

Sidney's Building Moving Fee and Support for House Reuse / Recycling

Town of Sidney, Capital Regional District, BC



Population: 11,191 (2013)¹

Land Area²: 5.12 km²

Density²: 2,183.6 persons/km²

Median Age²: 56.9

Housing Mix² – Single: Multi-Family – 69:31

Average persons per household²: 2.0

2012 Capital Regional District disposal rate³:
394 kg MSW per capita (all sources)

Program Highlights / Summary

The ultimate reuse is the reuse of a whole building. In many areas, building reuse is fraught with bureaucratic barriers, but some local governments aim to facilitate building reuse. The Town of Sidney is especially progressive with respect to house moving, as the low cost of a house-moving permit encourages homeowners to move a house rather than demolish it. Sidney has a \$250 permit cost for house moving and a \$250 charge for a foundation deconstruction permit; total \$500. This compares to approximately \$2,500 to \$5,000 for a demolition permit. Inquiries about house moving increased when Sydney implemented this cost differential.

Nickel Bros House Moving move approximately 50 homes within the Pacific Northwest (Canada and U.S.) per year and about 4 or 5 per year in the Town of Sidney. Company representatives estimate that each demolished home adds between 60–80 tonnes of building materials to the landfill, not including the building foundation. However, virtually 100% of the building is diverted from the landfill if the entire house is moved. If 5 homes per year are moved instead of demolished, an estimated 300–400 tonnes can be diverted from the landfill per year.

¹ BC Stats data (<http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/Demography/PopulationEstimates.aspx>)

² Statistics Canada census data

(<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E&MM>)

³ Environmental Reporting BC

(http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/soe/indicators/waste/municipal_solid_waste.html?WT.ac=LU_Municipal-Waste)

Program Details

Sidney is a small town located at the northern end of the Saanich Peninsula on Vancouver Island and one of the 13 municipalities in the Capital Regional District. The Town of Sidney is especially progressive with respect to house moving, as the low cost of a house-moving permit encourages homeowners and developers to move a house rather than demolish it.

Nickel Bros House Moving Ltd. representatives say they have experienced an upward trend in house-moving in British Columbia since the late 1980s. Typically, a house would have been demolished in the past. Their company (established in 1956) will either move the house to a lot purchased by the home owner, or remove and save the building for later resale and transfer to the another owner's property. Today, people choose to move homes (or purchase 'recycled' homes available to be moved) for a variety of reasons:

- As an economically affordable option, since many recycled homes are about half the cost of a new home of comparable construction.
- As an environmentally sustainable option which prevents tonnes of construction waste from reaching the landfill.
- By leaving the building intact, hazardous materials are contained within the building structure and consequently do not require any special handling as is often the case during demolition.
- To preserve distinct architectural styles and character details not typically built today (leaded glass windows / divided light windows, first-growth timber wood floors and doors, fir or cedar shingles or siding).

Whereas building and demolition permits are the responsibility of the homeowner, moving permits are the responsibility of the mover. The Town of Sidney's house moving fee and quick permit issuance has been especially attractive to those interested in acquiring a house by moving it to a new location. Sidney's house moving permit fee is only \$250 to move a house within their municipality. A \$250 foundation deconstruction permit is also needed. However, the permit cost to demolish a house is 2.5% of the assessed value of the improvements (house) as per BC Assessment (e.g., \$2,500 for a \$100,000 assessment). Nickel Bros states that Sidney is one of the only municipalities they know of that has a low house moving permit and a relatively high demolition permit fee.

Program Results

Financial Data

Capital Costs

No capital costs incurred by municipality.

Operating Costs

No additional operating costs.

Staffing Implications

House moving permits are issued by the Town's Development Services Department and the Building Official. No additional staffing required.



CR&D Case Study 2: Waste Reduction, Voluntary Mechanism

Cost Recovery

There is no additional fee or deposit required by the Town to administer this permit. The moving fee is retained by the Town to administer the Bylaw and ensure that the moving company complies with the municipality's and Province's road use and routing requirements.

Environmental

Reduction and Diversion (tonnes)

Nickel Bros notes that each discarded home can add between 60–80 tonnes of building materials to the landfill when it is demolished (not including the foundation). However, virtually 100% of the building is diverted from the landfill if the entire house is moved. At the time of writing this case study, two homes within the Town of Sidney were being moved. Nickel Bros reports that they typically move 4 or 5 homes a year within the Town of Sidney.

Disposal impact / Landfill Space Savings

If 5 homes per year (as in the Town of Sidney) are moved and reused instead of demolished, an estimated 300-400 tonnes can be diverted from the landfill per year. Nickel Bros calculates that a 1,600 ft² home represents about 60 trees worth of lumber, depending on the size of the trees when harvested.

GHG Reduction

Not calculated, however deconstruction is reported to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because the reuse of building materials diminishes the need for extraction of resources, manufacturing and transport of building materials made from virgin materials.

Social

Political Acceptability

The Town of Sidney supports the reuse of existing homes. Based on the number of homes that have been moved, it appears that the low house moving permit fee is having a positive effect on the reuse of homes and providing an affordable housing option. Preventing construction waste from being taken to the landfill is a key aspect of Sidney's house moving permitting process. The Town's initial enthusiasm for building reuse may have come from the presence of the Nickel Bros office in Sidney (i.e. supportive of a local business).⁴

Community / User Acceptability

Nickel Bros indicated that inquiries from developers about house moving in Sidney have increased. More people are considering the cost differential for moving (recycling) a house, vs. demolishing it, as well as the purchase of a recycled house vs. building a new home.

Community Economic Development

Nickel Bros' business model depends on the relocation of buildings (as opposed to demolition) and they currently have three divisions throughout the Pacific Northwest (Washington State, Greater Vancouver and Vancouver Island). Nickel Bros has expanded their market by incorporating the barging of buildings within the Pacific Northwest and Gulf Islands region. Barging costs are typically considered for projects that are more complex or where water transportation is more cost effective.

⁴ In recent years, Nickel Bros moved their Vancouver Island office to Nanaimo.

Lessons Learned

Not all homes can be moved. It depends largely on the structural integrity of the building, location of power lines, and distance to be traveled (Ministry of Transportation limits the distance a house can be moved, on the road, to 110 km). Additionally, house moving is not regarded a desirable practice in many municipalities, so the relocation of a building to another municipality or through a municipality may face several barriers.

If Nickel Bros is purchasing the home for resale via their website as a 'recycled' house (as opposed to moving it to a new site for the owner), the resale potential of the house is a factor in determining whether it is cost effective to relocate.

The Town has learned that significant variations in permit fees can be a consideration when a home owner or developer is deciding how to manage an unwanted building. The Town also uses the permitting process to ensure that the vacant site, after the house is removed, is both safe and clean.

Communities with Similar Programs

Oak Bay and Saanich also promote house moving:

- District of Saanich
Engineering Department 250-475-5575, or
Building Inspections 250-475-5457
- District of Oak Bay
Building & Planning Department 250-598-2042

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