

AVICC Housing Panel a Success



Last week, we attended the housing panel and trade show at the convention for the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC).

AVICC represents municipalities, regional districts and other local governments of Vancouver Island, Sunshine Coast, qathet/Powell River, the North Coast and the Central Coast.

We presented industry challenges and solutions for building new housing including the “missing middle” (townhomes, and small multi-family).

We received very positive responses from elected officials. Many appreciated the builders’ perspective and mentioned they were unaware of regulatory hurdles at the administrative level.

We were asked for copies of our presentation to address the issues with their staff. Some of our recommendations were:

- Avoid operating in departmental silos. Bring together departments in a meeting to review permit applications.
- Review permit charges which should be a fee for inspections, not a tax based on the cost of construction.
- Promote building code consistency and adopt code interpretations by the province. Avoid sending differences between inspectors and builders to the BC Building Appeal Board adding time and costs to the project.
- Implement effective pre-meetings. Some local govts have pre-meetings, however projects may be stalled when changes are made by staff that are already considered settled. Avoid multiple pre-meetings.
- Enforce circulation response deadlines for development applications. Adopt best practices for community associations.
- Review overlapping regulations.
- Pre-zone areas after the community planning process is complete and review the plan every 5 years.
- Expand delegated authority to staff for minor permit amendments.
- Advisory Design Panel members should be qualified designers, builders, architects, developers.
- Encourage creative solutions and appoint one person to shepherd these projects through the process. Housing affordability requires creative thinking and unique solutions, which may stall projects boosting costs and unaffordability.

Our experience at AVICC confirmed our expertise is appreciated and represents new information for elected officials.

In that regard, the convention was a significant success!

This is why we have advocated for mandatory housing education in partnership with industry when councils are first elected.

Better communication and understanding of industry’s housing challenges would lead to more housing supply and affordability.



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