

Recently, the City of Surrey developed a promising new initiative called the Building Inspector Mentorship Program. The intent of this program is to identify suitable candidates for building inspector positions, and provide a course of study as qualifying criteria. Faced with the dilemma of replacing veteran building inspectors on the verge of retirement, this program allows the city to develop its selected candidates to succeed the veterans. The mentorship program is broken into 4 quarters over the course of a year and is intended to train candidates to become Building Inspectors.

Candidates for the Mentorship program are required to meet certain selection criteria. In addition to having technical knowledge of common building practices, the B.C. Building Code and City Zoning Bylaws, the candidates must meet certain education and experiential requirements. Candidates with trade qualifications or those who have completed construction related courses from recognized institutions and have related field experience are considered to be ideal fits for this mentorship program. Such qualified candidates may be recruited from within the City, as well as externally.

The Mentorship program is broken up into four quarters over the course of a year; each quarter lasting 3 months. The intention of each of the quarter is outlined within the mentorship programs' required learning outcomes. Candidates are assigned to a veteran building inspector for guidance and onsite training. Each day of training is documented by the mentor and the candidate completes a deficiency checklist per site inspected. At the end of each quarter, the candidate is administered a written test, as well as an onsite review. Should a candidate fail to meet expectations of the program at the end of any quarter, they may be asked to withdraw from the mentorship program.

The first quarter is largely focused on learning the processes of the Building Department and other various departments within City Hall. The candidate begins by accepting permit applications at the front counter and answering any building/zoning related inquiries. The candidate then moves onto to residential and commercial plan checking, and then to the Plumbing/Electrical/Landscape Departments. The intention of this progression through the departments is intended to assist the candidate to become familiar with the processes of each department and to develop a deeper understanding of the overall function of the building division as a whole. Later in the first quarter, the candidate will also become familiar with the Planning and Engineering Departments. Onsite, the first quarter mainly consists of foundation inspections for single family, multi-family and commercial buildings. A number of days within each quarter are allotted for onsite training with Plumbing/Electrical Inspectors and City Arborists. At the end of the first quarter, the candidate should be able to carry out foundation inspections of all building permits issued by the City of Surrey.

The second and third quarters revolve mainly around frame, insulation and final inspections. The mentor trains the candidate on how to conduct these inspections for all types of building. Along with the technical aspects of conducting these inspections, the candidate learns the process of administrative aspect and dealing with the onsite professionals. Larger projects can have many professionals involved and it's important to learn the role each professional plays in the construction of simple and complex buildings. The candidate is also trained on the differences between Coordinating Registered Professional projects and Certified Professional projects.

The fourth quarter of the program is where the entire program comes together for the candidate. The candidate is now ready to carry out building inspections on their own without onsite guidance of the mentor. Each morning the mentor assigns inspections to the candidate that he/she is to carry out during that day. The mentor is still available for the candidate to rely upon via cell phone and may assist with larger or complex buildings, but the candidate is largely on their own when conducting inspections. At the end of this quarter a final cumulative written exam, as well as several onsite reviews are administered.

The City of Surrey's Building Inspector Mentorship Program is intended to assist in recruiting and replacing a veteran staff. The qualified candidates progress through a yearlong training process. The program is broken into four quarters which are intended to equip the candidates with skills to become a building inspector within the City of Surrey.