

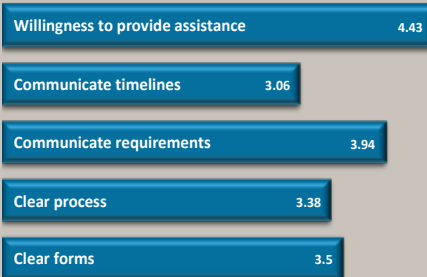
Development Applications Process Review

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- 69% have submitted applications to Ladysmith for more than 4 years
- 44% have 90%+ of their projects in Ladysmith, the remainder have less than half of their projects in Ladysmith
- The application process was rated relatively high, especially the willingness to assist applicants. Opportunities to improve include better communication of timelines (38% disagreed these were communicated early) and providing a clearer process (25% noted the process was not clear).

Development Application Process

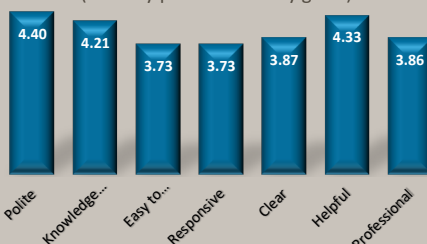
(1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)



- On customer service, the Town rated particularly high on politeness, knowledge and helpfulness.

Customer Service

(1 = very poor to 5 = very good)



We are listening!

The development application process review included a survey to hear from applicants about what went well, and what didn't, based on their own experiences applying for development permits, rezonings, variances and subdivisions in Ladysmith.

A total of 16 surveys were completed (44% return on Ladysmith's applicant list), and the consultants interviewed 13 applicants, including a range of local developers, and those with experience in other communities. Members of Council and staff were also interviewed. Some of the survey results are highlighted here.

Primary themes from the interviews and survey results are summarized as follows:

Strengths:

- Planning staff are helpful, professional and responsive.

- Most applicants thought Ladysmith was as good as, if not better than most Island municipalities in terms of application assistance and timelines.

Room to improve:

- Responsiveness (particularly engineering/public works department)
- Subdivision process and timelines, clarity in engineering requirements
- Guides, flow charts and checklists would be helpful (particularly for developers or owners unfamiliar with the process)
- Communicating processing timelines and expectations, and taking into account the complexity of the application before providing timelines
- Forms could be simpler

How does Ladysmith compare?

Applicants who were interviewed or responded to the survey indicated that Ladysmith compared favourably – in particular to Capital Regional, Cowichan Valley and Nanaimo region municipalities. Responses from applicants with experience in other municipalities ranked Ladysmith significantly higher than those who conduct business primarily within Ladysmith. Langford was referenced most often as an example of a municipality with efficient development processing. Langford's inter-disciplinary Development Review committee reviews applications within 2 weeks of submission, providing prompt and clear feedback.

Next Steps

Once we hear feedback regarding preferred approaches to improve the Town's application processes, a report will be prepared that outlines recommendations for improvement for review by staff and Council.

We all have a role in making this work!

While this review process is examining what the Town can do, it's always useful to remember that Council, Town staff and applicants each have a role in the development approval process, and making it run smoothly.

- **Applicants** can expedite the process by familiarizing themselves with application requirements, and submitting complete applications to allow thorough and timely review.
- **Staff** can provide simple forms and easy-to-understand guides, timely review, clear communications and coordinated review processes.
- **Council** can add certainty by applying policies consistently, and monitoring the impact of strategic projects on Town's capacity and resources.

How can we improve?

We know developers are looking for clear, timely processes. Delays cost money. While we received some feedback from the survey, the following is an expanded list of suggestions that could potentially improve the process, or your experience dealing with the Town. Tell us which of these changes would most benefit you!

Communication materials

- Guides, flow charts and checklists outlining the application process
- Application tips sheet
- Summary of staff authority vs. council (who has discretion where ... and where does staff NOT have discretion?)
- Feedback forms/customer service survey (completed at the end of each application)
- Simpler application forms (sustainability checklist)
- Application tracking information online

Process

- Mandatory pre-application meeting

Process (continued)

- Identification of one staff contact for each application
- Fast track processing for complete applications (or refusal to accept incomplete applications)
- Formalize a 48-hour customer service response policy
- Locate engineering together with development services and building
- Delegation of more development permit approvals to staff (rather than Council)
- Flexible requirements for public information meetings
- Streamlining of committees or what is reviewed by the committees (design panel, advisory planning, heritage)

Other

- Regular Developers' Forums to explore topics of interest and provide opportunities to discuss new regulations or process changes, concerns and successes with the Town, and network with local developers
- Create a liaison committee of development industry representatives to meet semi-annually with engineering and planning staff to identify and resolve issues

Tell us which improvements will help you!

The more we understand your preferences, the better we can respond and improve our processes to help you. Fill out a feedback form (available at the door) regarding the ideas you've heard today, or access the form on the Town website before April 20.