

Community Excellence Awards 2018 Application Form

Please complete and return the application form by Friday, May 25, 2018. All questions are required to be answered by typing directly in this form. If you have any questions, contact awards@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5193.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Local Government: Regional District of Nanaimo

Complete Mailing Address: 6300 Hammond Bay Road, Nanaimo BC, V9T 6N2

Contact Person: Geoff Garbutt

Position: General Manager of Strategic and Community Development

Phone: 250-390-6510

E-mail: ggarbutt@rdn.bc.ca

SECTION 2: Category

- ☐ **Excellence in Governance.** *Governance processes or policies that are outcomes-based and consensus oriented; support and encourage citizen participation in civic decision-making; are efficient, equitable and inclusive, open and transparent; and exemplify best practices in accountability, effectiveness, and long term thinking.*
- ☒ **Excellence in Service Delivery.** *Projects/programs that provide effective services in a proactive manner, demonstrate benefit to the community, and utilize performance measures, benchmarks and standards to ensure sustainable service delivery.*
- ☐ **Excellence in Asset Management.** *Projects/programs that demonstrate a comprehensive system of asset management policies and practices, meeting and/or exceeding accepted best practices.*
- ☐ **Excellence in Sustainability.** *Projects/programs that incorporate a long-term sustainability lens by considering cultural, social, economic and environmental issues in planning, policy and practice.*

SECTION 3: Project/Program Details

1. Name of the Project/Program:

Electoral Area Development Permit Approvals Delegation Initiative

2. Project/Program Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

As a very early adopter of the Development Permit (DP) powers in our OCP's, the RDN has used this tool to balance community objectives and sustainable development principles with development pressures in our electoral areas. DP's are a very powerful tool to manage development however, historically the approval of these non-discretionary permits was not delegated to staff. Due to the nature of Regional District decision making, this approval process caused significant and costly delays for the development community and had a steamrolling impact on the issuance of Building Permits which meant further addition of costs and delays to the development community and subsequent final cost of housing to new and existing residents, property owners and the commercial/industrial sectors of our region. With pressure to provide affordable and well designed development, the RDN Board strategic plan called for efficiencies to promote and manage growth, innovation in service delivery and customer service excellence as well as support for growing our economy.

With the support of the Board, it was identified that by delegating this permitting authority the timeline for approvals could be significantly reduced (approximately 2-3 months) and those savings in timing delays and red tape can be passed on to the public. With these delegated permits, it is estimated that the overall reduced timeline for development approvals from initiation to completion of building occupancy sign off is 5-6 months. Since the adoption of these delegated powers in 2017, the reduction in both the issuance of Development Permits and subsequent Building Permits has met and in some cases exceeded the goals for reducing permitting times during a period of development approvals that involved unprecedented volumes and complexity of applications in the Regional District of Nanaimo in terms of planning permitting and building permitting. Simply put, this change in process and delegation has allowed us to absorb increased pressure on the public service (volume and complexity of permits) while at the same time reducing our processing and approval times.

3. Demonstrating Excellence. Please describe how your project/program demonstrates excellence in meeting the purposes of local government in BC and provides promising practices for others to follow.

The process to consider broad delegation of Development Permits by the RDN Board supports all aspects of the purpose of local government in BC as envisioned by the legislation. This streamlined process for permit issuance supports efficient decision making, implements the community vision contained in the OCP and RDN Regional Growth Strategy. This process protects and supports our regional infrastructure investments, supports development in an integrated and sustainable manner and promotes economic processes that drive and support the delivery of public services in our region.

4. Category Criteria.

A. Please describe how your project/program meets the objectives of the category you have applied under. Refer to S. 3 of the Program & Application Guide.

Processing permits to guide the development of land is a core business function of local governments generally and in the case of the Regional District of Nanaimo, a conscious decision was made in the late 1990's to use Development Permit areas established

under the comprehensive Official Community Plans as the primary tool to manage development in the Electoral Areas. Land use planning in the RDN has been a central function with a strong focus on sustainable development. As the first rural Regional District to adopt a Regional Growth Strategy (third adopter of an RGS in the Province) we have balanced the need to plan and regulate appropriately with efficient delivery of services and benchmarked timelines for responding to development applications. As above, with the proliferation of DP areas and the evolution of very well designed DP guidelines an opportunity was identified in the RDN Board's Strategic Plan and our 2015 Operational Efficiency Review Report to streamline development approvals. This initiative brings forward and reinforces the direction of the OCP's to manage development in a sustainable manner. Although this is a relatively simple concept, Electoral Area Development Permit Approvals Delegation Initiative aligns and puts into action all of the RDN's community planning bylaws (RGS, OCP, zoning)

B. In many cases projects may meet the criteria of more than one category. If applicable, please describe how your project meets the criteria of one or more other categories.

SECTION 4: Program Criteria

- 5. Leadership.** Describe the extent to which your local government acted as a local or regional leader in the development or implementation of the project/program.

The delegation of Development Permits is a relative anomaly in our Region as only one of our member municipalities has implemented a significant delegation of Development Permits (2 of the remaining 3 have very limited delegation) and amongst Regional Districts as a whole in the Province, delegation of the majority of Development Permits is also limited. Through the Association of Regional District Planning Managers organization there has been significant interest in the impact of this delegation on process efficiencies (in both Community Planning and Building Permitting) as well as information exchange with the community and Electoral Area Directors.

- 6. Partnerships and collaboration.** Describe the breadth and depth of community and/or regional partnerships that supported the project/program and the extent to which internal and/or external collaboration was evident.

As above, the nexus of the project came through direction by the Board during the 2017 Strategic Planning review process which challenged the organization to find efficiencies in service delivery, innovative response to customer service demands and support for economic development. The second part of the collaboration was input and coordination with the regional building and construction association and professionals who support the development industry. This group was looking for ways to collaborate and embrace the RDN growth management principles around densification and smart growth while at the same time looking for opportunities to streamline approvals and shorten all aspects of the permitting process. These two groups were directly engaged and strongly supported the implementation of this delegation in accordance with the direction in the Board's strategic plan. With respect to regional partnerships, the approach taken in our delegation strongly resembles that utilized by our largest municipality, Nanaimo both for

consistency in approvals as well as standards for the development community to follow.

- 7. Innovation and promising practices.** Describe the degree to which the project/program demonstrated creativity and innovation, and contributed to increased efficiency or effectiveness.

The permitting process in local government has always been met with scepticism and concern with respect to costs and delays. Squarely in the sights of this are Development Permits which impact the ultimate issuance of the Building Permit and final occupancy of any residence, business or industrial development. The RDN delegation process is rooted in a balance of well-designed and clear Development Permit Guidelines in the OCP, utilization of an internal property information database that supports the permit processing and the removal of Board approval of this non-discretionary permit. Who would ever envision sending a Building Permit to the Board or Council for approval? We applied this same approach to the delegation of the issuance of Development Permits.

Delegating this permitting authority has reduced the timeline for approvals by approximately 6 months and those savings in timing delays have been estimated to be in the area of \$1,500-3000 per property subject to a permitting application. This estimate is based on reduced construction timeframe, reduced total borrowing period, scheduling of construction trades and the reduced involvement of agents/professional support for applications.

Since the adoption of these delegated powers in 2017, the reduction in both the issuance of Development Permits and subsequent Building Permits has met and in some cases exceeded the goals for reducing permitting times during a period development approvals that involved unprecedented volumes and complexity of applications in the Regional District of Nanaimo in terms of planning permitting and building permitting. Simply put, this change in process and delegation has allowed us to absorb increased pressure on the public service (volume and complexity of permits) while at the same time reducing our processing and approval times.

- 8. Public engagement and communications.** Describe the extent to which public engagement was foundational to the success of the project/program, including the use of communication tools such as social media.

The Electoral Area Development Permit Approvals Delegation Initiative was supported by a comprehensive internal and external stakeholder consultation plan. The Initiative was initially identified as an important innovation through a series of internal staff consultations during the RDN Operational Efficiency Review. Following Board support for the concept, the development community and consultants were directly engaged through focus group sessions to craft the approach to Delegation, input on the process was facilitated by staff and included direct consultation with the Electoral Area Directors and interviews with our Member Municipalities to attempt to coordinate the RDN approach with that of our local government partners. Once the initiative was supported, the RDN engaged local print media, RDN Social Media and the development community to role out and make known the new approach in the RDN.

- 9. Transferability.** Describe the degree to which the process or outcomes of the project, or other learnings, could be conveyed to other UBCM members.

Given the prevalence of the use of the Development Permit as a tool to manage development in rural Regional Districts and Municipalities, implementing a comprehensive delegated Development Permit approval process and the resultant savings in time and process for the community could be rolled out in a comprehensive manner across the rural Regional Districts and smaller municipalities of our Province. A secondary benefit is the impact that this delegation has on the time for a Board or Council to spend valuable time on other non-discretionary planning approvals like OCP's, Integrated Community Sustainability Plans or other initiatives like community economic development, active transportation or asset management to chart the course of the local government.

SECTION 5: Additional Information

- 10.** Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

The implementation of this delegation has spurred two additional efficiency initiatives that are currently underway at the RDN which will further support sustainable development, cost savings and effective service delivery in our region. The first is a Development Permit Harmonization project amongst our 7 Electoral Areas and the second is the implementation of a web based building permitting application system.

Since the adoption of this relatively simple change, customer satisfaction and the relationship with both the development community and our elected officials has shown a steady, positive change. Implementing a way to significantly reduce our processing time while at the same time thriving in an environment of rapidly escalating volumes has been an amazing success story.

SECTION 6: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Geoff Garbutt

Title: General Manager of Strategic and Community Development

Signature: 

Date: May 25, 2018

All applicants are required to submit:

- Signed application form. Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files.
- Five representative photos of the project. Photos should be submitted as JPEG files.

If you choose to submit your application by e-mail, hard copies do not need to follow.

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: awards@ubcm.ca

Mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8