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Highest Taxes Deliver Slowest Municipal Permit Service

VRBA surveyed our builders on the process time for a basic building permit by local municipalities.

A building permit is not a development permit with rezoning that requires a public hearing that can take years.

A building permit to construct a single-family home should be a reasonably straight-forward, administrative process.

The survey responses indicated the process ranged from 7 days in Langford to 3-4 months and even “forever” in Saanich.

The most inefficient municipalities were Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay, which also have the highest property taxes.

In 2020, Langford’s new housing starts were 1,101 of which 238 were single family. Saanich’s totalled 200 new homes of which 59 were single family. Victoria posted 330 new homes with 40 single family. Oak Bay had 28 new homes and all were single family.

Langford, with the largest workload, and lowest property taxes (\$3,030 for avg home in 2019) was by far the most efficient.

Of the three slowest approval processes, Oak Bay had the lightest workload and the highest taxes (\$7,968). The permit process ranged from 1 month to 4 months.

Saanich had the worst record of permit approvals ranging from 2 to 4 months and “forever.” Property taxes were second highest in 2019 at \$5,608.

Victoria’s permits were similar, ranging from 1 month and up to 5 months if the project was caught up in departmental delays. Property taxes were the region’s third highest at \$5,574.

That’s not to say other municipalities were particularly efficient. Most fell in the range of 3 to 4 weeks, or three to four times the approval period in Langford.

This reflects what has been happening for decades, especially in core municipalities - the region’s highest property taxes tend to deliver the slowest municipal permit service.

Also, there are reports that municipalities, such as Sooke, are starting to resemble Saanich’s inefficiency and high costs.

This should concern, not just builders, but also residents paying for the administration.

Municipal elections are in October 2022 and that’s the time to demand efficient, effective governance from your elected representatives.



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