



---

---

## MEMORANDUM

---

---

**TO:** ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION  
**FROM:** JAMES VAN HEMERT, CONSULTING TOWN PLANNER  
**SUBJECT:** WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY MEETING HIGHLIGHTS  
**DATE:** 2/13/2024

---

I provide a summary of the DRAFT Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy and my comments relative to Lake Cowichan interests.

The full strategy may be accessed here.

[View the draft Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy](#)

You are invited to participate in the survey until Monday March 4

[Complete the Survey](#)

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cowichan Region is taking bold action to address housing needs and to offer housing choices to workers, requiring new conditions in which housing development in the Cowichan Region takes place.

### STRATEGY AREAS WITH COMMENTARY by JVH

#### 1. Enable Industry-Led Workforce Housing Solutions

Creates opportunities for various industries to initiate housing solutions within their own sphere of influence. In the Cowichan Region, industries that are being called to take action and be part of the solution include agriculture, tourism, construction, healthcare, and non-profits. These industries require a supportive planning and development environment in order to successfully participate, such as getting sites ready for development, contributing land, advocacy, and building relationships with industries.

### Commentary

*Lake Cowichan already has a welcoming development environment. One of the initiatives listed in the strategy is a workers campsite for seasonal workers. The Lakeside Campground owned by the Town is not suitable for seasonal workers.*

## **2. Accelerate Housing Development**

This strategy aims to increase the number of housing units built in the Cowichan Region with a sense of urgency. Three specific solutions to speedily deliver units to the market are: utilize temporary use permits (TUPs) for temporary accommodation (e.g., RVs for seasonal workers), facilitate the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and mobilize modular housing construction. Programs are needed to move this strategy forward and involve the preparation of permit packages, educational materials, and Cowichan-specific design concepts.

### Commentary

- *Temporary Use Permits (TUPs). Currently the Town does not have a bylaw that permits residential TUPs. It is reasonable to consider one, particularly given that we have informal temporary RVs in the Town. The draft strategy recommends delegation to staff for TUP approval.*
- *Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). The Town has been awarded almost \$900,000 from the federal government to accelerate housing development. This includes updating the zoning bylaw to expand ADUs. Incentives could be considered with this funding.*

## **3. Regulate Short-Term Rentals (STRs)**

This is a strategy that mitigates the diversion of rental housing units from the market by finding a balance between making short-term rentals (STRs) available to serve short stay workers and tourists while ensuring rental housing is available for long-term residents. A focus on practical tools that align with new provincial legislation is the starting point for the first three years of implementation. This includes implementing a short-term rental business license program and enforcement at the regional district level, implementing short-term rental regulations across the region, and creating a STR Coordinator position to oversee its implementation.

### Commentary

- *As the Town has a population under 10,000, it is not required to enforce the principal residence requirement for STRs. The draft strategy suggests that the Town consider opting in. Local governments can annually request by resolution submitted to the Minister of Housing to "opt-in" to the Province's principal residence requirement. The resolution must be submitted to the Province by March 31st of each year for the change to take effect November 1st of the same year*
- *The regional coordinator for STRs is proposed as a new regional service to be funded (taxed) across all jurisdictions. I see no value here for the Town.*

#### **4. Establish a Housing Corporation (HC)**

The strategy aims to scale-up and increase capacity to address workforce housing needs in the Cowichan Region. Exploring the opportunity to evolve and empower the existing Cowichan Housing Association is the core focus of this strategy and involves a due diligence process to ensure feasibility before endorsing the framework. If supported and once in operation, it is envisioned that the HC will convene a work plan to identify potential partnerships and sites for development and pursue the creation of workforce housing as well as housing for other populations in alignment with the needs and gaps identified in the CVRD Regional Housing Needs Assessment Report. Ultimately, this strategy allows the HC to take a lead role in the development of housing on behalf of the region (CVRD electoral areas and member municipalities) and in partnership with other sectors, as well as inherit and manage housing agreements, and provide other programs, services, and advocacy.

##### Commentary

This falls beyond the scope of my expertise.

#### **Summary of recommendations**

1. Discuss and consider drafting a temporary use permit bylaw for residential uses. It could be written similar to that of one in North Cowichan.
2. Discuss and consider drafting a short term rental bylaw consistent with Provincial standards for communities over 10,000.