also involve a team review process and computerization of development information.

3.3.1 Assigning Responsibility for Tracking System

The first step is to assign one department (e.g., Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Building Branch) as primarily responsible not only for receiving the application but also for distributing and tracking the application. This provides the applicant with a central contact point and ensures that all the required parties receive the application.

In most provinces, numerous departments and agencies are involved in the approval process. Within each department involved, assigning one staff member to be primarily responsible for each application would provide both the applicant and the municipality with a contact for information about the status of the application. A mechanism should be put in place that would ensure that the person responsible in each department can be made aware of the names of responsible people in other departments and agencies.

3.3.2 Identifying Contact Persons

Once the responsible people are identified, the approving authority should notify the applicant, providing the contact names and phone numbers. If problems occur and/or the applicant wishes to have more information about the application, the various contact people should be able to advise both the applicant and the other agencies involved.

3.3.3 Establishing Time Frames

The departments involved in the approval process should work together to establish reasonable time frames for response to applications, which can then be made known to the applicant. One option is to establish time limits for response.

While imposing deadlines is difficult to implement since many factors contribute to delays (including incomplete application forms, staff illness, staffing levels elections, etc.), the establishment of target dates has some benefits.

Departments can be motivated to process proposals quickly if deadlines are set, and deadlines can be tied to staff incentives.

Another approach is to set a maximum number of extensions to stated time limits, or to establish a fixed outside limit for a decision. The responsible persons in the departments involved should be aware of the time frames for response in their own and other departments and agencies.

3.3.4 Establishing a Team Review Process

As many agencies are involved in the approval process, and have the power to establish conditions for approval, it makes sense for the approving authority to establish a team review process. In this situation, within each relevant department, a preliminary assessment of the proposal is conducted. Potential problems and conditions are identified. Then, qualified representatives from each reviewing agency meet to review and discuss the proposal. The group identifies and reviews the conditions set to ensure that they do not conflict. One collective assessment of the proposal is produced. This approach has the advantage that developers are not presented with many separate reports with potentially conflicting requirements.

3.3.5 Developing a Computer Tracking System

As part of improving the tracking of development information, the approving authority can work with other agencies to design, establish and maintain a computer system. All the information on the application would be maintained on the system, including: background information on the applicant; the type of development; the various contact people in each agency; the status of various approvals (received, in progress, completed); the conditions established, etc. In addition, relevant information about the land parcel (zoning, services available, soil conditions, etc.) should be included in the data base.

This serves several purposes: information on the status of the approval can be found easily; staff can regulate work loads; and performance statistics can be compiled easily (e.g., number of applications received, in progress, and completed per time period).

3.3.6 Players

- Approving authority in consultation with other provincial and municipal departments involved in the land development approval process and the building industry.

3.4 Allocating Staff Resources in the Reviewing and Approving Agencies

Objective: *to ensure staff resources are allocated effectively in the approving and reviewing agencies.*

In order to meet this objective, a review of the approval process must be undertaken in all the departments involved, and steps taken to address the problems identified.

3.4.1 Addressing Bottlenecks

First, actual and potential bottlenecks in the approval process need to be identified. This will involve an analysis of the approval process so that the approving authority can develop a profile of work activities and levels by season and reviewing agency. This can be conducted at the local level even if the municipality is not the approving authority. The local municipality should take responsibility for conducting this activity with the various municipal reviewing agencies (e.g., engineering, parks, utilities, etc.). Next the approving authority needs to address the problems which were identified by the analysis. At a minimum this will include:

- approving authority and reviewing agencies changing the routing of the application;
- approving authority and reviewing agencies reassigning/hiring staff;
- approving authority and reviewing agencies using temporary staff, transfers, secondments and overtime to deal with variable workloads.

Other approaches include:

- approving authority establishing a team review process; and
- approving authority establishing a mechanism to certify professionals to conduct their own plans examination. Alternatively, certified professionals could be hired on contract basis.

Example

Certified professionals

If delays are seasonal, it may be more beneficial to consider alternative ways of meeting demand. Staffing limitations can be addressed by utilizing the resources of a professional who is already involved in the project. This concept ranges from certifying professional architects and engineers to conduct their own plan examinations, to certifying a pool of professionals who could be hired by industry or government to conduct various parts of the approval process.

3.4.2 Identifying Staff Training and Education Needs

Once the approval process has been reviewed, staff training and education needs must be identified. This would include staff within the approving authority and reviewing agencies. Then the approving authority needs to provide staff with the appropriate training and education. Training and ongoing education will help people to perform their present jobs well. If staff are reassigned or the approval process changes, training and education will be required to assist in the transition to the new system. In some situations, staff may require additional training and information to keep up-to-date with new housing policies and approaches to the approvals process.

Training includes formal workshops and seminars, in addition to staff meetings and ongoing performance monitoring. Topics should include specifics and procedures of the approvals process, terminology, an introduction to manuals, application forms, etc. In addition, information on the development industry, provincial and municipal housing policies and customer relations would provide a context for staff activities.

3.4.3 Players

- Approving authority (province/municipality audits its own approval process and coordinates an audit of the approval process in other reviewing agencies).
- Provincial approving authority and municipalities work together to identify, develop and deliver education and training materials.

3.5 Innovative Housing Approaches and the Land Development Approval Process

Objective: *to keep non-standard development approaches from being unduly delayed.*

This objective is closely linked with two other objectives: ensuring staff resources are allocated effectively in the approving and reviewing agencies; and having an in-house review of the subdivision application which is predictable and trackable.

3.5.1 Reviewing the Approval Process

A review of the approval process will determine if specific types of projects are being delayed, reasons for delay and length of delay. Reasons for delay will likely be related to process (e.g., need for land use plan or zoning amendment) or content (e.g., familiarity of the staff with proposed designs or materials). More often than not, atypical, innovative housing developments will be delayed. Process issues should be addressed in part through the use of a tracking system (delays can be identified before they become unreasonable), and also through the establishment of time frames for response.

3.5.2 Specific Approval Stream

Another method of addressing the problem is to establish policy which determines a specific approval stream for atypical developments. However, in our preliminary consultations it was often stated that "fast-tracking" or giving certain types of proposals special approval streams was contrary to the philosophy of government services.

3.5.3 Staff Training and Education

Content issues can be partially addressed through staff training and education. Atypical housing approaches run into regulatory problems at every turn, from land development standards, to the approval process, to the inspection process. The problem is the non-familiarity of all players, not just staff, with atypical housing designs and material. Thus, a section has been set aside to deal specifically with the topic (see chapter 7: "Familiarity with Atypical Housing Types, Forms and Tenures").

3.6 Public Review Process

Objective: *to have a public review of projects prior to their approval by municipalities and provinces that is satisfactory to all parties.*

Any effort to reform regulations which have the potential to introduce new and innovative housing developments into a neighbourhood must consider the considerable resistance which has been shown by the public. There are many examples of the "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) syndrome. New development, redevelopment and subsequent new populations can change the physical character of a neighbourhood and create unease in a community. Concerns include the impact of the development on: property values; parking and traffic; green space; and neighbourhood appearance.

3.6.1 Information Exchange

The municipality and/or developer needs to take responsibility for providing the public with clear, timely information about the project while it is still in the approval stage. This will require the approving authority to have detailed, yet non-technical, information about proposals readily available. In addition, there needs to be a system in place to disseminate information and respond to public concerns.

Ongoing contact between the provincial and municipal planning department and the community, and early contact between the developer and the community will facilitate obtaining public input early on in the process, before the developer and reviewing agencies have contributed substantial resources into the approval process.

The concern for public input and public consultation arises in several of the issue areas. Thus a specific section identifies steps/actions regarding public consultation (see chapter 9: "Public Consultation").

3.6.2 Players

- Municipality consults with community on ongoing basis.
- Building industry establishes contact with community in the early stages of the project.

3.7 Appeal Process

Objective: *to provide for appeal of government decisions in a fair and expeditious manner.*

Each province has some form of appeal process. The appeal process can be a valuable mechanism for reviewing decisions made by government. However, if not conducted fairly and efficiently, the appeal process can also create and contribute to delays.

3.7.1 Setting Appeal Criteria

The first step is to develop specific criteria for accepting appeals. Specific activities include:

- approving authority and appeal body establish criteria for appealing decisions;
- appeal body make appealing criteria readily available to the public, the building industry and relevant government agencies; and
- appeal body apply criteria consistently when deciding whether or not to accept an appeal.

3.7.2 Allocation of Resources

Next, the allocation of resources to appeal bodies needs to be reviewed to ensure that hearings can be conducted without delay. Possible alternatives to the formal appeal processes need to be examined. For example, a pre-hearing process, to assess the legitimacy of the appeal, would enhance the efficiency of the appeal process by dismissing frivolous appeals immediately.

3.7.3 Mediation

Mediation is another approach. The appeal process is potentially time-consuming and costly. Mediation may serve as an alternative or as part of a preliminary hearing process. This would require the approving authority and the appeal body to establish an agency or individual to be available to mediate the disagreement.

3.7.4 Players

- Appeal bodies, in consultation with approving authorities at provincial and municipal levels.

4.0 Building Approval Process

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the building approval system is to ensure that the plans and materials for the proposed building comply with building codes and regulations.

In more complex projects, a number of different approvals are required before construction can begin. A building permit is required for the construction of a new building or structure--for additions, for fireplaces and wood stoves, and for most alterations. Separate, but construction-related permits, may also be required. These including: plumbing; swimming pool enclosure; and demolition permits.

Other approvals and permits which might be required prior to issuing a building permit include:

- **minor variance or a zoning by-law amendment**--if construction or alteration does not conform to the zoning by-law;
- **site plan control approval**--if property is located in a designated site plan control area;
- **heritage permit**--if property is located in a heritage conservation district; and
- **design control approval**--if property is located in a designated design control area.

Some provinces have development permits to regulate zoning by-laws. In B.C. and Alberta, for example, a development permit relates only to zoning, while a building permit relates to construction aspects. However, a development permit is required before a building permit will be issued (in New Brunswick a development permit is used as a tool to administer regional plans).

The process to obtain building approval varies from municipality to municipality but most systems have provisions for:

- submission, review and evaluation of detailed architectural, mechanical, electrical and structural drawings;
- issuing permits;
- charging permit fees;
- establishing citizen review processes for "atypical" or potentially controversial projects; and
- appealing decisions.

As with the land development approval process, the building approval process affects both housing costs and housing choice. The length of the process directly affects builders' costs: delays result in costs in lost time and opportunity, in financing, and in slow responses to quickly changing markets. Builders need to recover their costs; these costs are passed into the price of houses.

The length of the building approval process can also contribute to builders' preference for conventional housing developments--especially if the quickest way to obtain approval is to be non-controversial and adhere to existing land use plans and zoning by-laws. Existing land use plans and zoning by-laws may be outdated and may not reflect the present housing needs of the community.

The overall impact of regulatory reform with respect to the building approval process is to reduce the time between submitting an application until final approval is received. This can be accomplished through a number of changes at each stage of the approval process. Many of the suggestions are similar to those raised in the discussion of the land development approval process. The following section presents seven regulatory reform objectives for the building approval process. The objectives and suggestions presented focus on the building permit approval process, however, they also apply to the other approval processes which may be involved in obtaining a building permit (e.g., development permit). As in the previous section, examples of regulatory reform initiatives are included.

4.2 Pre-Application Review

Objectives: *to have the application forms submitted with all the appropriate information; and to allow the municipality to comment prior to submission of the applications.*

These two objectives can be met through two main areas of activity: the development of a service-oriented application and information kit; and the development of a central application and information centre. These activities could be carried out concurrently. An application and information kit would be a key tool/service of a central application and information centre, and will be discussed first.

4.2.1 Developing a Service-Oriented Application Information Kit

Some municipalities have prepared a guide to the building approval process for potential applicants. The information package should include specific information on all potentially required permits and approvals, together with an outline of the application requirements, application procedure, application forms, application fees and contact names and telephone numbers for more information.

Part of the process of developing an information package is identifying the types of information required and a suitable format. In addition, application forms can be reviewed and revised if necessary to ensure that all the required information is requested at the time of submission. It may also be helpful to standardize application forms for the various approvals required as part of the building approval process.

The development of the information kit and revisions to application forms should be done in consultation with the building industry. In addition, the building industry associations need to coordinate information sessions for builders to ensure they understand the requirements of the building approval process.

Many of the larger municipalities in Canada have prepared, or are in the process of preparing, guides to the building approval process for potential applicants. However, very little information is provided on the approval criteria for each type of approval required.

Example

The District of North Vancouver, British Columbia produces and distributes information brochures on various aspects of the development and building approval process. The brochures explain, in straightforward language, the process to follow if someone wants to build a house or change the use of a property.

Each of the District's brochures focuses on a specific aspect of the approval process. For example, there is a brochure on each of the following topics:

- development permit application procedure;

- minor variance procedure;
- rezoning procedure; and
- development variance application procedure.

A telephone number for more information is also provided.

Each brochure is printed on 8 1/2 by 11 inch white paper with a blue letterhead identifying it as information related to development procedures in the District of North Vancouver. This format is relatively inexpensive to reproduce, and changes to the content can be made very easily.

4.2.2 Establishing a Central Application and Information Centre

The centre would be an office where information and applications for all permits and approvals necessary prior to beginning construction could be found. The centre would be responsible for providing the building industry and the public with information relating to the building approval process, in addition to providing the names and telephone numbers of officials the applicant might need to contact to track the progress of the applications. The centre could also have information related to the land development approval process. This would involve both the building and planning departments.

One of the objectives of centre staff would be to ensure that the application was complete prior to submission. One of the easiest ways to achieve this would be to develop a standard checklist for use by municipal staff and applicants which would identify the presence or absence of the required information. Both the municipality and the applicant would retain a copy of the checklist; the application would not be accepted unless accompanied by a completed checklist.

The municipality should also offer the opportunity for formal pre-application reviews, to identify any obvious deficiencies and potential problems as early as possible in the application process. Also, it would be useful for applicants to approach government officials to ensure the application is complete prior to submitting it. These latter two activities do not require a central application and information centre, however, it would be the ideal place for this activity to occur.

Example

The City of Ottawa has established a Development Information and Application Centre for building permits and approvals. The centre is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Planning and Development. One of the Centre's activities is to provide building and development information to the public and the building industry upon request. Information is provided over the telephone, in writing and in person. This includes not only general information about the application process, but specific details such as the zoning by-laws which apply to a particular property. In 1987, approximately 12,000 requests for information were handled. The service is being used equally by small, medium and large builders, as well as architects, planners, lawyers, real estate agencies and the general public.

According to City of Ottawa staff, there are fewer problems in the planning stage since this pre-application service has been offered.

4.2.3 Players

- Municipalities in consultation with the building industry.

4.3 Developing a Tracking System for Applications

Objective: *to have in-house review of the building permit application which is predictable and trackable.*

In order to meet this objective, a tracking system needs to be developed to monitor the progress of an application through the building approval process. This will include: establishing people responsible for the application in each of the agencies involved in the review process; providing the applicant and municipality with contact names; and developing time frames for responding to proposals. It may also involve a team review process and computerization of development information.

4.3.1 Assigning Responsibility for Tracking System

The first step is to assign one agency and one person as primarily responsible not only for receiving the application but also for distributing and tracking the application. This provides the applicant with a central contact point and ensures that all the required parties receive the application.

In most municipalities numerous departments and agencies are involved in the approval process. Within each department involved, assigning one staff member to be primarily responsible for each application would provide both the applicant and the approving authority with a contact for information about the status of the application. A mechanism should be put in place that would ensure that the person responsible in each department would be made aware of the names of responsible people in other departments and agencies.

4.3.2 Identifying Contact Persons

Once the central responsible person is identified, the municipality should notify the applicant, providing the contact name and phone numbers. If problems occur and/or the applicant wishes to have more information about the application, the contact person should be able to advise both the applicant and the other agencies involved.

4.3.3 Establishing Time Frames

The departments involved in the approval process should work together to establish reasonable time frames for response to applications, which can then be made known to the applicant. One option is to establish time limits for response.

While imposing deadlines is difficult to implement since many factors contribute to delays (including incomplete application forms, staff illness, staffing levels elections, etc.) the establishment of target dates has some benefits. Departments can be motivated to process proposals quickly if deadlines are set, and deadlines can be tied to staff incentives.

Another approach is to set a maximum number of extensions to stated time limits, or establish a fixed outside limit for a decision. The responsible persons in the departments involved should be made aware of the time frames for response in their own and other departments and agencies.

4.3.4 Establishing Standard Team Review Process

For larger projects several departments are often involved in the approval process, and have the power to establish conditions for approval, thus it makes sense for the municipality to establish a standard team review process. In this situation, within each relevant department, a preliminary assessment of the proposal is conducted. Potential problems and conditions are identified. Then, qualified representatives from each department meet to review and discuss the proposal. The group identifies and reviews the conditions set to ensure that they do not conflict. One collective assessment of the proposal is produced. This approach has the advantage that a builder is not presented with potentially conflicting requirements.

4.3.5 Municipal Computer Tracking System

As part of improving the tracking of development and building information the municipality can work with other agencies to design, establish and maintain a computer system. Staff involved in the approval process should be able to access the data quickly and easily.

All the information on the application would be maintained on the system, including: background information on the applicant; the type of development; the various contact people in each agency; the status of various approvals (received, in progress, completed); the conditions established, etc. In addition, relevant information about the land parcel (zoning, services available, soil conditions, etc.) should be included in the data base.

This serves several purposes: information on the status of the approval can be found easily; staff can regulate work loads; and performance statistics can be compiled easily (e.g., number of applications received, in progress, and completed per time period).

Example

The City of St. John's, Newfoundland has detailed property information on a computer database. The computer system was developed in-house, after reviewing the systems used in Vancouver, British Columbia; Scarborough, Ontario; and North York, Ontario. Modifications to the system are continually being made to meet new demands.

The database is used for a variety of purposes including: tracking building permit applications; tracking inspection processes; and enforcing maintenance standards. Builders can phone the Building Branch and immediately be provided with information on the status of the application. In addition, the public can obtain information on the nature of development being considered for a specific property.

The database is also used for monitoring performance and producing year-end statistical reports.

4.3.6 Players

- Municipality in consultation with agencies involved in the building permit approval process and the building industry.

4.4 Allocation of Staff Resources in Review and Approval Agencies

Objective: *to ensure staff resources are allocated effectively within the municipal approving and reviewing agencies.*

4.4.1 Identifying and Addressing Bottlenecks

First, actual and potential bottlenecks in the approval process need to be identified. This will involve an analysis of the approval process so that the municipality can develop a profile of work activities and levels by season and reviewing agency. The building or planning branch should take responsibility for conducting this activity with the various other municipal reviewing agencies (e.g., engineering, parks, utilities, etc.).

Next the municipality needs to address the problems which were identified by the audit. At a minimum this will include:

- municipality changing the routing of the application;
- municipality and reviewing agencies reassigning/hiring staff;
- municipality and reviewing agencies using temporary staff, transfers, secondments and overtime to deal with variable workloads.

Other approaches include:

- developing separate approval stream for small scale projects(see chapter 6: Renovation).
- municipality establishing a team review process; and
- municipality establishing mechanism to certify professionals to conduct their own plans examination. Alternatively, certified professionals could be used for contracting out purposes.

Example

In 1980, the City of Vancouver began a "Certified Professional Program" for architects and engineers. The intent of this program is to allow the design professionals to certify code compliance and thereby accelerate the permit approval process. Every eligible course participant who passes the qualifying examination will be registered as a "Certified Professional". Once certified, the professional is permitted to conduct his or her own site plan examination and inspection.

The course is offered through the extension department of the University of British Columbia. This specialized course is designed to provide an upgrading of background knowledge of the "Use and Occupancy" standards of the National Building Code (1985), and the City of Vancouver Building By-Law No. 6134. The course consists of eight seven-hour sessions, regular tests and a stringent two-part final examination.

Currently, the certification program applies to buildings designed under Part 3 of the National Building Code (buildings four storeys and over, plus institutional and assembly buildings). The City is planning to expand the program to include buildings designed under Part 9 of the National Building Code (buildings three storeys and over).

4.4.2 Identifying Staff Training and Education Needs

Once the approval process has been reviewed, staff training and education needs must be identified. This would include staff within the municipality and reviewing agencies. Then the municipality needs to provide staff with the appropriate training and education. Training and ongoing education will help people to perform their present jobs well. If staff are reassigned or the approvals process changes, training and education will be required to assist in the transition to the new system. In some situations, staff may require additional training and information to keep up-to-date with new housing policies and approaches to the approvals process.

Training includes formal workshops and seminars, in addition to staff meetings and ongoing performance monitoring. Topics should include specifics of the procedures of the approvals process, terminology, an introduction to manuals, application forms, etc. In addition, information on the development industry, provincial and municipal housing policies and customer relations would provide a context for staff activities.

Example

In 1988, at the request of the City of Vancouver Planning Department, The Urban Development Institute (UDI) presented three seminars entitled *The Development Approval Process - The Developers' Perspective* to plan checkers and other front-line staff. UDI members representing market and non-market residential housing, office and industrial developers explained how developers work and just how important timing is to every project. It was agreed on all sides that the seminars were very productive and would lead to a better working relationship all around.

4.4.3 Players

- Municipality analyzes the approval process.
- Municipality identifies, develops and delivers education and training materials with the assistance of the building industry.

4.5 Innovative Building Approaches and the Building Approval Process

Objective: *to keep non-standard building approaches from being unduly delayed.*

This objective is closely linked with two other objectives: ensuring staff resources are allocated effectively within the municipal approving and reviewing agencies; and having an in-house review of the building permit application which is predictable and trackable.

4.5.1 Review of the Approval Process

An analysis of the approval process will determine if specific types of projects are being delayed, reasons for delay and length of delay. Reasons for delay will likely be related to process (e.g., need for land use plan or zoning amendment) or content (e.g., familiarity of the staff with proposed designs or materials). More often than not, atypical, innovative housing developments will be delayed. Process issues should be addressed in part through the use of a tracking system (delays can be identified before they become unreasonable), and also through the establishment of time frames for response.

4.5.2 Specific Approval Stream

Another method of addressing the problem is to establish policy which determines a specific approval stream for atypical developments. However, in our preliminary consultations it was often stated that "fast-tracking" or giving certain types of proposals special approval streams was contrary to the philosophy of government services.

4.5.3 Staff Training and Education

Content issues can be partially addressed through staff training and education. Atypical housing approaches run into regulatory problems at every turn, from land development standards, to the approval process, to the inspection process. The problem is non-familiarity of all players, not just staff, with atypical housing designs and material. Thus, a chapter has been set aside to deal specifically with the topic (see chapter 7: "Familiarity with Atypical Housing Types, Forms and Tenures").

4.6 Public Review Process

Objective: *to have a public review of projects prior to their approval by municipalities that is satisfactory to all parties.*

Any effort to reform regulations which have the potential to introduce new and innovative housing developments into neighbourhoods must consider the resistance which has often been shown by the public. There are many examples of the "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) syndrome. New development, redevelopment and subsequent new populations can change the physical character of a neighbourhood and create unease in a community. Concerns include the impact of the development on: property values; parking and traffic; green space; and neighbourhood appearance.

4.6.1 Information Exchange

The municipality and/or developer needs to take responsibility for providing the public with clear, timely information about the project while it is still in the approval stage. This will require the municipality to have detailed, yet non-technical, information about proposals readily available. In addition, there needs to be a system in place to disseminate information and respond to public concerns.

Ongoing contact between the municipal planning department and the community, and early contact between the building industry and community will facilitate obtaining public input early on in the process, before the developer and reviewing agencies have contributed substantial resources into the approvals process.

The concern for public input and public consultation arises in several of the issue areas. Thus a specific section identifies steps/actions regarding this concern (see chapter 9: "Public Consultation").

4.6.2 Players

- Municipality consults with community on ongoing basis.
- Building industry establishes contact with community in the early stages of the project.

4.7 Appeal Process

Objective: *to provide for appeal of government decision in a fair and expeditious manner.*

Each province has some form of appeal process. The appeal process can be a valuable mechanism for reviewing decisions made by government. However, if not conducted fairly and efficiently, the appeal process can also create and contribute to delays.

4.7.1 Appeal Criteria

The first step is to develop specific criteria for accepting appeals. Specific activities include:

- municipality and appeal body establish criteria for appealing decisions;
- appeal body make appealing criteria readily available to the public, the building industry and relevant government agencies; and
- appeal body apply criteria consistently when deciding whether or not to accept an appeal.

4.7.2 Allocating Resources

Next, the allocation of resources to appeal bodies needs to be reviewed to ensure that hearings can be conducted without delay. Alternatives to the formal appeal processes need to be examined. For example, a pre-hearing process, to assess the legitimacy of the appeal, would enhance the efficiency of the appeal process by dismissing frivolous appeals immediately.

4.7.3 Mediation

Mediation is another approach. The appeal process is potentially time-consuming and costly. Mediation may serve as an alternative or as part of a preliminary hearing process. This would require the municipality and the appeal body to establish an agency or individual to be available to mediate the disagreement.

4.7.4 Players

- Appeal bodies, in consultation with approving authorities at provincial and municipal levels.

5.0 Inspection Process

5.1 Introduction

The chief building official is responsible for administering the various building by-laws and codes. In some municipalities he or she is also responsible for administering the zoning by-law. This includes responsibility for: issuing permits; inspecting sites and construction; and enforcing by-laws and codes.

An application for a building permit must be accompanied by detailed plans including: site plan; foundation plan; floor plan; and cross section plan. Before a building permit is issued, all the materials, the type of construction and the type of design must be approved according to the building code and applicable municipal by-laws. Usually the site plans examiner conducts this review, once an application for a building permit is submitted. (Sometimes, in smaller municipalities, the site plan examiner is the chief building official.) When the plans meet the requirements of the building code and the various municipal by-laws, the chief building official is required to issue the building permit.

Once the permit is issued, several types of inspections are required: structural, electrical, and plumbing. These occur periodically during the course of construction. The purpose of the visits is to review the progress made between visits and to ascertain if there are any violations of the various codes. It is important to remember that the underlying objective of the inspection process is to ensure public health and safety; it is not to ensure that quality materials and equipment are used in construction.

In most provinces, the responsibility for inspections is shared between the province and the municipality, depending on the type of inspection and the size of the municipality. For example, in New Brunswick, the province conducts all electrical inspections. Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John conduct their own building, plumbing and fire inspections, while provincial authorities conduct these inspections for the remainder of the province. In some provinces, utility or power commissions conduct electrical inspections (e.g., Ontario and most municipalities in Nova Scotia).

With respect to inspections, the scope of this study does not include reforming the content of the building code and its impact on inspections, but with the organization of the inspection process. A significant time lag between a request for inspection and the inspector's visit and approval affects the builder's costs: delays result in lost time and in difficulties in scheduling trades. Builders need to recover their costs, thus increased costs due to delays in inspections may be incorporated into the price of a dwelling. The concerns of regulatory reform are to ensure that the inspection departments allocate staff resources effectively, that standards are applied consistently and that the inspection process does not inhibit housing choice. The following section presents regulatory reform objectives, steps which can be taken to meet them, and examples of initiatives related to the inspection process.

5.2 Allocating Staff Resources Within Inspection Authority

Objective: *to ensure staff resources are allocated effectively within the inspection authority.*

As in the other parts of the approval process, it is important to review the inspection process to identify and address potential problem areas.

5.2.1 Identifying Problem Areas

First, the actual and potential bottlenecks in the inspection process need to be identified. As in the land development and building permit approval process, this will involve some form of analysis of the inspection process.

This will begin with an analysis of performance statistics, most of which municipalities already collect, e.g., number and type of inspections conducted per month, number and type of inspectors allocated to the inspection process each month, length of time to conduct an inspection, etc. In addition, future inspection activity and staffing levels should be estimated and potential problems identified.

Discussions with staff at this point can identify problems they may be facing, both generally (e.g., work loads, timing inspections) and specifically (e.g., new types of materials, certain projects). It is important to meet with staff to discuss and clarify problem areas: What is the problem specifically? How often does it occur? What factors contribute to the problem? A municipality may also wish consult other municipalities of a similar size to see if they face the same problems and how they deal with them.

Then a list of ways to improve the system can be drawn up, again in consultation with the staff. Areas for action often mentioned include staffing levels and scheduling. In fact, these two are closely linked; poor scheduling may result in staff being ineffectively assigned.

5.2.2 Increasing Staff

The most frequently recommended method of reducing inspection delays is for government to hire more qualified inspection staff. The practicality of hiring more staff, however, is limited by two factors. One of these is restrictions on government resources. The other factor to consider is that, in most parts of Canada, construction is seasonal, with the demand for inspections peaking in the summer months. It is most likely that hiring inspection staff to meet peak summer levels would under-utilize those same resources in the winter months.

Another approach is to increase the number of inspectors by contracting-out a certain amount or type of inspections, or allowing a builder to retain a private-sector inspector. In addition to speeding up the inspection process, this system provides a pool of trained inspectors which municipalities can draw upon. In both approaches, a certification or licensing system for private inspectors is

required to ensure that inspectors have adequate knowledge of the building code and that standards are maintained. This is similar to the idea of a certified professional to conduct site plan examination, which was discussed in detail in chapter 3 (see page 19).

The private-sector inspector could be responsible for all the inspections. Alternatively, the private-sector inspector could inspect ongoing work; public-sector inspectors could be responsible for the final inspection.

5.2.3 Revising Inspection Scheduling System

Below are presented a number of ways that inspection departments can begin to address the issue of scheduling.

5.2.3.1 Conducting Random Inspections

For on-site inspections in large housing developments, where many units are similar in design and construction, the inspector could examine a sample of different models of houses rather than each one. This would reduce the amount of time spent at each site.

5.2.3.2 Computerizing Information and Scheduling

Computerizing project information allows inspectors to track the progress of a project more efficiently than a manual, card system. Status reports can be printed out regularly, as well as dates for the next required inspection and requests for inspections.

Example

In 1986 the City of Ottawa established a computerized inspection scheduling system for Part 9 buildings (three stories and less). Once a building permit is issued, a computer record is set up for it. Every day, the inspector submits his or her inspection reports, which are immediately entered into the computer. Every morning a report on each project is printed out which contains detailed information on the project, including the anticipated date of the next inspection. If an inspection is requested by the builder, this also appears on the computer print out. This system allows inspectors to easily track and schedule inspections. It also increases the rate of inspection by reducing the amount of time spent in the office.

5.2.3.3 "On-line" Inspections

Administration time can be reduced by the use of hand-held computers. Inspectors enter inspection data into the computers, on-site. Some systems also allow the inspector to have access to information on the project; this is particularly helpful when a number of different inspectors are inspecting the site. Approvals can be immediately entered into projects files, and less paperwork is required.

Example

Approximately 10 percent of inspectors at the City of Toronto use a hand-held computer to record inspection information. The computer fits into the palm of the hand. On average, each inspector manages 300 to 350 projects at one time, although over 500 projects can be stored on the system.

When a building permit is issued, key data is downloaded from a mainframe at the head office to a personal computer in a district office. Then, within 12 hours of issuing the building permit, the data is downloaded to the inspector's hand-held system. (In Toronto, inspectors have responsibility for certain blocks. Also, the onus is on the municipality, not the builder, to ensure inspections are conducted at certain stages of construction.) Each morning, the inspector picks up his or her computer, and reviews the status of his or her projects. During the day all the inspection information, including status codes and comments is entered. At the end of the day, the data is downloaded into the district's PC. Once the inspection process is complete, for example, when the occupancy permit is issued, a comprehensive project report is printed out, reviewed and signed by the inspector and chief building official.

Within six months of implementing the on-line, hand-held computer system, the manual system of writing on permit cards was discarded. Not only has the hand-held system decreased the inspectors' paperwork, but they now have greater control of their area. The system is expected to pay for itself within two years of start-up. The City is planning to expand the number of inspectors on hand-held computers. In addition, the City is examining the application of such a system to health and public works inspections.

5.2.3.4 Cross-Training Inspectors

Traditionally, inspectors are trained to conduct inspections in one discipline, be it plumbing, electrical, fire, mechanical, or structural inspections. Another approach is to cross-train inspectors, allowing them to conduct inspections in some or all areas. This improves the efficiency of the inspection process in several ways. First, once on-site, an inspector can conduct several inspections (e.g., plumbing and construction), saving both municipalities' and builders' time. Second, the municipality has greater flexibility in assigning staff to projects, especially during the winter months when construction activity is low. Modifications of this system are possible, for example, training inspectors in two approval criteria.

Example

In 1986 the New Brunswick Department of Labour, Technical and Inspections Branch, started a combination inspection program which formally educates all provincial plumbing, electrical, structural (building code) and fire code inspectors in all four specialties as they relate to low-rise housing (up to four units). Once the inspectors have passed provincial courses they can perform all necessary inspections on these buildings.

The program is delivered by community colleges. Fourteen weeks of theory cover the building code requirements for electrical, plumbing and fire prevention. In addition, well site and tourism inspections, and New Brunswick Housing Commission policies are covered. Then each inspector is required to log 40 hours of practice in each discipline. During the practical, inspections are reviewed

and audited. When the trainee has completed the practical, he or she is eligible to be certified by the chief inspector.

To date, 42 combined inspectors have been trained. In the first eight months of using combined inspectors, the number of inspections conducted has increased by seven percent over the same period last year. During that same time period, approximately 20 percent of 19,000 inspections were combination inspections. In the winter months, when construction slows down, all the inspectors can conduct fire inspections. Also, because the inspector can conduct several inspections at the same time, mileage costs have been reduced.

The City of Ottawa is exploring the combined inspection program (for Part 9 construction, buildings three storeys and less) on a pilot project basis. One person has completed the training, another one will complete the program within the year.

The City is using several resources to train the combination inspector. Both inspectors involved in the pilot project were building inspectors. Training for mechanical inspections was provided in-house. For plumbing inspections, the trainee was sent to an Ontario Ministry of Housing course on plumbing, followed by a three month "apprenticeship" with City plumbing inspectors.

The purpose of the combined inspector is to allow mechanical and plumbing inspectors to concentrate on larger, Part 3 (more than three storeys), inspections. Also, it provides better service to industry because they only have to call one telephone number for all inspections.

5.2.4 Players

- Municipal and provincial building officials conduct an audit of their own inspection processes; establish priorities in addressing problems; select and implement alternative processes.
- Municipal and provincial building officials work with building industry and professional organizations to develop training programs for staff and building professionals

5.3 Developing A Consistent Inspection Process

Objective: *to have an inspection process which is of a consistent nature.*

5.3.1 Discipline-Specific Training Sessions

Inspectors come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some have engineering or construction technology degrees from community colleges, others have a background in trades or are professional engineers and architects. With this diverse background it is important that inspectors have a similar understanding of the building code to ensure that it is applied fairly and consistently. In addition, changes to the National Building Code every five years (which are subsequently adopted into provincial building codes where they exist) and the use of equivalents, requires that inspectors receive ongoing training.

Example

The Ontario Ministry of Housing (MOH) offers five, two-week training courses for inspectors throughout the province; (1) The Inspector and the House; (2) Technical Inspection--Part 3; (3) Technical Inspection--Part 9; (4) The Legal Process; and (5) Plumbing. Grants are available for building officials to take the courses. In addition to providing information, a goal is to encourage communication between industry and building officials.

The response to the MOH programs has been overwhelming. In order to meet the demand, the province has recently enlisted the help of the The Ontario Building Officials Association (OBOA) to deliver courses. Members of the OBOA are trained to deliver the courses and are supplied with the manuals and instruction materials. The OBOA receives the course material free of charge; they however, charge students a fee to cover administration costs.

5.3.2 Staff Involvement

One of the problems inspectors have is keeping track of current information on building codes and related standards on an ongoing basis. Also, staff need to be included in discussions prior to and during the implementation of any change to the inspection process. Regular staff meetings are useful to: identify and review problems; discuss potential solutions; pass on information about new codes and standards, training sessions, etc.

Example

In Vancouver, a codes engineer receives the information from National Research Centre, evaluates it and discusses it with the inspections branch on an ongoing basis. The City also has a continuing education program for inspectors.

5.3.3 Players

- Municipal and provincial building officials in consultation with building industry professional organizations.

5.4 Non-Standard Building Materials and the Inspection Process

Objective: to keep the approval of non-standard building materials from being unduly delayed.

The site and building plans specify the types of materials and construction techniques as approved by the municipality. If an inspector is not familiar with different types of materials, designs or construction techniques, the inspection may be conducted more slowly. This may deter builders from undertaking innovative approaches to construction. The suggestions with respect to increasing housing choice focus on improving the knowledge and awareness of inspectors, to ensure that they are familiar with new approaches to house design, new building standards and processes, and the use of equivalents.

While building codes give specific standards for materials, designs and construction methods, in many cases it is possible for chief building officials to accept systems or materials which are "equivalent" to those in the prescribed standard. While the use of equivalents can lead to innovative housing approaches, builders may be discouraged from using them if inspectors delay the inspection process because they are unfamiliar with the equivalent. To overcome this problem, the following steps can be taken.

5.4.1 Developing Guidelines for the Use of Equivalents

Municipalities and provinces can begin by creating guidelines for the use of equivalents. Rather than allowing equivalents on a project specific basis, it would be more efficient if guidelines and procedures for the use of equivalents were established by municipalities. This should be conducted jointly with industry.

At the same time, builders and developers can stimulate the acceptance of equivalents by providing complete documentation supporting the use of a particular equivalent at the site plan approval stage.

5.4.2 Disseminating Information

Once guidelines are established, industry and municipal officials need to be informed on how to implement them. Staff training sessions and professional association meetings are an ideal place to disseminate and discuss information. Both municipal inspection officials and the building industry have professional organizations across the country.

Training sessions could be given to staff and interested builders at the same time. This would ensure that both builders and government staff have a common understanding of the guidelines and the use of equivalents.

5.4.3 Players

- Municipal and provincial building officials in consultation with National Research Council.
- Building industry professionals including builders, engineers and architects.

6.0 Residential Renovation

6.0 Introduction

Before discussing the issue surrounding residential renovation, the term "residential renovation" needs to be defined. Rehabilitation, renewal, retrofitting, remodelling, conservation and maintenance all describe activities which overlap one another to varying degrees and are used synonymously with residential renovation in this paper.

Statistics Canada renovation data are generally broken down into two components, repairs and improvements. (For a more complete definition of repairs and improvements see Appendix F.) In this report, the term renovation refers to the two activities combined.

Another way of considering residential renovation is to consider renovation as being either to repair or improve an existing dwelling without a change-of-use (e.g., adding an accessory apartment to a single family dwelling), or with a change-of-use of a dwelling (e.g., converting commercial space into residential space). The first tends to be of lower cost than the second. In addition, change-of-use projects often require rezoning, whereas repair and improvements often do not. Thus some of the issues for each area are slightly different.

Most renovations require a building permit. As a result, many regulatory regulations issues raised previously in this report overlap with a discussion of renovations. However, certain aspects of the renovation process are sufficiently different in nature to warrant specific consideration of the topic. These are discussed in this chapter. Examples of specific initiative are also presented.

6.2 Improving the Applicability of the Building Code and Building Standards to Residential Renovation

Objective: *to improve the applicability of the building code and building standards to residential renovation.*

The application of building codes and standards designed for new construction to older construction is not straightforward. In most jurisdictions the building code for new construction is used for renovations, despite the fact that a building constructed according to previous regulations is not likely to meet all the provisions of a current code. The inflexibility of the building code often increases the cost of residential renovation because it requires that the entire older dwelling be brought up to the new standard. Also, in some areas, zoning by-laws have been changed over time. The new building standards established in current zoning by-law may bear little or no relationship to the housing built prior to the changes. However, when a property is renovated, it may be required to conform with the current zoning by-law.

6.2.1 Developing a Renovation Building Code

Several jurisdictions have adopted special provisions to their building regulations to deal specifically with renovations to existing dwellings. These provisions are often called renovation codes or retrofit codes. Renovation codes generally relax the building code standards which would otherwise apply, while maintaining an acceptable level of health and safety. For example, allowing the acceptance of materials or methods which meet established safety standards and not requiring portions of the building unaffected by renovation projects to conform to the current standards. The use of a residential renovation code can improve the economic feasibility of renovation work.

Example

The Province of Ontario's Building Code has a chapter for residential renovations (Part 11). The intent of the code is to ensure that when an existing building is altered in any way, the renovation provides a level of safety in the building against fire, structural instability and threat to health that is at least equal to that prior to the renovation. Any new construction, for example an addition to an existing dwelling, must comply with the appropriate parts of the building code.

Part 11 also establishes a set of "Compliance Alternatives" to requirements in the building code for renovations. For example, heights for doors may be reduced to suit ceiling heights (Compliance Alternative 9.6.3.1).

The cities of Saint John, Vancouver and Winnipeg have adopted approaches similar to Ontario's. In Vancouver, a building by-law has been established which contains renovation guidelines. At the national level, the Associate Committee on the National Building Code is considering preparing guidelines on the application of each clause of the National Building Code to existing buildings.

Another approach is to have compliance with the current code based on the extent of the renovation work.

Example

In some American municipalities a percentage rule is commonly used to control rehabilitation with no change-of-use or occupancy. The rule bases the need for compliance with the code on the ratio between the cost of the renovation work and the replacement value of the dwelling. For example, in Phoenix, Arizona, if the cost of repair is zero to 10 percent of the replacement value of the building, the renovator can replace with like materials; if the cost of repair is 10 to 50 percent, the new work must meet the current code; and if the cost of repair is over 50 percent the entire building must meet the current code.²

Several drawbacks to the percentage rule have been noted. First, the percentages have been arbitrarily chosen and do not relate to the need for renovation. Second, because the rule is based on the replacement, or market, value, it discriminates between two similar buildings located in different real estate markets. Also, it may unintentionally encourage low-cost renovations by forcing the renovator into complete code compliance when the 50 percent limit is exceeded.

6.2.2 Developing a Guide to Renovation Codes

To accompany existing renovation codes or once renovation codes have been adopted, it is important for municipalities to provide both renovating professionals and the general public with clearly presented, accurate information about the renovation codes. This may require special training sessions for both renovators and staff involved in the approval process. Course and printed materials should be designed and offered jointly with the home building industry. If there are no specific guidelines for renovations, guidelines to the building code targeted to potential renovators should be prepared.

Example

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has published a set of eight rehabilitation guidelines to assist municipalities interested in reforming regulations governing rehabilitation.³ The intent is to encourage the maintenance and upgrading of the existing housing stock. The first four guidelines are designed for use by municipal officials and politicians. They cover: setting and adopting standards; the municipal approval process; statutory guidelines for building rehabilitation; and managing official liability.

² National Institute of Building Sciences, Rehabilitation Guidelines 1980: Guideline for Setting and Adopting Standards for Building Rehabilitation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, 1980. p.19.

³ National Institute of Building Science, Rehabilitation Guidelines 1980: Guideline for Approval of Building Rehabilitation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Washington, 1980. Volume 4.

The other four guidelines are technical in nature, and are intended for use by code officials, inspectors, designers, and builders. They cover the following technical requirements: egress; electrical; plumbing; and fire.

Approximately 40 percent of home renovations is carried out by home owners, the majority of whom are not aware of the wide range of permits, rules and regulations that must be obtained and adhered to when undertaking home renovation (including the creation of accessory apartments). Learning of the need for detailed project information, and the potentially cumbersome approval process, may discourage some home owners from undertaking renovations. It may also encourage them to undertake the work outside of the established permit and inspection process.

The type of information needed by home owners who are considering renovating includes: local building codes and standards; zoning by-laws and approval processes that must be followed; and government housing programs targeted to renovations (e.g., the Ontario Ministry of Housing's Convert-to-Rent Program).

Example

Recognizing the problem discussed above, the Ontario Ministry of Housing is promoting the development of municipally-operated Home Planning Advisory Services. The Advisory Services will provide a single source of information on topics relevant to the home owner or non-professional who is renovating or creating an accessory apartment, or creating new units generally through the renovation of existing buildings.

6.2.3 Players

- Municipality in consultation with the provincial government, the National Research Council and the building industry.

6.3 Residential Renovation and the Approval Process

Objective: *to keep residential renovation projects from being unduly delayed.*

The problems within the approval process and their potential resolutions with regard to residential renovation for: (1) repairs and improvements; and (2) change-of-use will be discussed in turn.

Residential renovation for repairs and improvements

This type of renovation work is generally of a lower dollar value and less extensive than the construction of new housing. But in most municipalities the building approval requirements and process is exactly the same. Thus the time and costs involved in the approval process may discourage people from undertaking renovation. Also, as noted previously, about 40 percent of renovations are undertaken by home owners who are less likely to be familiar with the building approval process than contractors and home building professionals.

Residential renovation for change-of-use

Change-of-use projects are different from repairs and improvements in at least two ways that are relevant to the approval process. As the use of the dwelling is changing, rezoning of the property is often required--a potentially time consuming activity. Also, renovations for change-of-use are usually more extensive and hence of higher value than repairs and improvements. Efforts to improve the approval process will affect change-of-use projects positively (see chapter 4).

In addition, if municipalities want to encourage change-of-use, this should be clearly stated in policy documents and staff informed accordingly (for example, to make more intensive use of existing housing stock; to revitalize commercial areas).

Thus, another objective of regulatory reform is to permit efficient review of renovation projects. This objective is closely linked with objectives in the building approval process: ensuring staff resources are allocated effectively; and having an in-house review of the application which is predictable and trackable.

6.3.1 Analysis of Approval Process with Respect to Residential Renovation

As discussed in the chapter 4 , an analysis of the building approval process will identify if specific types of projects are being delayed, reasons for delay and length of delay. It should also be used to identify process and content issues related to renovations. Analysis of the information from the audit could lead to the following approaches to renovation and change-of-use projects.

6.3.2 Possible Approaches

6.3.2.1 Assign a Chief Building Inspector to Residential Renovations and/or Assign Staff Specifically to Handle Residential Renovations

This allows expertise to be developed with respect to renovations and as a result may speed up the approval process.

Example

Seattle, Washington has assigned one plan check engineer to handle all rehabilitation. The City feels that this helps municipal staff to become familiar; with problems unique to rehabilitation, leading to a reduction in the number of formal appeals.⁴

6.3.2.2 Exempt Minor Works from the Approval Process

As in the construction of new dwellings, delays in the approval process can increase renovation costs. The less the value of the renovation, the less likely that the costs can be recovered. One way to ensure that staff resources are used effectively is to exempt minor works from the approval process.

Example

The City of Ottawa has identified a number of renovation activities which do not require a building permit including: replacing plaster with drywall; replacing deteriorated wood for verandah floors or steps; installation of siding; sun decks not more than 24 inches in height from the ground; and garden or tool sheds under 108 square feet.

6.3.2.3 Provide a Separate Approval Stream for Small- or Low-Value Projects

In many cases, renovation for repair and improvement does not require rezoning or obtaining minor variances to zoning by-laws. One way to ensure that the costs of the approval process do not inhibit renovation activity of this type is to provide a separate stream for small- or low-value projects.

Example

The City of Ottawa has a same-day building permit service for certain types of projects, including renovations such as: interior alterations to single family dwellings, semi-detached and row housing; and addition and or exterior work to singles.

In addition to, or instead of, a separate approval stream, municipalities could modify the information required on applications for building permits for renovation projects. For example, in less complex renovation projects, detailed

⁴ *ibid.* p.3.

plans may not be required. It may be possible to use written descriptions of materials and equipment as construction documents, supplemented, where necessary, with sketches or product literature.

6.3.3 Staff Training and Education

Training sessions and meetings for staff members should deal with specifics of the building code and renovation code. All staff who are in contact with renovators should be aware of the renovation code/guideline or the building code as it applies to renovations, and be able to direct renovators to a source of detailed, clear information about these codes as they apply to particular dwellings.

If a change-of-use policy exists, staff should be made aware of the policy and any accompanying guidelines.

Example

In San Francisco, California existing buildings, legally constructed at some time in the past, are considered acceptable today if they conform with a set of specific retrofit requirements. In order that municipal staff, especially site plan examiners and inspectors, apply the retrofit requirements consistently, the city produces a field inspection manual. The manual contains interpretations of conditions or configurations that have been common over the years in buildings in San Francisco. These interpretations assist an inspector during an inspection by directly providing him or her with the expertise of the Superintendent of Building Inspection.⁵

Sometimes renovation guidelines allow the inspector a certain amount of discretion in determining acceptable conformance with the code. The uncertainty associated with the use of discretion and resulting legal liability may contribute to the reluctance of building officials to implement renovation guidelines. The fear of liability can be reduced by adopting agency practices that support the officials' ability to respond to the needs of renovators without compromising public health and safety. These practices could include: training and education of inspectors, particularly with respect to renovation; development, distribution and requiring use of detailed renovation manuals; and provision of supervisory support.

6.3.4 Players

- Municipality in consultation with the provincial government, the National Research Council, and the building industry.

⁵ National Institute of Building Sciences, Rehabilitation Guidelines 1980: Guideline for Setting and Adopting Standards for Building Rehabilitation, p.31

7.0 Familiarity with Innovative Housing and Materials

7.1 Introduction

Changing demographics and lifestyles are requiring new approaches to housing. Housing must be built to meet the needs of single parents, the elderly, professional couples, empty-nesters and smaller families, all of whom reflect different lifestyles. All parties, including municipal politicians, municipal staff involved in the planning and approval process and the profit and non-profit building industry, must be familiar with and accept new housing forms before regulatory reform activities can proceed with community support.

The push for atypical housing is likely to arise in one of three ways--through the planning process; through special interest groups; or through the building industry proposing projects. The planning process may identify demographic trends which will affect housing supply and demand; special interest groups (senior citizens groups, handicapped groups, low income groups, etc.) may demand new forms of housing; or builders and developers may identify a new market opportunity in a proposed project (perhaps based on the development of new technology).

The planning and approval process in most municipalities is designed to manage applications which are consistent with the approved planning principles, objectives and policies of the municipalities. However, in a time of change, these policies, which are usually designed for "standard" developments, may inhibit the use of innovative housing designs and materials. "Atypical" applications may be delayed since they do not fit or meet the usual approval process requirements. Approval problems can easily arise with atypical housing types such as manufactured housing, granny flats, and intensification; and atypical forms of housing such as made-to-convert housing and the conversion of commercial space to residential dwellings. In addition, if new materials or construction techniques are introduced the approval process may be delayed.

One of the reasons for the delay may be because the people involved in the policy development, plans examination and inspection process are not familiar with the housing plans or materials used, and thus simply require more time to evaluate them. Often underlying the lack of familiarity is a perceived risk in trying something new. For example, in introducing new land use and housing policies municipalities may not be sure of the effects on infrastructure maintenance costs; builders may be uncertain about designing housing appropriate for smaller lots or if they will be able to obtain building approval for atypical projects.

In this context, one of the objectives of regulatory reform is to familiarize municipal and provincial officials, municipal and provincial politicians and the building industry with atypical housing developments (public education is discussed in chapter 9). The following section presents actions to achieve this objective.

7.2 Training and Education Needs

Objective: *to establish a method to identify and meet training and education needs associated with atypical housing developments.*

7.2.1 Identifying Training and Information Needs

Action is triggered when an organization identifies a specific area in which increased training and education is needed. Usually this need will arise when policy changes or new housing projects are under consideration. Action required includes identifying who needs to know, what information is required and the level of knowledge required. Various organizations may identify a need for more information including a municipality, special interest group or the building industry.

Various types of proposals would result from taking this approach including:

- builders suggesting materials that they wish to use to the chief building official and proposing that the building industry would provide resources for training municipal officials. The objective of training and education would be to provide municipal officials with the level of knowledge necessary to evaluate and inspect buildings with these materials without undue delay in the approval process.
- community groups identifying special housing needs and the municipality working with the building industry to develop a project (perhaps a demonstration project) that meets these needs. Then, the municipality and the building industry would use this project as a tool to educate the public through open houses, seminars, meetings with community associations, etc. Education would be particularly important if the project is controversial. In addition, the municipality could use the project to make municipal staff aware of the reasons for non-standard approaches, in that they meet the housing needs of the community.
- builders suggesting atypical developments to meet community needs. The municipality would then ensure that the community needs would be met, and that the staff have adequate information to assess the project. If training for staff is required, the municipality should provide it.

7.2.3 Demonstrating Innovative Approaches

As has been noted above and in other chapters, demonstration projects are an effective way of focussing attention on a specific issue. With respect to familiarity, demonstration projects focus attention and energy on specific examples of alternative housing approaches. They are ideal tools for reaching

a broad public audience and for focussing training and education sessions for municipal staff and the building industry.

Example

The concept of a garden suite or granny flat is new to Canada, and both industry and governments are seeking a better understanding of the opportunities for this housing approach in Canada. (A garden suite is a small self-contained house that is placed on the same lot as a single family house. They are designed for elderly people who want to live close to their children, while maintaining their independence and privacy.) This prompted provincial government housing departments, CHMC and provincial manufactured housing associations to sponsor demonstration projects to provide Canadians with a chance to visit a garden suite. The demonstration projects were held in most Canadian provinces in 1987 and were intended to provide potential occupants, potential neighbours, municipal planners and members of the community a better understanding of how garden suites will look and ways in which they will be used.

7.2.3 Players

- Municipalities take the lead in ensuring that there is a known contact point for groups with special housing needs and for proponents of atypical projects (particularly those that may run into problems if special training and education measures are not taken). The municipality would oversee information and training sessions for staff, including plans examiners and inspectors (they would also ensure that broad public education is done, as discussed in chapter 9).
- Builders take the lead in working with special needs groups which have been identified as requiring housing. (Builders would also consult and educate the public on the nature of the resulting developments, as discussed in chapter 9.

8.0 Industry-Government Relations

8.1 Introduction

It is generally assumed that goals of the building industry and municipalities with respect to housing differ. Municipalities are looking to achieve livable, safe neighbourhoods *from a non-monetary* perspective. The building industry is looking to maximize profit. Of course, these are not mutually exclusive goals. Many municipalities have examples of livable, safe neighbourhoods which realized a profit for the builder and developer.

However, the difference in goals has contributed to the development of an adversarial relationship between the building industry and government. Government officials often mention examples of rapacious land development and badly-designed housing which led to the establishment of regulation. The building industry complains that administrators of regulations do not have any experience in building and development and do not consider the cost implications of what they do.

The reality is that the building industry and municipalities share an overriding objective--to supply housing to meet the market demand, including a variety of types, forms and tenures of housing at a price people can afford. From this objective come a number of shared concerns about regulatory content and process, many of which have been discussed in other chapters of this report.

The impact of reforms to regulatory content and process are widespread, and the environment within which housing operates is increasingly complex. Very few concerns can be solved successfully by one party alone.

The building industry and government need to share information, exchange ideas and discuss options. For this to occur a good working relationship should be established between industry and government. Thus, a precursor to regulatory reform is to increase the building industry's and government's knowledge and understanding of each other--the outcome of which should be an effective working relationship.

With respect to regulatory reform, the key players' knowledge and understanding of each other is important in two ways. First, it can contribute to a better understanding of current regulations: why they are in place; how they affect the building industry; and how they affect housing choice and affordability. Second, communication between the building industry and government is likely to bring relevant, timely information to bear on decisions about revising regulations and creating new regulations.

Joint discussions can provide information on the impact of revised regulations and new regulations on housing choice and affordability. Or, the development industry can provide housing market information to municipalities;

municipalities can discuss ideas about revised land development approval processes with the development industry.

Activities to stimulate reforms to housing regulations can serve as the basis for regular dialogue between industry and government. Ultimately, this dialogue should occur at the municipal, regional and provincial level. However, for the purposes of this paper, the focus of the following section is on municipal-level models. They can easily be adapted to a regional or provincial level. Also presented are relevant examples.

8.2 Establishing Liaison Committees

Objective: *to increase the level of mutual understanding between the building industry and municipal government.*

A liaison committee is a formal committee of industry and government representatives which meets on a regular basis. The purpose of establishing liaison committees is to facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between the building industry and government. The key is for the structure and agenda of the committee to be flexible enough to meet the situations and concerns of the municipality.

The initiative to establish the committee can be taken by the municipality or the building industry. Examples of both are discussed later. First, the steps required to establish the committees are presented.

8.2.1 Identifying Contact Persons

The first step is for the initiating organization to contact people who might be interested in establishing and participating in an industry-government liaison committee. This would involve industry contacting municipal politicians and senior city staff or municipalities contacting building industry associations representing builders, developers, architects, landscape architects, engineers, planners, etc.

Initial discussions should focus upon a discussion of: the idea of an industry-government liaison committee; the potential purpose and benefits of such a committee; and the interest of each person or organization in participating.

8.2.2 Initial Committee Meeting

Next, a meeting time and place should be set by the initiating organization and potential members invited. The objective of the first meeting is to obtain a commitment from the various representatives to participate. The meeting may be purely informational, or a specific issue relevant to all parties can be discussed. The meeting should end by establishing: a time and date for the next meeting; a list of potential issues to be examined; and an organization responsible for administration (e.g., taking minutes, preparing the agenda, information dissemination). Ideally, the first one or two issues addressed would be of concern to both parties, involve minimum resources and achieved results within a relatively short time period.

Example

In British Columbia the Urban Development Institute (UDI) has initiated 21 liaison committees over the past six years. Many of these committees were formally established after a one day meeting which examined the land development approval process from the municipality and industry perspectives.

8.2.3 Identifying Opportunities for Industry-Government Cooperation

Once the committees are up-and-running other opportunities for industry-government cooperation can be identified. For example, the committee may wish to sponsor joint building industry-government education and training sessions, or may wish to support the development of a liaison committee at the regional and provincial levels.

The impact of the committee should also be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is fulfilling its original purpose.

Example of a Municipally-Led Initiative

In 1985, the City of Ottawa established the Building-Industry Liaison Development Committee (BILD Committee). The purpose of the committee is to "facilitate a regular interchange of ideas and information between the Buildings Branch and the public it serves". (Terms of Reference BILD Committee, City of Ottawa, 1985.) Since its establishment, the scope of the committee has expanded to include activities in the City departments of Planning and Development, Finance, Housing, Engineering and Works and Economic Development.

Membership of the BILD Committee includes senior city officials from: the Chief Administrative Office; Planning and Development; Housing and Property; Finance; Engineering and Works; and Economic Development. Industry representatives are from: the Ottawa Construction Association; the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects; the Building Owners and Managers Association; the Ottawa-Carleton Home Builders' Association; the Ottawa Regional Society of Architects; the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario; the County of Carleton Law Association; the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario; and the Real Estate Board of Ottawa-Carleton.

City staff members of the Committee are not intended to provide decisions on issues, in that the City representatives rarely have the required authority. The role of each member is to represent the needs and positions of their department or industry and, where required or desired, to consult with their department or industry associations on particular issues.

Municipal council is not represented on the BILD Committee. Municipal council's Planning Committee, however, meets with the BILD Committee on a quarterly basis. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss matters directly with industry and to provide members with the opportunity to respond to reports on major housing and land policies.

While it is hoped that the discussions will lead to a level of consensus which is acceptable to all members, it is important to note that the Committee is not intended to provide a consolidated stance or consensus opinion on issues.

The meetings are chaired by the Commissioner of Planning and Development. Meeting agendas include: updating the building industry on current activities at City Hall, such as the status of the Official Plan; providing industry with specific information about new policies and procedures; and soliciting opinions on housing, planning and development matters, such as a new procedure for notification of fee increases. In addition, the Committee has established an

agenda for jointly examining specific issues of concern. These include the land development approval process and site plan control.

Two formal processes to solicit input from industry on reports being prepared by City staff going to a Standing Committee and/or Council were established in the Terms of Reference for the BILD Committee. The first process is designed to address reports where immediate action is required. The second process provides for reports which are more flexible in terms of time. The appropriate process to be followed on a particular item will be determined at the first BILD Committee meeting at which the item is raised. Details on each process are included in Appendix G.

Where consensus is not reached and where Council decision is required on a particular issue, the concerns of the industry will be reported to council. This does not preclude industry representatives attending Council meetings to support their own position.

The administrative responsibility for the BILD Committee lies with the Planning and Development Branch who prepare the agenda, take minutes, circulate minutes and reports and provide the meeting facilities.

Meetings are generally held on a weekday evening (from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.) every other month. The meetings are held at City Hall.

Example of an Industry-Led Initiative

In British Columbia, the UDI Pacific Region has established 21 industry/government liaison committees. These operate at the municipal and regional level, meeting every other month. The creation and administration of liaison committees is an ongoing project of UDI Pacific Region.

The purpose of the committees is to foster communication and cooperation between industry and government. The membership, structure and format is flexible to meet the needs and interests of each municipality. For example, some committees include politicians, others do not; some committee meetings are very structured, others follow a more flexible format.

Membership of the committees usually includes senior city officials from: the chief administrative office, housing, planning and engineering. Industry representatives are from the local chapters of the: Urban Development Institute; architects association; and the home builders' association.

The meetings are usually chaired by a representative of UDI. Meeting agendas include items such as: an overview of the industry and housing market; community plan updates; status of specific municipal policies; soliciting opinions on housing, planning and development matters, such as new by-laws; and activities of subcommittees.

The administrative responsibility for the UDI Liaison Committees lies with the UDI Pacific Region who works with local politicians and staff to establish the committees, prepares the meeting agendas, takes minutes, and circulates minutes and reports. In some municipalities UDI sponsors annual dinner events.

The UDI Liaison Committee is not intended to provide a consolidated stance, or consensus opinion on issues. However, as with the City of Ottawa BILD

Committee, it is hoped that the discussions will lead to a level of consensus which is acceptable to all members.

Benefits of the committees include: an improvement of the relationship between industry and government; better communication between industry and government; the ability to obtain/give industry input early in the policy and procedure development process; and some improvement of procedures (e.g., land development approval).

The committees are usually initiated by the UDI, although in some instances the municipality has approached UDI to establish a committee. Generally one of two approaches is taken to establish committees.

Approach A

- UDI meets with local politicians and some senior officials to obtain agreement to the idea;
- UDI sends a letter to senior staff with information about UDI, liaison committees and interest in establishing liaison committee;
- once interest has been established, UDI and City staff organize first meeting.

Usually the first meeting is held immediately after a council meeting and lasts about one and a half hours. The purpose of the liaison committee is discussed and agreed upon, membership established and roles and responsibilities agreed upon. In addition, a list of potential issues to be discussed may be identified.

Approach B

Another approach is to begin by the UDI offering to give a workshop for municipal staff. Usually the workshop is on the land development approval process. Participants are recommended by senior staff and usually include people involved in the daily task of approving land development, in addition to senior staff.

The meeting is co-chaired by UDI and the City. Briefly, the workshop format is as follows:

- municipality presents the steps in land development approval process including the rationale, regulations, potential problems, time lines, etc;
- building industry presents the steps in the land development approval process including markets, financing, experience with application process, time lines, etc.;
- identification and discussion of potential problems/conflicts/"hot" issues;
- lunch break with guest speaker;
- role play of the land development approval process--municipality takes the role of "Newcome Developer" and industry takes the role of "Newcome Municipality";
- review of session prompted by industry listing what they think municipality learned and municipality listing what they think industry learned;
- close session by co-chairperson putting forward recommendation for vote to develop an industry-government liaison committee to look at the issues raised by this workshop.

8.3 Joint Industry-Government Training Sessions

Joint industry-government training sessions are useful ways to draw on the expertise, experience and insights of both industry and government. This may involve industry providing courses for government or visa versa. Joint sessions can facilitate communication between the two groups, and can ensure that both parties receive the same information.

Example

In Burnaby, British Columbia the British Columbia branch of the CHBA built and operated a building industry training centre. The Burnaby Housing Industry Training Centre was completed in 1987 and has been busy providing courses for industry, government and technology students ever since. The two-storey, 5,000 square foot building is constructed to R-2000 specifications. The land was provided by the British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) and the building industry contributed \$100,000 in addition to donated time and materials. The first floor of the building contains a computer laboratory, three classrooms and a seminar room. The second floor contains a technical library and the offices of CHBA-British Columbia.

The classrooms are used by BCIT four days a week; CHBA has use of the classrooms the remainder of the time. The CHBA offers a variety of workshops throughout the year to both the building industry and municipal officials. Areas covered include: typical construction problems such as wood frame construction, siding, preserved wood foundations, moisture problems, etc.; R-2000 housing qualification and marketing; certified professional builder training; and computer courses specifically targeted to the building industry. Courses are often offered jointly with other organizations such as CMHC and the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute (HRAI).

In January 1988, HRAI and CHBA held workshops on "Ventilation and the 1985 Code". Both builders and municipal officials across British Columbia are having problems with the interpretation of the new mechanical ventilation requirements of the 1985 National Building Code. The workshop for builders is targeted for the builder/general contractor specializing in residential construction. It covers: selecting and specifying an approved system; inspecting system installation; and marketing a variety of systems to customers. The workshop for municipal inspectors covers: the design and proper installation of mechanical ventilation systems; and the inspection of a variety of ventilation system installations. The Chief Building Inspector for the Municipality of Delta facilitates this workshop series.

Example

In 1988, UDI Pacific Region, at the request of the Vancouver City Planning Department, presented three sessions entitled *The Development Permit Process - The Developer's Perspective*. Division members representing market and non-market residential housing, office and industrial developers, explained how developers work and just how important timing is to every project. According to UDI and City staff, these sessions were very successful and promoted open dialogue and a feeling of teamwork.

8.4 Demonstration Projects

Joint demonstration projects are another way to improve industry-government relations. A demonstration project (or a project to review and revise the approval process) can foster discussion between key players; be monitored and evaluated; and involve low cost and risk.

Example:

For the National Canadian Home Builders' Association Conference in February, 1988, CMHC and the CHBA jointly sponsored a demonstration home. The objective of the demonstration home was to design a home that would be of interest to building industry professionals, municipalities and the general public. In developing the project, a focus was the changing housing needs of Canadian municipalities.

The CHBA/CMHC Demonstration Home is an example of the made-to-convert concept--a single family, 2,000 square foot home which can be easily and inexpensively converted to two, 1,000 square foot units (rental, ownership or combined).

Members of the Hamilton and District Home Builders' Association initiated, organized and coordinated the construction of the CHBA/CMHC Demonstration Home. The Tripartite Group and CHMC provided funding for the project; materials and time were donated by local industry.

The CHBA/CMHC Demonstration Home was open to the public at the Hamilton Home Show. Now the home is also being used for industry and government education seminars and by the Board of Education for educating tradespeople.

8.5 Players

- Municipal government senior staff in housing, planning, engineering, and finance with the support of municipal council.
- Building industry associations.

9.0 Public Consultation and Education

9.1 Introduction

Increasingly the public consultation process is becoming a point of discussion among the building industry, municipalities, public interest groups and special needs groups. Perceptions of the value of public consultation vary widely. Some see it as a "necessary evil"; others see it as a valuable tool to obtain support for projects; while others see it as vital to the maintenance of livable communities.

Throughout the issue paper the need for public consultation has been identified, both before policy changes are made and before projects are approved. By regulation, in most municipalities, any proposed changes to land use plans and zoning by-laws require, at a minimum, public notification and a public meeting. There are also occasions when more extensive public consultation--the early gathering of opinions and information from the public to assist in an analysis of the situation--is required. These processes influence the amount of time and money that is spent processing land development and building permit applications.

However, few would agree that the public consultation process should be done away with. One reason is that public consultation has become an institutionalized part of our democratic system--increasingly the public expects to be consulted and is outraged when it is not. Another reason is that public consultation can result in "better" projects. For example, the local community may recognize that the assumptions that a project are based on are incorrect for that particular community; a special interest group may understand a particular problem better than municipal staff. In addition, ongoing contact with the community can help municipalities and the building industry understand the community better--its concerns and perceived needs. This knowledge can be used in designing projects to meet those needs.

Another issue with respect to public consultation is the general opinion that the public (in particular residents of established communities and the politicians that represent them) is resistant to the introduction of particular types and tenures of housing into the community where they live (the "Not In My Back Yard" [NIMBY] syndrome). Numerous examples can be cited of community associations, ratepayers groups, etc., appearing at public meetings to protest small-scale infill, non-profit housing, cooperative housing, etc. Public concerns usually focus on the effect of such projects on property values, parking, traffic and noise levels. In other words, the general livability of the community.

However, there is also ample evidence to indicate that alternative housing types, forms and tenures can be introduced into neighbourhoods without adversely affecting the quality of the neighbourhood; in fact they can improve it.

These factors point to the need for a broadly based public information/education program to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of housing issues at the government and community levels. Public education is required after policies are agreed on, and to address chronic points of misunderstanding.

Both public consultation and public education are prerequisites to the acceptance of controversial housing and land use policies and developments. A public education program should not be considered a substitute for public consultation, but an adjunct to it.

The remainder of this chapter presents a suggested approach to public consultation and education. An overview of the role of public education and consultation is presented, followed by a definition of "the public", a discussion of specific issues on which to consult and inform the public and a set of guidelines is put forward. In addition, ideas concerning communication activities and materials are presented.

9.2 The Role of Public Education and Consultation

The role of public education is to provide people with the basic information required to begin to evaluate housing projects and policies and their potential impact on the community. The quality of the information obtained from public consultation is directly related to the quality of the information provided to the public.

The role of public consultation is to provide the opportunity for people to comment on policies, plans and projects which affect their city and community. Ideally, through the public consultation process, a project or policy proponent develops informed agreement on a particular course of action.

9.3 The Time to Involve the Public

Public consultation needs to be conducted before policies are changed and before projects are approved. Public education needs to be provided as part of the consultation process to ensure that the public has the sufficient and relevant information to assess reasonably the proposal. Once policies are adopted, the public needs to be informed to ensure that they are aware of the existence of the policies and the effect of these on neighbourhoods.

In addition, ongoing education is required to address chronic areas of misunderstanding which limit the community's ability to meet the housing needs of its citizens.

9.3.1 Policy Changes and Official Plan Review

Municipalities need to seek public input in the development of the municipal and neighbourhood land use plans. During this process the public needs to be provided with clear information about the housing and demographic trends--past, present and future. Then the proposed plans and policies to address

these trends can be presented for discussion. The public, including both special interest groups and "unorganized" citizens, needs to be asked to comment on the policy. Once the views of the public are obtained they should be evaluated and integrated into a revised plan. Then the municipality can return to the public with the revisions. The municipality should be prepared to explain (clearly and in non-technical language) the rationale for the choice of policies, and why suggestions made were or were not adopted.

Similarly, when amendments to land use plan are being requested, the rationale for such amendments should consider community needs and concerns.

9.3.2 Zoning By-law Review

A similar process for reviewing and amending zoning by-laws can be used. Zoning by-laws tend to be tailored to specific neighbourhoods. Also, the housing needs of neighbourhoods can vary widely within a municipality. Thus, municipalities should discuss and decide on changes to zoning by-laws on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.

Example

For many years, municipalities have turned a blind eye to the existence of "illegal" suites in single family homes. It is widely recognized that these provide affordable housing for certain sectors of the population. However, there are also concerns about the building standards of the suites. Recognizing the dilemma, plus the increased need for this form of housing in established neighbourhoods, the City of Vancouver included a referendum in the 1988 civic election, asking voters if they wanted to review the issue of illegal suites in their neighbourhood. For those districts that voted "Yes" council earmarked \$700,000 to set up review programs to determine if residents wanted secondary suites legalized or eliminated. The program includes public meetings in neighbourhoods who voted "Yes". Council members, the public, special interest groups and industry attend the meetings to discuss the issue. At the end of the meeting, or at the last meeting if there are several in one community, the councillors for that particular ward vote on this issue. The vote then goes to Council for ratification.

9.3.3 Specific Projects

Regulations guiding the land development approval process and the building permit approval process stipulate situations where public consultation/hearing is required. Sometimes this is conducted by the municipality in a very formal, council-like session. Some municipalities, however, conduct information sessions out in communities to obtain feedback on projects before they go to council. Others encourage the developer to conduct public information sessions in addition to the formal public hearing.

Example

The District of North Vancouver, British Columbia, encourages all applicants to liaise with the community on proposed zoning changes or major development proposals. The public information session is to be held after initial Council

consideration but prior to the public hearing required by regulation. The Council's experience is that a public information meeting provides a forum to alleviate concerns and clarify misunderstanding or points of contention that typically arise later in the public hearing.

The District has prepared a two-page factsheet for applicants, which outlines the rationale for public consultation; when the meeting should be held; how to notify the public; who needs to be notified; who is to conduct the meeting; and the information that needs to be provided at the meeting. In addition, a telephone number for further information on holding a public information meeting is provided.

Developers and builders across the country conduct public consultation in addition to that required by regulations. Techniques used include: door-to-door canvassing to meet with neighbours; open houses; and information sessions at community association meetings. However, the consultation process is often conducted with the attitude of "selling" the public on a project rather than providing the public with an opportunity to influence the design of a project.

Even before plans for specific projects are designed, it is valuable for proponents of projects to learn about the characteristics of the neighbourhood where the project will be located. This includes identifying the needs and concerns of the community; past successes and failures in the area; the general attitude towards development; the level of activity of community and special interest groups; etc. This information can then be incorporated into the design of the project and the consultation process. It is easier to address concerns raised earlier in the planning process than concerns that do not surface until the late phases of the project.

9.4 The Need for Ongoing Public Education

The introduction of atypical housing as a means to address demographic trends, to make more efficient use of land and to develop the local housing stock is a potential source of conflict between communities and proponents of atypical housing. A key to increasing acceptance is to familiarize the public with the community and neighbourhood needs that atypical housing developments meet.

Several steps must be taken before resistance to new housing approaches will be overcome. The first is to create the understanding that some people in the community have "special" needs. These people might include: potential home buyers who are finding it difficult to enter the housing market for the first time; low income groups; single parents; seniors, etc. Next, the various housing approaches to meet those needs must be understood by the public. Only then will the public accept alternative housing approaches in the community and/or neighbourhood.

This situation suggests that a broadly based and planned education program is necessary to increase the public's awareness and knowledge of alternate types, tenures and forms of housing and their relationship to the community's housing needs. The complexity of housing and land development issues

suggests that a one-time, glitzy campaign to solve problems, either real or perceived, associated with the introduction of atypical housing developments into communities, will not work. What is required is a medium- to long-term approach that seeks to provide the public with information that situates atypical housing approaches as a community-based response to community housing needs.

Information is also required on specific housing issues. For example, the housing needs of the elderly; facts on non-profit housing projects (e.g., a certain proportion of the units are market valued, they do not appear to have an impact on property values); and the role of intensification in revitalizing neighbourhoods.

Another topic area for public information is specific information about the land development and building permit approval process. Other chapters noted the need to provide the building industry with clear comprehensive guides to these processes. If the public is involved in the approval process, they also need to understand how it works and the role that they play.

9.5 Defining the Public

It is important to define the public as clearly as possible. The following typology is often used:

- the general public--unaffiliated or unorganized citizens;
- community associations--usually defined geographically;
- special interest groups--usually defined demographically (e.g., seniors, the disabled, tenants);
- institutions (e.g., churches, schools, etc.); and
- professional organizations (e.g., planners, developers, builders, etc.).

Those involved in public consultation will have to consider the different concerns, interest, and knowledge level of each particular group. In some cases, the group may represent several interests, for example, a church group concerned about the provision of housing for seniors in a particular community.

It is also important to remember that members of the public do not necessarily belong to a group, and that a group may not accurately reflect the concerns of its members. Thus the participation of representatives of community associations, special interest groups, etc., should not exclude consultation with other members of the public.

9.6 Guidelines for Public Education and Consultation

The act of educating and consulting the public will not, in and of itself, assure acceptance of housing policies, plans and projects. Simple models of public consultation and education cannot be developed; situations, issues, history of issues and communities vary. Rather than a model, presented below are

guidelines to inform and involve the public in the development of housing to meet community needs.

9.6.1 Ensure that the Public is Adequately Informed

For the public to assess policies and projects effectively, they need to be informed about the issues and possible options. If they are not informed, then municipalities and the building industry need to produce and provide information.

Public and private sector staff interacting with the public need to have useful communication materials, e.g. brochures, fact sheets, guidelines, etc. The information needs to be understandable, complete, up-to-date and objective. The information should be provided to those associated with special interest groups, as well as the general public, before consultation on policies and proposed projects takes place. Someone should be responsible for ensuring that the information is distributed, received and understood.

9.6.2 Identify and Address Public Concerns

The initial stages of public consultation should be used to identify public concerns, if they are not already known by the municipality and the building industry. This includes identifying the concerns of those who may not be vocal or affiliated with a particular group. Generally speaking, the people who do not support a policy or project will be more active than those who will benefit from it.

Proponents need to see the existing and proposed policies through the eyes of the parties involved. This requires that private and public sector staff dealing with the public have good communication skills and feel comfortable with the general public and special interest groups. It also requires ongoing contact with the community.

Next, as part of the development of land use and housing policies, steps should be taken to address public concerns. This may involve changes to proposed policies, plans and housing developments; clearly identifying the community need which is being addressed; and ongoing education about alternative approaches to housing.

9.6.3 Maintain Regular Contact with the Public

Throughout the duration of the project, and as an ongoing part of policy development and implementation, proponents should maintain regular contact with the public. This is an integral part of identifying and addressing concerns, and providing ongoing education on more contentious aspects of housing and land development.

Interaction should occur with the community-at-large as well as official community representatives and special interest groups, especially when the community is made up of diverse interests.

For regular community contact to be maintained some sort of system needs to be developed to:

- identify the people and organizations who need to be kept informed;
- maintain a current mailing list of the above;
- receive and respond to questions, concerns and requests for information;

9.7 The Role of Municipalities and the Building Industry

Municipalities should take the lead in providing information about housing and land policies and procedures. The building industry should take the lead in providing information about specific projects. Municipalities and the building industry should both take steps to address housing and land development issues posing barriers to housing which meets the needs of the community.

Appendix A

Land Development Standards

Land Development Standards

Objective of Land Development Standards

The objective of land development standards is to provide for the orderly development of land within the province, region and municipality. Land development standards usually cover the type and quality of infrastructure required, the density and type of housing allowed, and the location of housing on a lot.

Standards are developed on the basis of national codes established by associations such as the National Research Council and the Canadian Standards Board, and on the experience and judgement of the municipality.

Establishment of Land Development Standards

The setting of land development standards is within the jurisdiction of municipalities as outlined through a number of provincial acts, usually a provincial Planning Act and/or Municipal Act. Consequently, it is not surprising that land development standards vary widely from municipality to municipality.

Broadly speaking, there are at least three types of land development control, each which establishes a variety of standards: (1) land use plans, (2) zoning by-laws, and (3) development agreements.

Provincial, regional and municipal land use plans set out the policies and objectives that guide land use in communities. In addition, land use plans may contain a description of the means of attaining the objectives of the plan; and the means for citizen participation with respect to proposed revisions to the plan. In some provinces these are called Official Plans (e.g., Ontario and British Columbia).

Land use plans are largely concerned with the physical development of the community including:

- location of different types of land use;
- the type, tenure and density of residential housing;
- the direction of future growth;
- the design of the transportation network; and
- the location of utility services.

If a new development or redevelopment does not conform to land use plans, the developer must apply to the appropriate level of government for an amendment to the land use plan (e.g., to the regional government for an amendment to the regional land use plan). The government is responsible for holding a public hearing to discuss the amendment before it can be adopted.

Municipal zoning by-laws, sometimes called land use by-laws, implement land use plans by defining land use and land development standards allowed in specific locations.

For example, a municipal zoning by-law may establish:

- type of land use;
- maximum density;
- minimum and maximum lot areas;
- floor areas of buildings;
- building setbacks from property lines;
- location of fences;
- off-street parking provisions;
- landscaping requirements; and
- design and appearance of buildings.

Special approval must be granted by the municipality for any proposed changes to the zoning by-law (for example, increased density, decreased setbacks). Minor changes to the by-law, for example reducing front setbacks by one foot, are usually made through a "minor variance" to the zoning by-law. Substantive changes, such as increased density, smaller lot sizes, or a change in land use, require an amendment to the zoning by-law.

Before changing the zoning by-law which applies to a property, or a group of properties, municipal council must inform the public of its intention and hold a public meeting. Some provinces (Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, for example) have appeal mechanisms. The process to change by-laws can be time-consuming and hence costly.

In addition to those in the zoning by-law, **land development agreements** establish conditions for the development of land. Prior to approving subdivision plans, municipalities and developers may enter into agreements, regarding the sharing of costs arising from the construction of certain items needed to service the subdivision or lot(s). For a subdivision, these are called subdivision agreements, for other types of developments (for example infill) these are called development agreements.

Land development agreements may include requirements concerning:

- sidewalk and road widths;
- garbage storage facilities;
- grading;
- easements for water, ditches, drainages, sewers and other public utilities;
- lighting; and
- parking facilities.

Types of Land Development Standards

Land Development Standards fall into three basic categories: Land-use, site-development and site-servicing.

Land-use standards relate to the type of land use (e.g., commercial, residential and density and height restrictions. (As noted previously they are usually contained in zoning by-laws).

Site-development standards relate to the location of the building(s) facilities and services on a lot and within a larger development.

Site-servicing, or engineering standards relate to infrastructure such as roads, storm, drainage, water supply, sanitary sewers and utilities.

Appendix B

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing is a term which refers to houses or house parts which are factory built. The most common types of manufactured housing are: component; modular; and mobile.

Component housing refers to housing which is constructed on-site by the owner from building components or systems which are built in a factory. In fact, many stick-built components are now manufactured in factories.

Modular housing is a house which is almost entirely built in a factory. A home usually consists of two or more sections which are delivered to a site and installed on a foundation. It is possible to create a variety of housing types, from bungalows to multi-family townhouses.

Both component housing and modular housing are built to a standard established by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA-8277). This standard is virtually the same as the National Building Code (NBC) and is accepted by municipalities across Canada. Engineers from the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) inspect the factories where the component and modular homes are produced. Each modular home and component part which is produced to the standard has a CSA sticker on it.

Mobile housing refers to factory-built housing which is not permanently installed on a foundation and which can be relocated. It does not include trailers and recreation vehicles. A nationally accepted building standard for mobile homes is established by the Canadian Standards Association (CSA-Z240). No province has increased the standards established by the Association, but some municipalities have. The CSA standard is very close to the standard for stick-built housing established in the NBC. As with modular homes, engineers from the CSA inspect the factories where mobile homes are produced. Each mobile home which is produced to the standard has a CSA sticker on it.

Factory-built housing can be made equivalent in safety, durability, and aesthetic appeal to site-built housing. In fact, the quality of manufactured homes is usually greater than stick-built construction. Indoor storage ensures that materials are not effected by weather conditions. Kiln-dried lumber is used which practically eliminates warpage, resulting in tighter construction that helps reduce heating costs.

Manufactured housing has an "image" problem. Municipalities and the public tend to associate manufactured housing with low-income housing, mobile homes, and trailer parks. In fact, in terms of appearance, manufactured housing is indistinguishable from comparable conventional stick-built construction. Municipalities, the public and the building industry would benefit from a greater awareness and knowledge of the product and the contribution it can make to the housing industry and housing affordability. While the image problem faced

by the manufactured housing industry is beyond the scope of the present study, communications material related to regulatory reform can indirectly increase knowledge of the housing alternatives offered by manufactured housing.

Economies in manufactured housing relate to volume purchasing and reduction in the involvement of tradespeople on-site. On an annual basis, a factory can produce more units than a builder can produce. Also, factories have facilities for storing materials. Thus considerable cost savings may be realized through volume purchasing.

Other cost savings are realized because fewer tradespeople are required, especially for modular and mobile housing. A purchaser of a mobile home simply needs services hooked up, once the home is located on a lot. A purchaser of a module home obtains a building permit; pours a foundation; has the house delivered; installs the house on the foundation; and hooks up the utilities. The house is ready for occupancy. Very few tradespeople are involved.

If the house is sold directly to the occupant, some producers of manufactured homes will prepare the site and install the home on the foundation. For the purchaser, additional savings are achieved through purchasing directly from the factory rather than through a real-estate agent.

Manufactured housing contributes to increased housing choice in a number of ways. Component and modular homes allow non-professionals, in effect, to build and custom-design their own homes to meet their particular needs. Mobile homes are often suitable for people looking for less space.

Manufactured homes are ideal for use as garden suites or granny flats. The garden suite concept originated in Australia, and is now being explored in Canada as a housing option for seniors. Garden suites are self-contained dwellings which are placed on a lot which already contains a housing unit. Typically, a garden suite provides housing for the elderly relative of a homeowner. Alternatively, an elderly homeowner may place a garden suite on his or her lot, move into it, and rent out his or her larger home.

Mobile homes can be purchased and then placed on leased or rented land. Another advantage is that they can be moved more easily to another site than conventional dwellings. This is an advantage when the economy is volatile. For example, when the oil prices fell in Alberta, many mobile homes were moved from Fort MacMurray to other parts of Alberta. (Also, because the mortgage payments tend to be lower, the default on mobile home mortgages was lower than for other types of mortgages in the area.)

Many of the regulatory problems faced by the conventional housing industry are faced by the manufactured housing industry as well. For example, planning standards established in zoning by-laws and subdivision agreements dictate the type and form of housing which can be placed on a site. Thus house

designs for manufactured housing, particularly modular housing, have tended to be virtually the same as for housing built by conventional methods.

Regulatory problems unique to manufactured housing primarily concern mobile homes. Very few municipalities have zones designated for mobile homes, or are willing to amend zoning by-laws to make provision for them. Also, some municipal building standards are higher than those established by the CSA.

An additional, though perhaps less crucial, problem concerns the building inspection process. In smaller municipalities, some inspectors are not familiar with manufactured housing. This poses a problem when they attempt to inspect the dwelling. Because the unit comes to the site fully constructed, it is impossible to inspect the drywall, electrical system, etc. However, the modular or mobile home does not need to be inspected if it has a CSA sticker on it. (An inspection of the foundation may still be required.) This is a minor problem, as the inspector can phone the provincial building authority for further information.

In Ontario and British Columbia, an additional problem is created by road-width restrictions imposed by the provincial Ministry of Transportation. In Ontario and British Columbia the maximum allowable road-width is 14 feet--two feet less than every other province imposes. As a result, the house and room configurations are narrower than those of conventional housing, and the product looks different. Experience in other provinces shows that consumer acceptance of manufactured housing is partly determined by the degree to which it conforms with traditional configurations. This problem is currently being addressed by the Canadian Manufactured Housing Institute.

Appendix C

Land Development Approval Process

Land Development Approval Process

The land development approval process is established by provincial legislation through a variety of acts; these include planning, municipal, condominium, land titles and registry acts. While the process varies in different provinces and municipalities, most systems have provisions for:

- ensuring citizen participation;
- solving special development problems or technicalities;
- requiring financial contribution towards community infrastructure through development charges;
- recognizing interests of the broader community; and
- appealing decisions.

The owner of land, or his or her agent, applies to the authorized agency (e.g., a ministry, municipal council, or delegated body). Detailed information is required on the application in order for the authority to evaluate the proposal. In addition to a detailed draft site plan, information required usually includes a description of the: proposed land use; relationship of proposed land use to municipal plans and zoning by-laws; proposed servicing and access; existing land use, vegetation topography and drainage on the site; and anticipated environmental effects.

After preliminary evaluation of the application by the approval authority, the application is circulated to the local municipality and other departments and agencies who may be concerned, to obtain approval and recommendations. Typically this will include housing, transportation, energy, agriculture, environment, natural resources, and education departments, in addition to rail companies, utility companies, conservation authorities and the local health unit and school boards. Sometimes information is circulated to both the local and headquarters offices of a particular agency.

After evaluation of the plan and of the recommendations from other bodies, the authorizing body and the municipality may impose conditions and/or grant approval of the draft plan. This stage is called the draft approval. Any conditions of the draft approval must be met prior to the approval of the final plan. The bodies affected by the conditions must indicate to the approving authority that the stipulated conditions have been met.

All provinces except Quebec have a process for appealing decisions concerning approval and conditions to approval, although the nature and scope of appeals vary from province to province. For example, property owners are given an appeal in some provinces but not in others. Depending upon the nature of the decision appealed, the appeal may be at the local or the provincial level.

In New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, there are municipal zoning or development appeal boards or boards granting

variances. In all provinces except Quebec and British Columbia, there are provincial appeal boards for appealing the decision or lack of decision by the municipal council, local or regional planning authority. In most provinces, including British Columbia, appeals may be made to the Supreme Court on a question of law or jurisdiction.

Appendix D

Building Approval Process

Building Approval Process

The purpose of the building permit system is to ensure that the plans for the proposed building comply with building regulations. A building permit is required for the construction of a new building or structure--for additions, for fireplaces and wood stoves, and for most alterations. Separate, but construction related permits, may also be required prior to issuing a building permit depending on the nature of the project. These include: plumbing; swimming pool enclosure; and demolition permits.

The process to obtain building permits varies from municipality to municipality but most systems have provisions for:

- submission, review and evaluation of detailed architectural, mechanical, electrical and structural drawings;
- issuing permits;
- charging permit fees;
- establishing citizen review processes for "atypical" or potentially controversial projects; and
- appealing decisions.

The process usually begins with the owner of the land, or his or her agent, applying to the municipality for a building permit. An application form is submitted with the appropriate fee and several sets of plans. The information on the application form usually includes:

- description of the present use of land and building;
- description of the work to be done; and
- estimated value of the work to be done.

The type and detail of plans which are required vary with the type (residential, commercial, industrial) and size of the project.

Separate submission of the plans is required for other permits and approvals (plumbing permits; minor variance or zoning amendments; site plan approval, etc.). Usually responsibility for compliance with zoning by-laws lies with the planning or land use department; a buildings department is responsible for compliance with the construction. Potentially then, obtaining all of the "sub-approvals" requires identifying and applying to several municipal departments.

It is the responsibility of the chief building official to issue a building permit once the plan meets the various "sub-approvals".

The amount of time required to obtain a building permit varies widely depending upon a number of factors:

- the time of year (which affects the volume of applications);
- the type, location and size of project;

- the municipality; and
- the completeness of the application form.

As with the land development approval process, the building permit approval process affects both housing costs and housing choice. The length of the process directly affects builders' costs: delays result in costs in lost time and opportunity, in financing costs, and in slow responses to quickly changing markets. Builders need to recover their costs; these costs are passed into the price of the houses.

The length of the building permit approval process can also contribute to builders' preference for conventional housing developments--especially if the quickest way to obtain approval is to be non-controversial and adhere to existing land use plans and zoning by-laws. Existing land use plans and zoning by-laws may be outdated and unresponsive to the community's housing needs.

Appendix E

Inspection Process

Inspection Process

The chief building official is responsible for administering the various building by-laws and codes. In some municipalities he or she is also responsible for administering the zoning by-law. This includes responsibility for:

- issuing permits;
- inspecting sites and construction; and
- enforcing by-laws and codes.

An application for a building permit must be accompanied by detailed plans including: site plan; foundation plan; floor plan; and cross section plan. The building code establishes prescribed standards, which means that they describe in considerable detail how the construction is to be carried out. In addition, the building code allows for the use of "equivalents"--systems or materials that are similar to those set out in the prescribed standards.

Before a building permit is issued, all the materials, type of construction and type of design must be approved according to the building code and applicable municipal by-laws. Usually the site plans examiner conducts this review. (Sometimes, in smaller municipalities, the site plan examiner is the chief building official.) Once an application for a building permit is submitted, a building inspector conducts a field inspection. The purpose of the field inspection is to confirm the description of the site (and building[s] if present) contained in the plans, and to examine the area surrounding the proposed site. Any variances to the plan are reported, and adjustments are made to the plans as required.

When the plans meet the requirements of the building code and the various municipal by-laws, the chief building official is required to issue the building permit.

In most municipalities, once the permit is issued the onus is on the building permit holder to request inspections at specific stages of construction. Several types of inspections are required: structural, electrical, and plumbing. Large buildings, such as three-storey low-rises, also require mechanical and fire inspections.

As a rule, the inspection activity consists of periodic visits to the site during the course of the work. The purpose of the visits is to review the progress made between visits and to ascertain if there are any violations of the various codes. It is important to remember that the underlying objective of the inspection process is to ensure public health and safety; it is not to ensure that quality materials and equipment are used in construction.

Provincial regulations usually establish the timing of inspections. For example, in Nova Scotia, a single-family home must be inspected at least three times by a building inspector: prior to backfill; prior to dry wall; and prior to occupancy.

Inspectors will usually visit the site more often. In most larger municipalities, a residential dwelling is inspected five to eight times during construction.

In most provinces, the responsibility for inspections is shared between the province and the municipality, depending on the type of inspection and the size of the municipality. For example, in New Brunswick, the province conducts all electrical inspections. Moncton, Fredericton and Saint John conduct their own building, plumbing and fire inspections, while the provincial authorities conduct these inspections for the remainder of the province. In some provinces, utility or power commissions conduct electrical inspections (e.g., Ontario and most municipalities in Nova Scotia).

To ensure that the building process is adhered to, and that the provisions of the building permit are complied with, inspectors have the power to issue compliance orders. In Ontario and British Columbia, the inspectors also have the power to issue stop-work orders to prohibit building operations being carried on in violation of the building by-law.

If the builder wishes to make a change to an approved plan (e.g., change the type of drywall used) the chief building official must be notified, details of the change must be submitted and the approval of the chief building official must be obtained. In some municipalities the site plan examiner has the responsibility of approving the change (e.g., Ottawa).

Appendix F

Residential Renovation

Residential Renovation

Renovation activity is an ideal vehicle for maintaining existing housing stock while helping communities to provide citizens with options in housing type, tenure and form throughout their lifecycles.

Before continuing, it is necessary to define "residential renovation". Terms such as rehabilitation, renewal, retrofitting, remodelling, conservation and maintenance all describe activities which overlap one another to varying degrees and are used synonymously with renovation in this paper.

Statistics Canada renovation data are generally disaggregated into two components, repairs and improvements. Repairs includes work undertaken on an existing residential structure or piece of equipment to keep it in good working order and to maintain an appearance "as new" as possible. Improvements cover the construction of structural extensions and conversions; work done to upgrade or modernize the property and installation or replacement of equipment or fixtures. Improvements tend to be more expensive than repairs. In this report, the term renovation will refer to the two activities combined.

In addition, the more general term "renovation" refers to residential renovation--including the conversion of non-residential buildings to residential. Renovation on non-residential buildings for non-residential purposes is not covered.

Residential renovation can be a cost-effective way to supply housing. In theory, renovating a dwelling costs less than building a new housing unit from the ground up. This of course depends upon the nature and type of renovation and the costs of adhering to building codes, standards and procedures.

Renovation is also a cost-efficient method of using existing space in communities. Public facilities, public transportation, shopping, recreation and jobs are already in place. These factors indirectly contribute to housing costs.

Renovations can make a great impact on increasing housing choice, especially through projects which change the use of dwellings. New types of homes can be created--a duplex or a triplex from a single family home. A warehouse or commercial space can be transformed into a multi-unit dwelling. New forms of housing can be created when space in houses is used more efficiently--larger homes with under-utilized space can be converted to two or more smaller units suitable for smaller households (e.g., an elderly couple wanting less space and reduced maintenance, working singles, etc.). Smaller units can be added to existing homes.

Renovations can increase tenure options. For example, renovating to create an accessory apartment in a single-family home will add another rental unit to the market.

Also, renovation activity is essential for the maintenance of adequate housing conditions. As the age of a dwelling increases, it is more likely it is to require major repairs. It is projected that by 1996 about one-third of the ownership dwelling stock will be over 35 years old, compared to about one-quarter in 1981.⁶ By maintaining existing housing stock, renovation activity permits people to stay adequately housed in their community, in addition to providing lifestyle alternatives to suburban dormitory communities.

Renovation also restores the vitality of inner cities; increases urban tax bases; and respects the characteristics of existing neighbourhoods.

Spending on residential renovation increased significantly between 1971 and 1985. In 1985 residential renovation expenditures in Canada totalled \$12.6 billion--more than double the 1971 levels.⁷ Rehabilitation activity now equals that of new construction and may overtake it in the near future.

Most renovations require a building permit which means that many regulatory regulations issues discussed in this report overlap with renovations. For example, renovation work must comply with building codes and standards, and land use controls (e.g., zoning by-laws). However, certain aspects of the renovation process are sufficiently different in nature that it is dealt with as a separate topic. These are discussed below.

Building codes

The application of building codes designed for new construction to older construction is not straightforward. In most jurisdictions the building code for new construction is used for renovations, despite the fact that a building constructed to a past building code is not likely to meet all provisions of a current code. The inflexibility of the building code often increases the renovation cost because it requires that the entire dwelling be brought up to the new standard. This can contribute to the reluctance of contractors and home owners to renovate. A study prepared for Alberta's Department of Housing, "Conversion of Existing Housing for Multiple Occupancy Rental Purposes" identified requirements for room sizes, ceiling heights, bedroom windows, stairs and landings, means of egress, fire protection, sound control, plumbing systems and heating/ducting as potential problem areas for renovators.

In the older areas of many cities, a major obstacle to renovation is the building standards established in the zoning by-laws. As discussed in chapter 2, a municipal zoning by-law may establish the type of land use; maximum density; floor areas of buildings; etc. In some areas, the zoning by-law may have changed over time to the point where it bears little or no relationship to the

⁶ Clayton Research Associates Ltd., The Nature of the Residential Renovation Market in Ontario. Prepared for Ontario Ministry of Housing Conservation Unit, February 1987. p.17.

⁷ *ibid.* p.4.

existing housing. However, when a property is renovated, it may be required to conform with the current zoning by-law.

The findings of a 1982 study by the Renovator's Council of the Toronto Home Builders' Association illustrates this problem well. The study examined the relationship between the specifications of the zoning by-law and the type of housing on one typical city block in Toronto. Virtually all renovation of existing dwellings, including conversions (e.g., single-family home to duplex, accessory apartments, etc.) would require at least one variance and one Committee of Adjustment hearing. Typical problem areas include provisions for maximum density and minimum gross floor areas. (The study also reported that all but one of the 55 houses on the block would require at least one by-law variance and a Committee of Adjustment hearing if they were to be built today as new construction.)

Building permit approval process

Renovation work is often less extensive and of a lower dollar value than the construction of new housing. However, in most municipalities the two activities are subject to exactly the same building permit approval requirements. Thus the time and costs involved in the approval process may discourage people from undertaking renovation. It is also important to note that about 40 percent of renovation activity is undertaken by homeowners who are less likely to be familiar with the building permit approval process than contractors and home building professionals.

Appendix G

**City of Ottawa Procedures for Staff Reports to Planning Committee
and Council which Require Industry Input**

City of Ottawa Procedures for Staff Reports to Planning Committee and Council

In those instances where a position of the industry representatives is required or desired on a report being prepared by City staff and which is to be included in a report to the Various Standing Committees and/or Council, City staff will attempt to advise the BILD Committee of the recommendation prior to final approval being given so as to permit feedback from the industry representatives.

One of the two processes set out below may be followed in responding to potential industry concerns. The first process is designed to address reports where immediate action is required. The second process provides for reports which are more flexible in terms of time. The appropriate process to be followed on a particular item will be determined at the first BILD Committee meeting at which the item is raised.

Process A--Immediate Action Required

1. The draft report will be circulated to the industry members of BILD prior to the BILD meeting at which the item is to be discussed.
2. Industry concerns are to be raised at the meeting.
3. The industry's comments and suggestions should be written and forwarded to the appropriate staff member to be included in the final report. This requirement may be waived at the industry's option.
4. The final report will proceed to the Standing Committee and/or Council without further review by the BILD Committee.
5. Industry members who wish to attend the meeting at which the report is to be considered will be advised of the meeting date and provided with a copy of the final report as soon as it is made available to staff.
6. Although City staff responsible for the report will draw attention to the industry's concerns, they are expected to present industry arguments for any positions not supported in the body of the report. Industry presentations at the meeting must be made by an industry delegate.

Process B--Flexible

1. The draft report will be presented for comment at the BILD Committee meeting.
2. Industry representatives will be given the opportunity to submit written comments to the staff members responsible for the report. The timing for their comments is to be determined by the meeting.

3. City staff will attempt to incorporate the industry's comments, suggestions, and concerns in the body of the report.
4. The revised draft report will be presented for discussion at the next BILD Committee meeting.
5. Subject to any additional revisions requested at the second BILD meeting, the final report will proceed in the normal course to the Standing Committee and/or Council.
6. If BILD members wish to make comments or views which City staff cannot support, those comments will be included in the report as information, and/or presented to the Standing Committee by the appropriate industry representative.
7. Members of the industry having expressed an interest in attending the meeting at which the report is to be considered will be advised of the meeting date and provided with a copy of the final report as soon as it is available to staff.
8. Independent presentations on a particular item may be made at the industry's discretion.

Appendix H

List of People and Organizations Contacted

List of People and Organizations Contacted**Presentations and Discussions**

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Task Force on Housing
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) Board of Directors
Urban Development Institute (UDI) Board of Directors

Conferences Attended

Toronto Home Builders' Association Annual Conference 1989
Canadian Home Builders' Association Annual Conference 1989
Ontario Provincial Housing Conference: "Developing the Will" 1989

Representatives of the Canadian Home Builders' Association

Gary Reardon
Reardon Construction and Development Ltd.
St. John's, Newfoundland

Robert Shaw
Clayton Developments Ltd.
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Tom Cochren
Tommar Construction Co. Ltd.
President, Canadian Home Builders' Association
Hamilton, Ontario

Mickey LaBrie
Vice President, Western Region
Genstar Development Corporation
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Keith Sashaw
Executive Director
B.C. Home Builders' Association
Vancouver, B.C.

Bob McGloglan
St. John, New Brunswick

Doug McNeil
President
Prince Edward Island Home Builders' Council
Charlottown, Prince Edward Island

Laverne Brubacher
Chairman, Renovators' Council
Canadian Home Builders' Association
St. Jacobs, Ontario

Scott Sutherland
Sutherland and Sons Co. Ltd.
Hamilton, Ontario

Donald Cameron
Canlands Investments
Vancouver, British Columbia.

Donald May
Planning Consultant
Hamilton, Ontario

Christopher Long
R.E. Winter and Associates
Consulting Engineers and Architects
Burlington, Ontario

Hank Starno
Executive Vice-President
Manufactured Housing Institute
Ottawa, Ontario

Municipal Officials

Marilyn Baker
Mayor
District of North Vancouver
(President, Union of British Columbia Municipalities)
North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Richard E. Plunkett
Director of Development
The Corporation of the District of North Vancouver
North Vancouver, British Columbia.

Roger Herbert
Chief Building Official
City of Vancouver
Vancouver, British Columbia

Ken Cameron
Manager, Development Services Department
Greater Vancouver Regional District
Burnaby, British Columbia

Wayne Cameron
Planning and Building Department
City of Edmonton
Edmonton, Alberta

Wayne Purchase
Director, Buildings and Development
City of St. John's
St. John's, Newfoundland

City of Ottawa Municipal Officials

Tom Fletcher
Commissioner of Planning and Development

Rosemary Fletcher
Department of Planning and Development

Robert Player
Commissioner of Housing and Property

Dan Stankovic
A/Director
Market Housing Program Development and Delivery

Stan Wilder
Senior Program Officer
Market Housing Program Development and Delivery

Gerry Noffke
Director
Development Information and Applications Centre

Gary Holtz
Counter Supervisor
Development Information and Applications Centre

Don Currie
Chief Building Inspector

Provincial Government Officials

Richard Franz
Housing Advocacy Task Force
Ontario Ministry of Housing
Toronto, Ontario

David Hodgson
Director Buildings Branch
Ontario Ministry of Housing
Toronto, Ontario

Micheal Heitshu
Analyst Buildings Branch
Ontario Ministry of Housing
Toronto, Ontario

Don Woodrow
ADM Technical and Inspections Branch
New Brunswick Department of Labour
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

Doug Stewart
Director, Research
CMHC
Ottawa, Ontario

Brian Grey
Senior Researcher
CMHC
Ottawa, Ontario

Wally Majesky
Member of the CMHC Board of Directors
Markham, Ontario

Victoria Garland
Member of the CMHC Board of Directors
Vancouver, British Columbia

Other

David Hulchanski
Director, Centre for Human Settlements
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.

Duff MacDonnell
Extension Services, Professional Engineers
University of British Columbia
Vancouver, B.C.

David Sherwood
Executive Director
Canadian Institute of Planners
Ottawa, Ontario

Maureen Enser
Executive Director
Urban Development Institute Pacific Region
Vancouver, British Columbia

Jim Cox
Chairperson, UDI Vancouver Liaison Committee
Vancouver, B.C.

Mike Jordan
Chairperson, UDI Surrey Liaison Committee
Surrey, British Columbia

John Nichols
Chairperson, UDI Burnaby Liaison Committee
Burnaby, British Columbia

Ron Marr
Chairperson, UDI Richmond Liaison Committee
Richmond, British Columbia

Avi Friedman
Affordable Homes Program
School of Architecture
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

David Williamson
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
Joint Venture for Affordable Housing
Washington, D.C.
U.S.A.

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