

Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy

A PLACE TO BUILD FUTURES

What We Heard – Engagement Round #2

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Introduction

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) is developing a Workforce Housing Strategy for Cowichan, to come up with actions for increasing housing availability and affordability for the labour force. Economic Development Cowichan (EDC) is leading this project on behalf of the CVRD, with support from Cowichan Housing Association and CitySpaces Consulting. The project includes several rounds of engagement with stakeholders and the general public. This report outlines the results of the second round of engagement.

Executive Summary

In May 2023, EDC hosted a series of workshops to discuss key focus areas of the Workforce Housing Strategy project: short-term rental regulations, a potential Cowichan housing authority, and accelerated workforce housing solutions. Workshop participants discussed the benefits and challenges of each potential solution, and how each might be used to alleviate workforce housing issues in the region.

Participants were supportive of regulating the short-term rental market in Cowichan, as it would allow local government to proactively shape the development of the industry to protect housing stock for workers while maintaining tourist accommodation. The main challenge cited was capacity to enforce regulations. Overall, participants felt a need for smart regulations that consider the variety of unique communities in Cowichan.

Most participants felt that the creation of a housing authority in Cowichan would allow for a more streamlined, efficient, and integrated development process. Significant advantages were seen in having a housing authority or a housing corporation leading this space as opposed to a non-profit housing society. Many felt that Cowichan Housing Association should transition to become the housing authority/corporation. The primary challenge discussed was funding such an organization.

Participants showed high interest in temporary use permits, modular construction, and accessory dwelling units to drive accelerated workforce housing development. Appropriate policies (including zoning) and support from local government are needed to champion these solutions.

Engagement Round #2



After initiating the Workforce Housing Strategy project in November 2022 (Phase 1), the project team engaged a variety of stakeholders in a series of workshops to explore issues and opportunities for workforce housing in Cowichan (Phase 2). A summary of the results of Issues and Opportunities engagement workshops is available on [the project website](#). The workshop findings were subsequently enhanced by one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, including local government and First Nations staff, to learn about initiatives already underway that address items identified in the workshops.

As a result of this extensive engagement, four primary themes emerged that form the scope of the Workforce Housing Strategy project:

1. **Regional Workforce Housing Policy Guidelines:** Research on the types of housing needed by workers in key industries (e.g. healthcare, construction, tourism, and agriculture) to inform policy development that could support and enable the delivery of these housing forms.
2. **Accelerated Housing Solutions:** Look at tools that can be used to quickly deliver workforce housing units to the market while longer-term solutions are being put in place.
3. **Short-Term Rental Regulations:** Discussions around the implications of regulating the short-term rental market, balancing the needs of worker housing and the tourism industry.
4. **Housing Authority:** Explore the role, structure/model, funding, partnerships and impact of the creation of a housing authority for the Cowichan region.

In May 2023, Phase 3 of the Workforce Housing Strategy project was initiated. The project team hosted three workshops to explore themes 2 through 4 in more depth with a select group of stakeholders. It was determined that Theme 1 did not require stakeholder consultation during this phase, as it is largely a research exercise.

- Short-Term Rental Regulations Workshop – May 5, 1:30-3:30pm
Virtual, 23 attendees (out of 33 registrants)
- Cowichan Housing Authority Workshop – May 15, 12-4pm
In-person, 28 attendees (out of 35 registrants)
- Accelerated Housing Solutions for Cowichan – May 16, 2-5pm
In-person, 26 attendees (out of 43 registrants)

Each workshop included an overview of the project and findings to date, as well as a review of the four project scope themes. Next, background information and case studies on the workshop topic were shared to help inform participants and spur discussion.

The majority of each workshop was dedicated to discussion with the participants. Breakout groups were utilized and participant responses were recorded in real time. The feedback gained during these workshops will be used to refine each focus area of the project in preparation for drafting the Workforce Housing Strategy.

Invitees included First Nations and local government representatives, developers and builders, employers, workers with lived experience, service providers, and Project Advisory Group members. For the Short-Term Rental Regulations Workshop, short-term rental hosts, Tourism Cowichan Society, visitor centres, hotels and motels, and other tourism representatives were invited. Members of the Board of Directors for Cowichan Housing Association were invited to the Cowichan Housing Authority Workshop. For the Accelerated Housing Solutions Workshop, invites were sent to motels, campgrounds, RV parks, mobile home parks, RV dealerships, modular and tiny home builders.

The workshops were enhanced by the participation of representatives from other regions that have already implemented some of these solutions. In particular, Marla Zucht, General Manager of Whistler Housing Authority, was invited to attend and present on the Whistler experience at the Cowichan Housing Authority Workshop. Representatives from Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), Aboriginal Housing Management Association, City of Victoria, Capital Region Housing Authority, Greater Victoria Housing Society, and Islands Trust were also in attendance at various workshops and provided invaluable advice and perspective to the discussions.

What We Heard

The following pages provide a summary of the discussions at each workshop.

Short-Term Rental Regulations Workshop

The slides presented at the beginning of this workshop are included as Appendix A of this report. The presentation provided background information on short-term rentals, their impact on workforce housing, and case studies of regulations implemented elsewhere.

Benefits

Participants were asked to brainstorm potential benefits and challenges to introducing short-term rental regulation in Cowichan. The overall benefit was seen as the opportunity to proactively shape the development of the short-term rental industry in Cowichan in order to protect housing stock for residents while maintaining tourist and temporary worker accommodations. It was generally thought that housing for residents should take priority over accommodations for tourists, and that regulations could result in some units returning to long-term housing stock and increased diversity of housing to meet the needs of workers at various income levels.

Other cited benefits of regulation included the ability to set minimum standards that would ensure consumer protection, and the creation of a new revenue stream (through business license fees, fines, etc) that could fund affordable housing, monitoring and enforcement. Participants felt that regulations could result in more equal treatment of short-term rental

operators and traditional accommodations, such as hotels and motels, the latter of which typically pay higher property taxes, etc. The ability to collect data and track the short-term rental market was seen as a huge benefit to regulation. Overall, most participants felt that smart, consistent, and transparent regulations applied throughout Cowichan would have many benefits.

Challenges

The main challenge to regulation cited by most participants was capacity. It was felt that challenges already exist in enforcing current regulations, and that added complexity would only exacerbate the issue. Also, the resources required to establish, communicate, manage and enforce short-term rental regulations was seen as a major barrier, including spillover into other government departments such as waste management, utilities, and engineering with respect to site plan review and permitting. Furthermore, one of the most common mechanisms for regulation, business licenses, is not currently available to electoral areas the Cowichan Valley Regional District. Note: If desired, the CVRD could request from the Province authority to issue business licenses. A Report of the [Joint UBCM-Province Advisory Group on Short-Term Rentals, 2021](#), recommends that this authority be issued to regional districts by default.

Other challenges brought up by participants included difficulty in partnering with short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb for enforcement and data collection, and the effective communication of regulations once established. It was recommended to use precise language when discussing the short-term rental market, as there are a variety of types of rentals, suppliers, and marketing platforms involved.

Several participants noted that not all short-term rentals are suitable for affordable workforce housing, such as multi-million-dollar ocean and lakefront properties, so regulations will need to be designed with this in mind. Overall, most felt that clear, realistic goals of regulation should be laid out, with the understanding that short-term rental regulation alone will not address the current housing crisis.

Scenarios

Participants were asked to share scenarios where short-term rental regulations may be problematic, as well as where they might alleviate regional workforce housing issues. Many expressed concerns about the loss of revenue for property owners who aren't able or don't want to accommodate long-term renters, but who rely on the extra income, for example, seniors on fixed incomes. As has come up in previous engagements, participants had concerns about the Residential Tenancy Act pushing landlords out of the long-term rental market.

There were also concerns about overregulation and its impact on the tourism industry, especially given the growing popularity of short-term rental-style accommodations and the increasingly apparent shortage of sufficient hotel space in Cowichan. It was also noted that short-term rentals are often used by the workforce, including temporary, seasonal and contract workers, local residents whose housing is in transition, and newcomers to the area. If regulations are put in place, they will need to be balanced.

On the other hand, in situations where long term accommodation is not viable, it was suggested that thoughtful regulation of short-term rentals could help to open up temporary workforce housing for newcomers, seasonal and contract workers. Regulations could also potentially increase the inventory of affordable units for low-income renters and students, an important input into the local workforce. It was suggested that allowing short-term rentals under certain circumstances may pave the way for partnerships with short-term rental platforms, which could help shift the burden of data collection away from local governments and enable digital enforcement tools.

Overall, participants acknowledged that Cowichan is made up of many distinct and unique communities. Some communities lend themselves more to leisure travellers, while others attract more business travellers. Therefore, there is no one size fits all solution to short-term rental regulation.

Solutions

Naturally, participants began to brainstorm possible solutions to some of the challenges facing short-term rental regulations, and ideas for regulations that might suit the Cowichan context. Ideas included:

- Allow short-term rentals on properties that already provide long-term housing, and restrict the percentage of floor space allowed for the short-term rental unit
- Allow short-term rentals under a Temporary Use Permit for Electoral Areas and Business Licenses for Municipalities
- Cost of a Temporary Use Permit or business licence could be tiered to prioritize long-term accommodation, followed by medium-term accommodation for workers, and lastly to permit short-term rentals
- Allow for camping in more zones, especially around trails
- Create permissive tax exemptions to attract more hotels, motels, etc to Cowichan
- Create tourism-specific zoning where short-term rentals are permitted
- Create more permissive commercial zoning for tourist accommodations (i.e., permit kitchen facilities)

- Limit length of stay and frequency of annual booking for short-term rentals, which may free up more medium-term housing
- Create a government-run platform to manage short- and long-term rentals

Cowichan Housing Authority Workshop

The slides presented at the beginning of this workshop are included as Appendices B and C of this report, including those presented by Marla Zucht of Whistler Housing Authority. The presentations provided background information on housing authorities, a comparison of different models, case studies of housing authorities operating elsewhere, and the evolution of Whistler's housing authority. Key take-aways from the Whistler presentation included:

- Be Bold & Innovative
- Need Housing Champions
- Partnerships are Important
- Get Credible Data
- Protect Your Housing Inventory

Benefits

Participants saw the primary benefit of a housing authority would be an integrated development approach that connects Official Community Plans, zoning, and other land use tools with the development community. Its connection to local government would create more certainty and efficiencies for developers. Participants also felt that higher levels of government would welcome a housing authority in Cowichan, and would be eager to work with the new organization.

Other noted benefits included the formation of partnerships to access land, leverage funds, etc, and the housing authority's ability to build capacity in the local non-profit housing sector.

Challenges

The primary challenges cited by participants to the success of a housing authority in Cowichan were funding and capacity. The question of how the authority would be sustainably funded yielded a number of ideas:

- Taxation
- Community Amenity Contributions (CACs)
- Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT)
- Commercial lease revenue from mixed use developments

The representative from Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) shared that WHA is funded through an [Employee Housing Service Charge](#) on any commercial or industrial development within the municipality.

Several participants noted that the creation of a housing authority would be a complex process, and that the resulting entity would still have challenges to overcome like any non-profit. It was recommended to closely examine how the creation of a housing authority would solve specific workforce housing problems in Cowichan to ensure that it is the correct solution.

Model & Mandate

While discussing the ideal model for the proposed housing organization (authority, corporation, or non-profit society), many felt that a housing authority or corporation would have advantages over a non-profit society, mainly due to its connection and integration with local government. Participants also felt it is very important to have strong Indigenous representation within the organization.

It was acknowledged that Cowichan Housing Association is playing a valuable role in the local housing landscape as a non-profit. In order to further strengthen its effectiveness and avoid duplication of efforts, transitioning CHA to a housing authority/corporation was held as the preferred direction to investigate further.

Participants agreed that the mandate of the housing authority or corporation should be broader than just workforce housing, and include seniors and others. The organization should have a strong vision to direct housing development in the region, backed by the support of government at all levels.

Accelerated Housing Solutions for Cowichan

The slides presented at the beginning of this workshop are included as Appendix D of this report. The presentation provided background information on six possible tools to accelerate workforce housing development, with case studies from other regions.

There was strong interest from the development community to make use of these and other tools to solve the housing crisis. They identified the need for “permission” as a perceived barrier to implementing these solutions.

Temporary Use Permits

Most participants felt that non-confirming housing is already widely in use in Cowichan, including recreational vehicles (RVs) and tiny homes. Since they are not permitted, there are no regulations for health and safety in place. Temporary Use Permits (TUPs) would allow such regulations to be put in place, and are a mechanism to legalize what is already happening across the region, increasing housing security for people living in these situations. Participants

suggested that, at the very least, temporary resolutions should be put in place to limit enforcement of non-confirming dwellings where health and safety regulations are being met. However, it was acknowledged that, if these housing forms are permitted on a temporary basis, it may be very difficult to disallow them at a later date.

Taking a longer-term view, participants noted that many Cowichan residents desire a rural lifestyle, and in a community context, which results in increasing popularity of RVs, tiny homes, and other housing forms. Suggestions included the creation of zoning for tiny home communities and permanent campgrounds, increasing density on campgrounds, and allowing composting toilets and other alternative systems. It was also noted that RV design and technology is advancing, allowing for four season occupation, and that some park models are permitted as long-term housing.

An important distinction made by participants regarding tiny homes and other non-traditional forms of housing is that these options are often very well constructed and represent a lifestyle choice as opposed to a decision made out of desperation. The Regional District of Central Kootenay has done great work to clarify [situations in which “tiny homes” are permitted in the RDCK](#), which Cowichan might duplicate.

Modular Construction

Participants saw significant potential in modular construction as a means of bringing affordable workforce housing into the market faster than traditional construction. In fact, it was also noted that the residential construction sector could benefit from increased adoption of technologies overall, including alternative building methods, 3D printing, and robotics. Economies of scale will be needed to make modular construction a success on Vancouver Island, and Cowichan already has a number of modular construction businesses operating within the region. Another key concern raised regarding modular construction was access to appropriate development sites with proper zoning, and incentives to drive this form of development.

Modular work camps were also discussed in the breakout groups, including fly camps with mobile infrastructure, bunk houses, and opportunities on forestry land. This topic felt particularly relevant to many participants given the Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project, which is projected to bring hundreds of workers into the region during construction. Participants noted that private forestry companies hold large tracks to land in Cowichan, which could present a partnership opportunity to access land for modular development, eco-villages, or cohousing projects.

Accessory Dwelling Units

As with modular housing, participants saw great potential in Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as another way to bring more affordable workforce housing on stream quickly. Barriers to the widespread development of ADUs in Cowichan were noted: restrictive zoning regulations, infrastructure limitations, lack of property owner knowledge and ability to navigate the development process, and NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard).

Participants discussed a number of opportunities to overcome these barriers. Zoning amendments to allow ADUs in appropriate residential zones would remove the need for lengthy zoning amendments where NIMBYism can be a problem. The development of pre-approved ADU designs available to the public at no charge, as well as support for property owners looking to undertake the development process, were noted as major opportunities to increase development of ADUs.

Extended Stay Hotels

There was limited interest from workshop participants in pursuing extended stay hotels. Several related comments were made about the need for short-term rental regulations, incentivizing property owners to offer long-term rentals and home sharing, and the creation of short-term rentals geared towards the workforce instead of tourists.

Adaptive Reuse

Participants noted a number of potential opportunities to repurpose existing infrastructure for workforce housing, including Cowichan Secondary School and the Cowichan District Hospital, which are both being replaced by new structures. Student housing for Vancouver Island University's Cowichan Campus was also brought up. On the more creative side, multiple participants recalled the use of cruise ships for workforce housing in Kitimat, which led to discussions about multi-unit float homes and floating subdivisions, as well as potential uses for decommissioned BC Ferries vessels.

A photograph of a construction worker wearing a yellow safety vest and a hard hat, working on a wooden frame structure. The image is overlaid with a teal and black geometric design.

COWICHAN WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY

Workshop 1: Short-Term Rental Regulations
May 3rd, 2023

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Land Acknowledgement

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Introductions

Introductions

- Let's get to know each other!
- Type into the chat:
 - Name?
 - Organization / Role?
 - A summer activity you are looking forward to?



What are we going to cover today?

- Project overview
- The Cowichan Workforce
- Potential Strategy for the Cowichan Region: Short-Term Rental Regulations
- Interactive discussion
- Next steps



Sharing Virtual Space

- Together we know a lot (and we are all creative!)
- Take space, make space
- Do our best to stay present and engaged
- Spirit of respect + curiosity
- Lean into discomfort
- Uphold what's confidential
- Zoom etiquette




The image features a white background with two overlapping, irregular, slanted shapes. The top shape is a vibrant teal color, and the bottom shape is a bright lime green. The teal shape is positioned slightly higher and further to the right than the lime green shape, creating a layered effect. Centered within the teal shape is the text "Project Overview" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Project Overview

Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Falling short on delivering new units, impacting the labour market

- **Number of housing units needed:** 4,955 new housing units by 2025 (991 units per year)
 - **Housing development trend:** an average of just 460 new units were built per year over the last 10 years (shortfall of 531 units per year)
 - **Market pressure:** there is an acute shortage of rental housing, significant price increases, and land development constraints
- 

Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Continued...

- Housing costs are misaligned with regional **wages**
- Households are **relocating** where housing is available rather than where they would prefer (and **further from their jobs**)
- **Job vacancy rate has increased** from 3.3% to 5.9%
- **Labour shortage** is impacting business throughout the region, including closures, reduced hours, and reduced service



Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Our Purpose:

- To identify a collaborative and regional solution to workforce housing
- To identify potential solutions to attract and retain staff within various industries
- To foster sustainable economic growth in the Cowichan Region



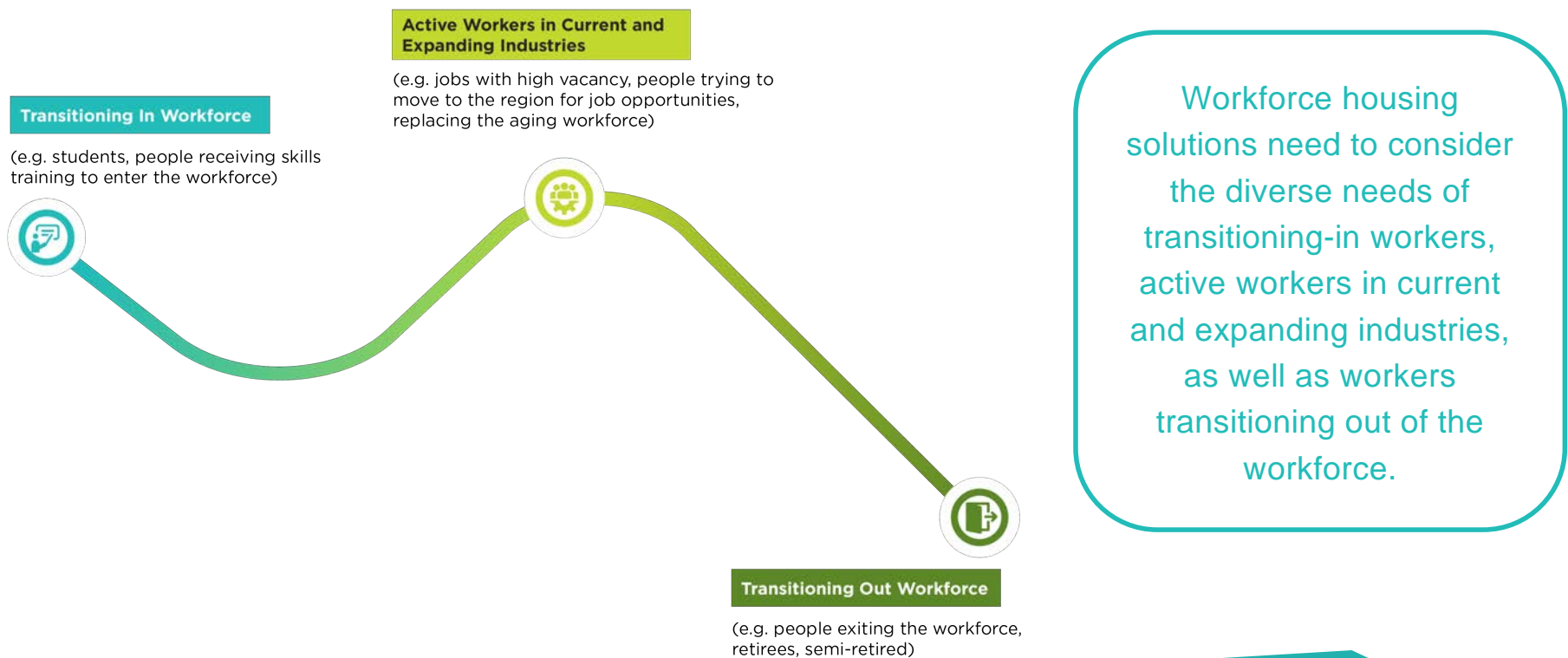
Project Timeline



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The Cowichan Workforce

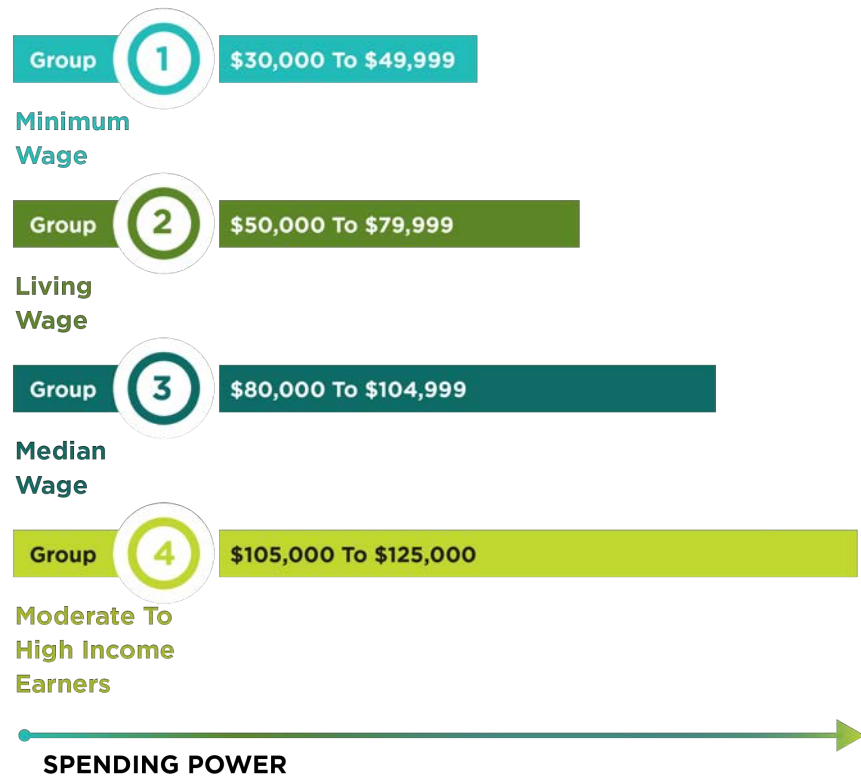
The Cowichan Region Workforce Arc



The Cowichan Region Workforce Wage* Spectrum

**full-time equivalency*

All jobs are important. Every worker contributes equally to Cowichan's socio-economic ecosystem. However, the spending power and the ability to afford housing ranges widely across the wage spectrum.



Proposed Vision Statement

“ The Cowichan Region offers housing choices for workers at all income levels and all stages of their vocations ”

A Vision provides meaningful context to a strategy. Visions can convey the spirit of the strategy, and often focus on the most important message or overall aspiration.



Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy Scope

Currently exploring 4 overarching strategies:

1. Create regional workforce housing policy guidelines (e.g. industry-specific solutions)
2. Seek accelerated housing solutions
3. Consider short-term vacation rental regulations
4. Establish a housing authority



Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy Scope

Currently exploring 4 overarching strategies:

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3. **Consider short-term vacation rental regulations**
4. Establish a housing authority



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Potential Strategy: Short-Term Rental Regulations

Short-Term Rentals (STRs)

- Private rentals through online platforms such as **AirBnb and VRBO** have grown in popularity and numbers, outpacing traditional tourist accommodation (e.g., B&Bs or hotels).
- STRs **support the local tourism economy** by providing accommodation.



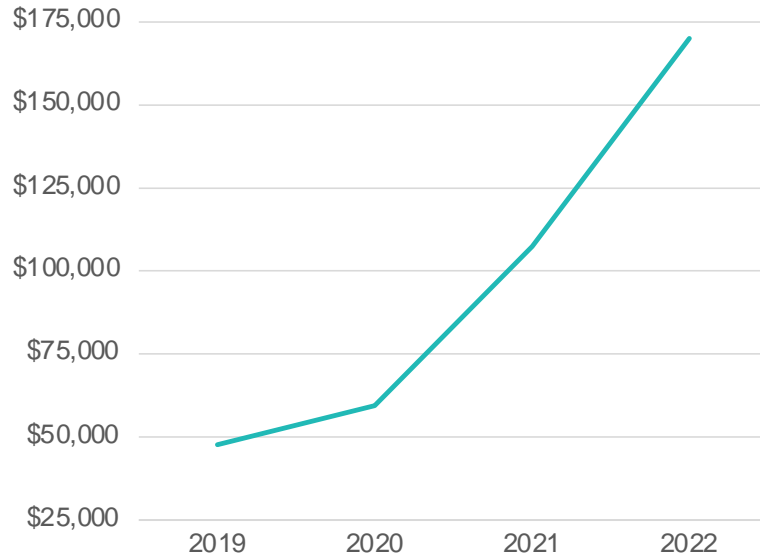
STR – Impact on Workforce Housing

- Short-term rentals **reduce the availability of rental accommodation** for residents and the local workforce.
- **Provide medium-term accommodation** needed by contract and seasonal workers, relocating workers, and others.
- Seasonal **workers are competing with holiday makers** for rental accommodation.



STR – Impact in Cowichan by the Numbers

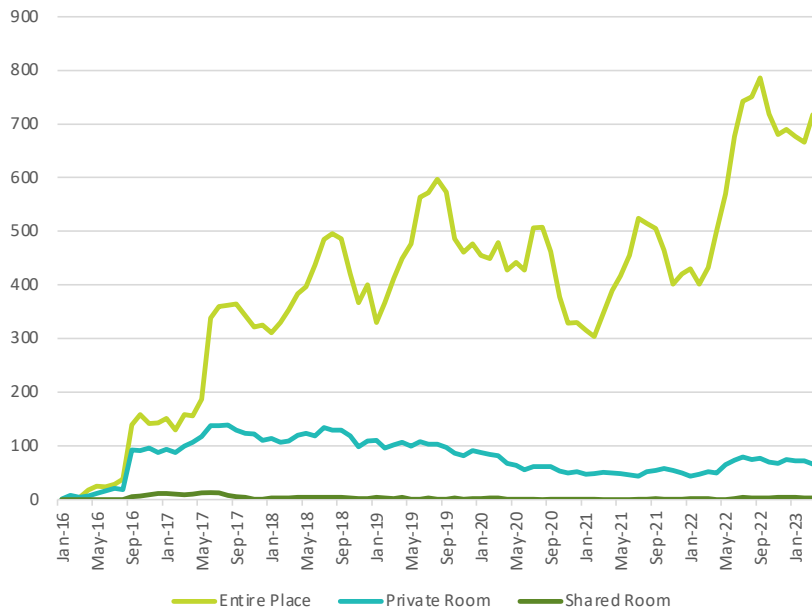
Online Accommodation Platform Revenue (2019-2022)



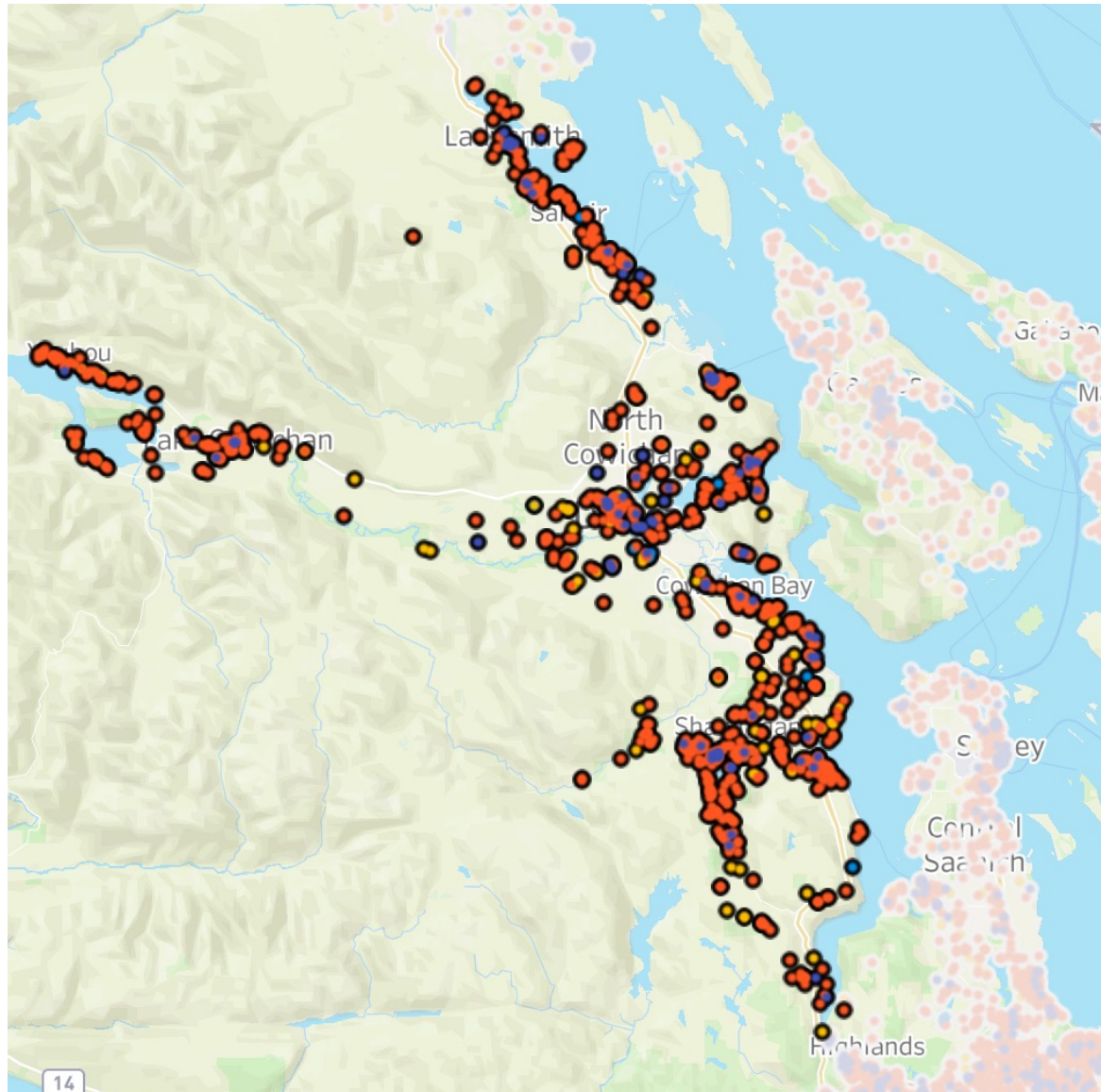
- STRs through the online accommodation platform tax (OAP) generated **\$170,059 in revenue** (2022).

STR– Impact in Cowichan by the Numbers

Number of AirBnb and HomeAway Listings in Cowichan (2016-2023)



- **Over 700 entire house** rentals were listed on AirBnb and HomeAway in January 2023.
- **Over 1,000** Cowichan Valley rentals were listed on AirBnb as of April 2023.



STR – Impact in Cowichan

- STRs are concentrated in certain areas throughout Cowichan
- This trend impacts long-term rental availability in the communities

STR– Impact in Cowichan

- **Many STRs do not comply** under zoning regulations.
- Homeowners may rely on STRs as a secondary source of income.
- The increase in STRs may be **impacting the availability of long-term rentals** in certain parts of Cowichan (Cowichan Lake, Gulf Islands, Shawnigan Lake).



STR– Impact in Cowichan

- Regulations in the **Residential Tenancy Act** are driving some landlords out of the long-term rental market and into STRs.
- A growing number of STRs are **under commercial ownership**.
- There is demand for **STR as tourist accommodation**, shaping this growth to support community need is important.




Short-Term Rental Regulations


- Short-term rental regulations help **monitor the use of short-term rentals (STRs)** to safeguard medium- and long-term rental market
- Address core issue of: **long-term housing being converted to STRs.**



Case Study 1 - City of Victoria

- Introduced a land use bylaw that prohibits short-term vacation rentals in transient zones.
 - STRs are only permitted if the property is a principal residence
 - The whole home on occasion for up to 30 days; or
 - Up to 2 bedrooms in the home with shared kitchen and living spaces.
 - Self-contained dwellings suites are not permitted.
 - All operators must hold a valid business license.
- 

Case Study 2 - Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD)

- In 2018, adopted a short-term vacation rental **temporary use permit policy (TUP)**.
 - The zoning of a property determines whether a TUP is needed to operate a short-term rental.
 - A business license may be required to operate a STR in Tofino, Ucluelet, or Port Alberni.
- 

Case Study 2 cont..

- In issuing a TUP, the ACRD may specify conditions including:
 - Buildings to be used
 - Area of use
 - Hours of use
 - Total number of permitted rental occupants
 - Availability of owner or caretaker
 - Form and character of the rental unit
 - Environmental protection




Case Study 3 – District of Sicamous

- Updated the zoning bylaw to include regulations on short-term rental locations and what is needed to operate.
- Regulatory requirements include:
 - Must have a business license
 - Provide off-street parking
 - Limit occupancy to 2 adults per bedroom
 - A Sicamous resident must manage the property



Case Study 4 – Town of Gibsons

- Updated **3 bylaws** to regulate STRs:
 1. **Updated Business License Bylaw** to add STRs as properties that require a business license
 2. **Bylaw Notice Enforcement** in introduce penalties for STRs
 3. **Zoning Bylaw** to alter zones where STRs are permitted
 - The regulations outline two ‘streams’ of permissible residential guest accommodation (with a principal resident or no permanent resident).
- 

Key Takeaways

- In tourist destinations, **short-term rental regulations** can be implemented to regulate the use of rental properties and safeguard long-term rental housing for residents and the workforce.
- **Consideration:** investigate regional-level regulatory changes such as business license requirements and regulating occupancy, parking, and property management.



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Interactive Discussion

Instructions

- We will be using Mural (a virtual whiteboard) to facilitate a group discussion.
- Everyone will have an opportunity to add their expertise and input.
- Please follow the link in the chat to the Mural board!

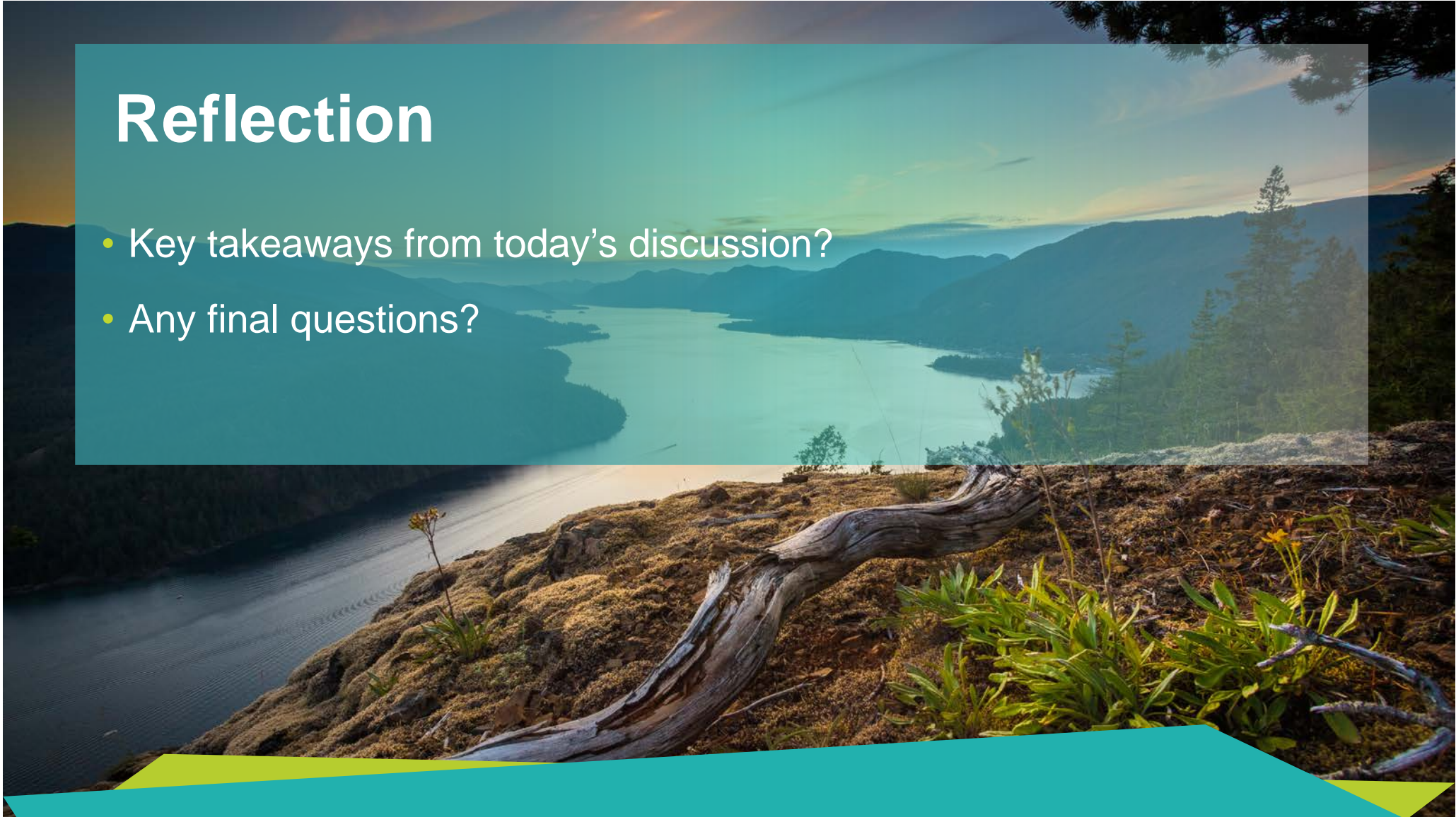


Discussion Questions

- What do you think are the **benefits and challenges** to introducing STR regulations in the Cowichan Region?
 - How might these regulations **impact** your business/organization?
 - Can you think of **scenarios** where the STR regulations may be problematic?
 - Can you think of situations where STR regulations would alleviate regional workforce housing issues?
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Reflection

- Key takeaways from today's discussion?
- Any final questions?



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Next Steps

Next Steps:

- Additional engagement in early May
- Summarize what we heard
- Knitting solutions together / drafting the Strategy
- Ready to launch / finalizing the Strategy



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Thank You!

A photograph of a construction worker wearing a yellow safety vest and a hard hat, working on the wooden framing of a building. The image is overlaid with a teal gradient and a black shadow effect.

COWICHAN WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY

Workshop 2: Housing Authority
May 15th, 2023

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Introductions

Introductions

- CVRD Project Team
- Consultant Team
- Guest: Marla Zucht, Whistler Housing Authority



What are we going to cover today?


- Project overview
 - The Cowichan workforce
 - Potential strategy for the Cowichan Region: Housing Authority
 - The Whistler Experience
 - Breakout groups / interactive discussion
 - Reflections and next steps
- 

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Continued...

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- To foster sustainable economic growth in the Cowichan Region.



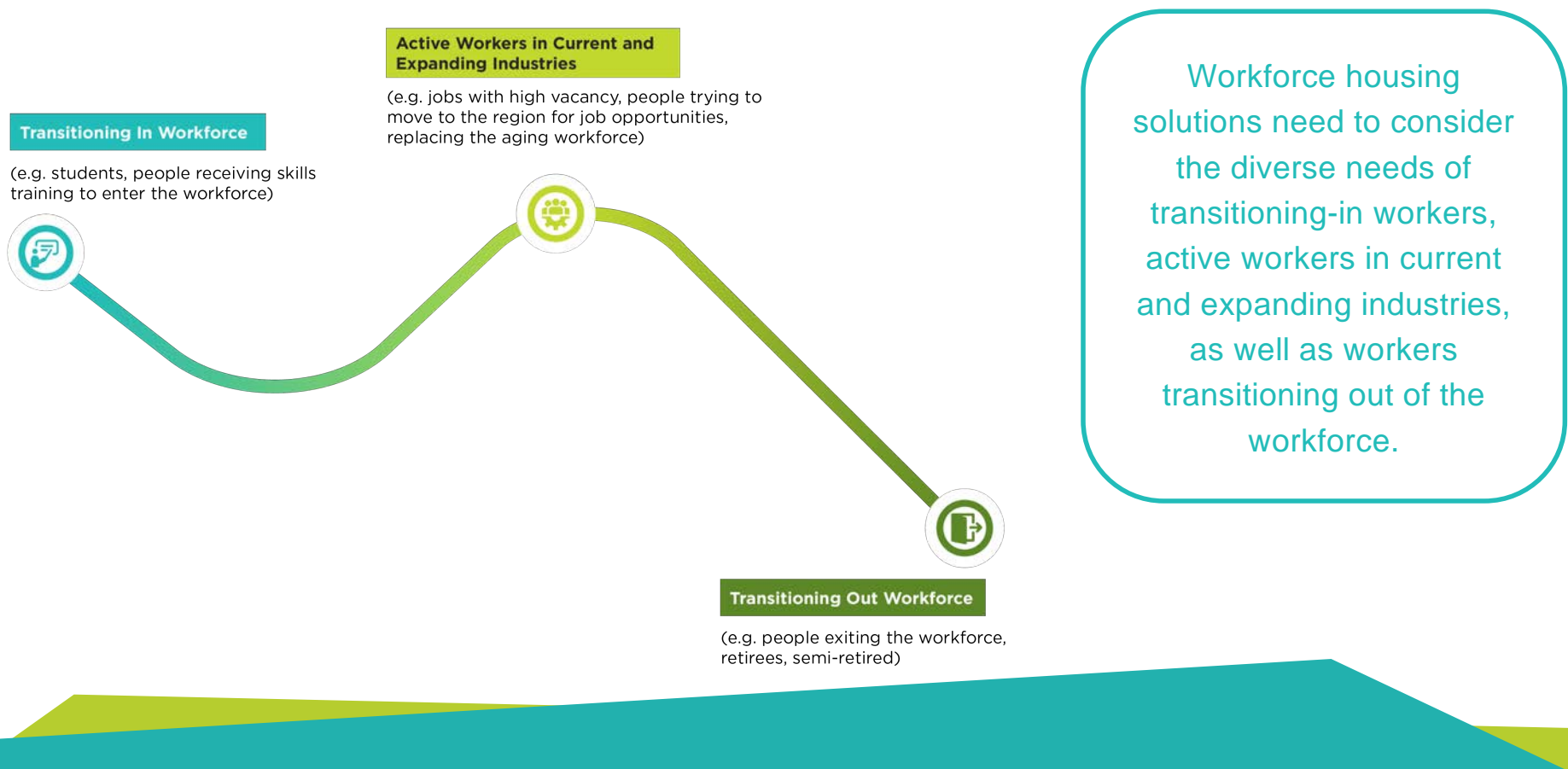
Project Timeline



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The Cowichan Workforce

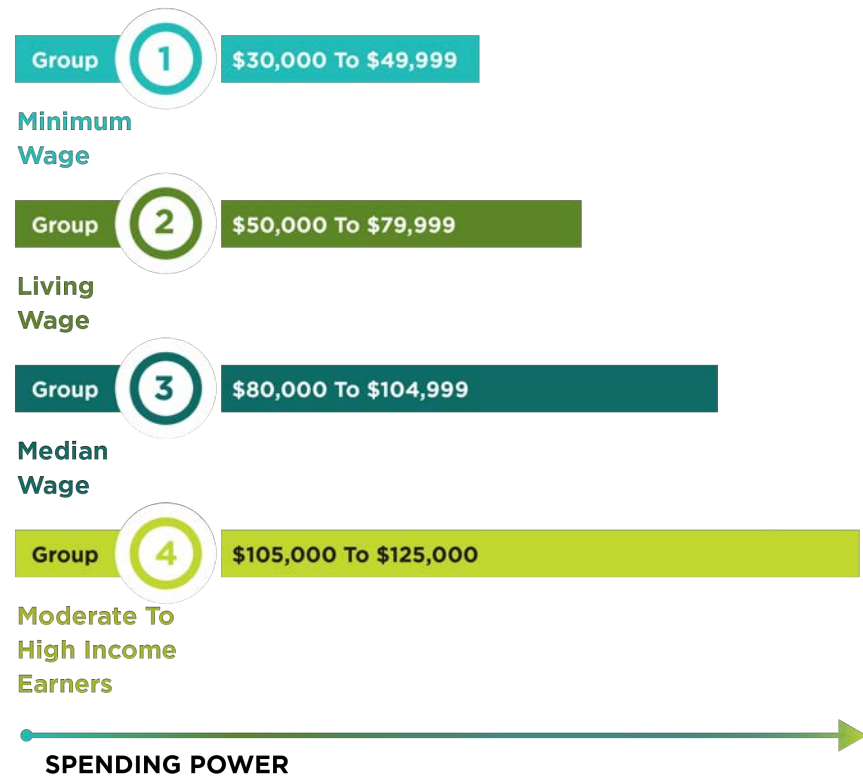
The Cowichan Region Workforce Arc



The Cowichan Region Workforce Wage* Spectrum

**full-time equivalency*

All jobs are important. Every worker contributes equally to Cowichan's socio-economic ecosystem. However, the spending power and the ability to afford housing ranges widely across the wage spectrum.



Proposed Vision Statement

“ The Cowichan Region offers housing choices for workers at all income levels and all stages of their vocations.”

A Vision provides meaningful context to a strategy. Visions can convey the spirit of the strategy, and often focus on the most important message or overall aspiration.

Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy Scope

Currently exploring 4 overarching strategies:

1. Create regional workforce housing policy guidelines (e.g. industry-specific solutions)
2. Seek accelerated housing solutions
3. Consider short-term vacation rental regulations
4. Establish a housing authority



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1. Create regional workforce housing policy guidelines (e.g. industry-specific solutions)
2. Seek accelerated housing solutions
3. Consider short-term vacation rental regulations
4. **Establish a housing authority**



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Potential Strategy – Housing Authority

Housing Authority – introduction

- A Housing Authority is an **independent, government-owned agency** that provides a range of housing services, funding and programs to connect people to the housing they need.
 - A Housing Authority **consists of a Board and Manager/Director, and sometimes additional staff.**
 - Housing Authorities hold a lead role in the **development of housing** on behalf of local governments.
- 

Housing Authority vs. Housing Corporation

- A **Housing Authority** is an independent, local government-owned agency.
- A **Housing Corporation** operates at an 'arm's length' from elected officials.



Tofino Housing Corporation

- **Non-profit** owned and controlled by the District of Tofino, at an arm's-length from Council.
- Facilitates the **development and operation of below-market housing**.
- Provides attainable and affordable housing for employees and residents.
- **3** main revenue sources: Municipal Regional District Tax, grants, service fees



Tofino Housing Corporation

- **Board of Directors** and an **Executive Director**, with support from **District of Tofino staff** and **development consultants**.
- Tofino Housing Corporation has **4** focus areas:
 - Housing development
 - Funding
 - Communications and advocacy
 - Organizational development and strategic priorities / actions required to facilitate the development of housing projects



Capital Region Housing Corporation

- A wholly-owned subsidiary of the Capital Regional District.
- Capital Region Housing Corporation's **mandate is to develop and manage affordable housing.**
- The Capital Region Housing Corporation received a \$28 million operating budget and \$53 million capital budget from the CRD's financial budget.



Capital Region Housing Corporation

- Comprised of a **Board of 24 Directors** including A Chair and Vice Chair.
- Primary **areas of focus:**
 - Services to residents living within it's 49 housing complexes
 - Consistent management of housing
 - Providing property management services



Capital Region Housing Corporation

- CRHC utilizes partnerships with the following organizations:
 - Victoria Cool Aid Society
 - BC Housing
 - Island Health
 - City of Victoria through the Housing Reserve Fund
 - CRD through the Regional Housing Trust Fund and;
 - CMHC
- Partnerships funded a 72-unit project - including 51 affordable housing units and 21 supportive units.



What's the Difference?

	HOUSING AUTHORITY	HOUSING CORPORATION	NON-PROFIT HOUSING SOCIETY
OWNERSHIP	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	REGISTERED NON-PROFIT
Governance	<p>Board, with representation from elected officials</p> <p>Operations are integrated with local government</p>	<p>Board, with representation from local government (elected officials, or staff)</p> <p>Operate at an 'arm's length' from local government</p>	<p>Board, with representation aligned with mandate and bylaws</p> <p>Operate independently from government</p>
Mandate	<p>Programs, units and target population aligned with Council Direction and local government priority (e.g. housing needs report/strategy)</p>	<p>Programs, units and target population typically aligned with local government priority (e.g. housing needs report/strategy)</p>	<p>Programs, units and target aligned with mandate of society</p>




What's the Difference?

	HOUSING AUTHORITY	HOUSING CORPORATION	NON-PROFIT HOUSING SOCIETY
OWNERSHIP	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	LOCAL GOVERNMENT	REGISTERED NON-PROFIT
Funding	Direct financial contribution from the local government, and eligibility to apply / receive external sources of funding (e.g. Provincial Government, CMHC, grants, loans, financing)	Direct financial contribution from the local government, and eligibility to apply / receive external sources of funding (e.g. Provincial Government, CMHC, grants, loans, financing)	Grants, loans, financing, subsidies, fundraising, donations, operating agreements with senior levels of government
Development Process	Local government staff are involved in concept and development planning and can streamline / fast-track development approvals, with near absolute certainty	Local government staff have close collaboration in concept and development planning and can streamline / fast-track approvals, with high degree of certainty	Development applications are prepared independently and submitted for review. Development approvals process is the same as private development. Approvals is uncertain, however can be increased if there is a collaborative relationship between society and local government staff, alignment with OCP/ land use and other policies



Housing Authority – Key Takeaways

- A **housing authority** is an independent, local government-owned agency that oversees the development and management of workforce and affordable housing projects.
 - **Housing corporations** operate at an arm's length from the local government, with support from municipal staff and development consultants.
 - **Non-profit housing societies** operate independently of government and have less certainty of project approval, however can foster positive working relationships with local government.
- 

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Interactive Discussion

Sharing Space for our Discussion

- Together we know a lot (and we are all creative!)
- Take space, make space
- Do our best to stay present and engaged
- Spirit of respect + curiosity
- Lean into discomfort
- Uphold what's confidential
- Workshop etiquette




Interactive Discussion

- Break out groups for approximately **45 minutes**
- Introduce yourself to your group
 - Name?
 - Organization / Role?
 - What brings you to today's workshop?

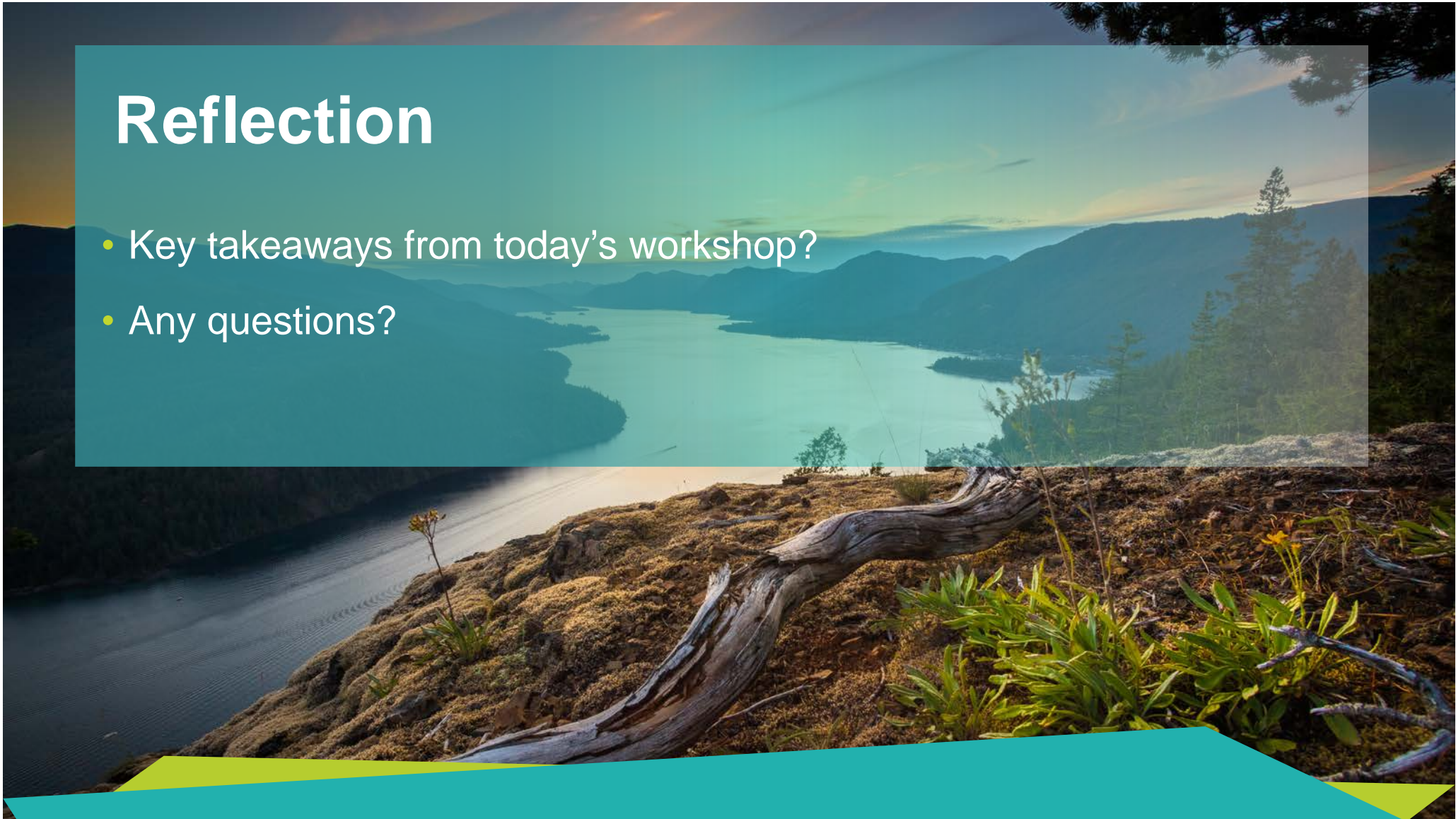


Consideration for Discussion

- What do you think are the **potential benefits and challenges** to establishing a housing authority in the Cowichan Region?
 - How could we address challenges?
 - What model do you gravitate towards? Authority? Development Corporation? Non-profit?
 - What are some considerations for structuring a housing authority in the Cowichan Region? Focus / mandate?
 - Could we empower the CHA to evolve into an authority or corporation?
 - Is this strategy worth exploring further? Why or why not?
- 

Reflection

- Key takeaways from today's workshop?
- Any questions?



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Next Steps

Next Steps:

- Additional engagement in early May
- Summarize what we heard
- Knitting solutions together / drafting the Strategy
- Ready to launch / finalizing the Strategy



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Thank You!



HELPING TO MAKE WHISTLER THE PLACE TO CALL HOME

Marla Zucht
WHA General Manager
www.whistlerhousing.ca



About Whistler

Housing Challenges & Evolution

Whistler's Employee Housing Model

The Whistler Housing Authority

WHISTLER

- Resort has seen unprecedented growth
 - Permanent population & jobs have grown
 - More competition for housing & great disparity of incomes
 - House prices increasing well ahead of wages
 - Lack of affordable housing for workforce
-



peaks'n'valleys by Glenn Rodgers

NO PLACE
TO CALL
HOME!



14,000 - Permanent Residents

12,100 - Employees in Whistler

77% - Workforce Live Locally

7,000 - Beds of Employee Housing



Housing Challenges & Evolution

1970 – 1980's

As the resort developed, rising real estate prices and affordability for local residents has been a perennial problem,

1990

Implementation of the Employee Housing Service Charges which required developers to either build employee housing or contribute to a designated housing fund.

1990's

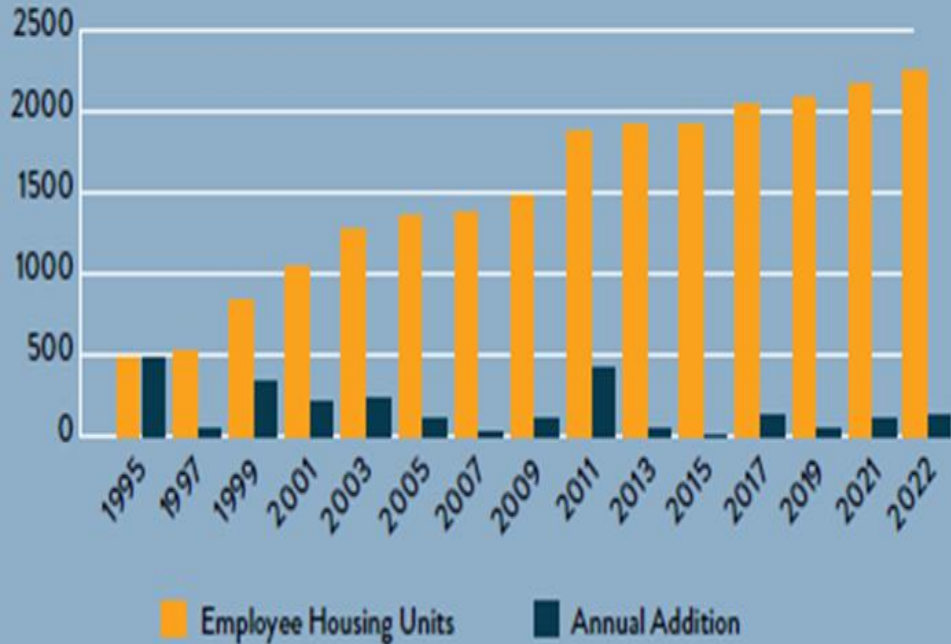
Affordable Employee Housing Policy, Comprehensive Development Plan and creation of the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA)

WHA starts to develop housing - originally had a relatively even split of rental and ownership housing, but as the community evolved with a greater demand for permanent family owner occupied housing, more focus was added to affordable home ownership properties

Today Whistler offers a wide range of housing catering to diverse individuals of varying socio-economic backgrounds – a key element to building successful neighbourhoods and sustainable communities

WHA continues to play a significant role in building resident restricted units, creating housing policy, and monitoring and managing the use of the resident restricted inventory

GROWTH IN EMPLOYEE HOUSING UNITS



VISION

Whistler's workforce is securely housed within Whistler.



MISSION

To provide employee housing solutions that support and enable our community to thrive and make Whistler the place to call home.



CORE SERVICES

The WHA works to support and meet the needs and interests of the community through delivery of the following:

- Long-term Housing for Whistler's workforce
- WHA Portfolio Management
- Employee Housing Resource Centre



1. EMPLOYEE HOUSING

Ensuring our workforce is provided with safe and enjoyable homes.



“WHA’s system has provided us with a fantastic place to live at a price that a normal family can afford.”

2. ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Developing our processes to increase our proficiency and relevance.



“The WHA has allowed us to make our home in Whistler and contribute to the community we love. As a single parent family, our WHA unit means the difference between staying in the town we call home and leaving.”

3. COLLABORATION

Working with new and existing partners to address the needs of our community.



“WHA’s housing program has made it possible for me to stay in Whistler and be able to own a home and build some equity. I am grateful.”

Continual Growth in Employee Housing

NEW EMPLOYEE HOUSING BEDS CREATED

Project Name	Year	Beds
WHA Cloudburst Court	2018	81
WHA Legacy Passive House	2019	68
WHA Lumina	2020	60
WHA Granite Ridge	2021	111
1340 Mount Fee Rd.	2022	122
1360 Mount Fee Rd. & 1315 Cloudburst Dr.	2023	306

**Total = 748
New Beds in 5 Years**



WHA Employee Housing Program

EMPLOYEE HOUSING WAITLISTS NUMBER OF APPLICANTS

2022	2021
466 Rental	356 Rental
1095 Ownership	1011 Ownership



EMPLOYEE HOUSING WAIT TIMES TO BE HOUSED

2022	2021
3.5 YEARS Rental	2.5 YEARS Rental
3.2 YEARS Ownership	5.6 YEARS Ownership

2022 WHA OWNERSHIP WAITLIST DEMAND



2022 WHA RENTAL WAITLIST DEMAND



“WHA has meant safe, affordable, secure housing that I own and take great pride in. WHA means great neighborhoods with like minded people and families. WHA means us being able to survive and thrive in Whistler - a place we love dearly. Thank you for all that you do WHA, our lives are better because of what you do.”

Employee Housing Opportunities

2022 WHA HOME OWNERSHIP SALES

2022 Total 2021 Total

121 **20**

New Construction (2022)	100
Purchased a different WHA Home	7
Left the Region	11
Pulling-out Equity (Staying in Whistler)	3

2022 WHA RENTAL HOUSING TURNOVERS

2022 Total 2021 Total

42 **28**

Purchased a WHA Home	34%
Left the Region	41%
Moved & Staying in the Region	13%
Rented a Different WHA Home	2%
No longer Eligible for Employee Housing	2%
Other/Unknown	8%

“Without the WHA Purchase Program, I would be unable to live in Whistler and would have unfortunately left years ago. These programs are crucial to the locals. Thank you for all your hard work!”

“I’ve lived in Whistler for 11 years and at the end of last year, the place I was renting was put up for sale. Thankfully, I had applied for the WHA Rental list and was offered a spot starting in December. Having the peace of mind that my place will not be put up for sale and I will not have to move unless I choose to is amazing.”



Community Feedback on the WHA & Employee Housing Program

“Owning our WHA property has allowed us to start our family and our businesses in Whistler with confidence in knowing our housing situation is secure. We have watched friends and colleagues around us struggle with ever increasing rent and in some cases being forced to leave town, while our mortgage has remained affordable and sustainable. The WHA program has meant that a long term (15+ years) local couple has been able to stay in the community we love!”

“Able to stay in Whistler and raise family here. Would have moved on if WHA affordable housing was not available.”

“It's meant everything. It has given me the ability to both live and work in my community. I wouldn't be living in Whistler without the WHA housing programs.”

“It's meant an opportunity to live affordably in a neighborhood of Whistler families. It creates relationships between local families.”

“The WHA housing program provided me with the means to own my own home in Whistler. If the WHA didn't exist, I probably would have moved away from Whistler years ago since rents are exorbitant, as are the prices for market housing. It's impossible for a single person, who does not wish to have multiple roommates, to find affordable long-term/permanent housing in this town. The WHA makes that need a little more possible.”

“The WHA's Housing Programs means that me and my family can live and stay in Whistler with an affordable mortgage.”

“Thank you for your efforts in making housing affordable for workers.”

TAKE-AWAYS

- Be Bold & Innovative
- Need Housing Champions
- Partnerships are Important
- Get Credible Data
- Protect Your Housing Inventory



SECURE HOUSING FOR WHISTLER'S WORKFORCE

Whistler Housing Authority

Helping to Make Whistler the
Place You Call Home

Whistler has 7,000 beds of affordable rental & ownership housing dedicated to those working in Whistler.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Whistler Housing Authority gratefully and respectfully acknowledges that our workplace and inventory of employee homes are located in the unceded territory of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and Lil'wat7úl (Lil'wat) Nations. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, and stewardship of the land we now know as Whistler.



COWICHAN WORKFORCE HOUSING STRATEGY

Workshop 3: Accelerated Housing Solutions
May 16th, 2023

The background features two overlapping, irregular, angular shapes. The top shape is a teal color, and the bottom shape is a lime green color. Both shapes have a slightly wavy, torn-edge appearance. The text is centered within the teal shape.

Land Acknowledgement

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Introductions

Introductions

- CVRD Project Team
- Consultant Team



What are we going to cover today?

- Project overview
- The Cowichan workforce
- Potential Strategy for the Cowichan Region: Accelerated Housing Solutions
- Interactive discussion
- Reflection / Next Steps



The title 'Project Overview' is centered within a teal-colored, irregularly shaped banner. This banner is layered over a larger, light green, irregularly shaped background element. The overall design is modern and abstract, with sharp, angular shapes.

Project Overview

Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Falling short on delivering new units, impacting the labour market

- **Number of housing units needed:** 4,955 new housing units by 2025 (991 units per year).
- **Housing development trend:** an average of just 460 new units were built per year over the last 10 years (shortfall of 531 units per year).
- **Market pressure:** there is an acute shortage of rental housing, significant price increases, and land development constraints.



Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Continued...

- Housing costs are misaligned with regional **wages**.
- Households are **relocating** where housing is available rather than where they would prefer (and **further from their jobs**).
- **Job vacancy rate has increased** from 3.3% to 5.9%.
- **Labour shortage** is impacting business throughout the region, including closures, reduced hours, and reduced service.



Why a Workforce Housing Strategy?

Our Purpose:

- To identify a collaborative and regional solution to workforce housing.
- To identify potential solutions to attract and retain staff within various industries.
- To foster sustainable economic growth in the Cowichan Region.



Project Timeline



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The Cowichan Workforce

The Cowichan Region Workforce Arc

Transitioning In Workforce

(e.g. students, people receiving skills training to enter the workforce)



Active Workers in Current and Expanding Industries

(e.g. jobs with high vacancy, people trying to move to the region for job opportunities, replacing the aging workforce)



Transitioning Out Workforce

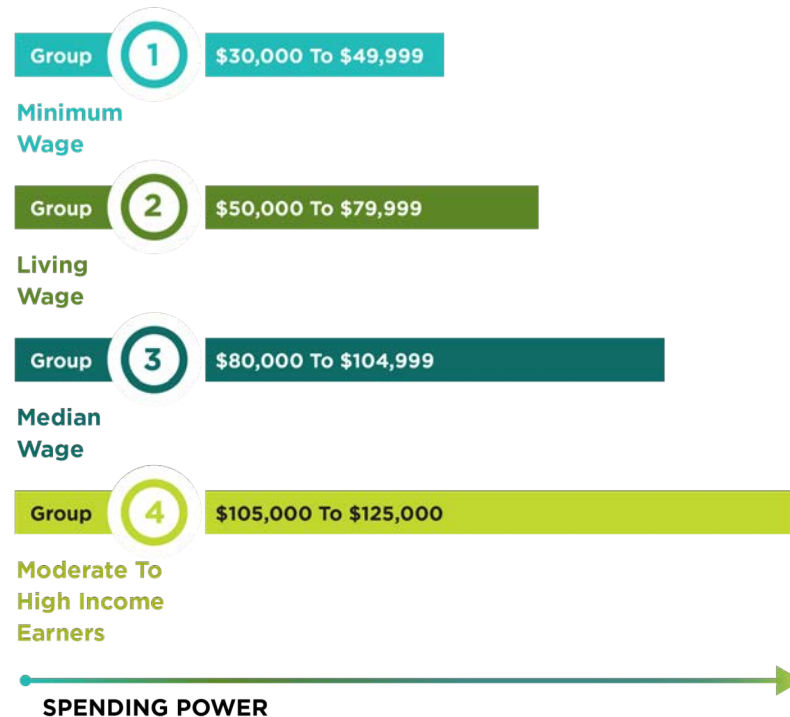
(e.g. people exiting the workforce, retirees, semi-retired)

Workforce housing solutions need to consider the diverse needs of transitioning-in workers, active workers in current and expanding industries, as well as workers transitioning out of the workforce.

The Cowichan Region Workforce Wage* Spectrum

**full-time equivalency*

All jobs are important. Every worker contributes equally to Cowichan's socio-economic ecosystem. However, the spending power and the ability to afford housing ranges widely across the wage spectrum.



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Cowichan Workforce Housing Strategy Scope

Currently exploring 4 overarching strategies:

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Potential Accelerated Housing Solutions

Accelerated Housing Solutions – introduction

- Typically, workforce housing projects take **3 to 4 years** to complete
- Workforce housing projects can be accelerated when enabling conditions are created to support development
- Numerous tools such as policies, zoning, programs, funding, incentives, collaboration, regulation, initiatives, and bylaws can be used to accelerate housing projects



Tools to Accelerate Workforce Housing Development

- 6 tools that we are exploring:
 1. Temporary use permits (TUPs)
 2. Extended stay hotels
 3. Modular construction
 4. Adaptive reuse
 5. Extended permitted use of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 6. Pre-approved Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) designs



Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Temporary Use Permits (TUPs)

- TUPs **allow temporary land uses not permitted under current zoning**, subject to council approval
- TUPs can be used to **fast-track** a range of housing solutions including permits for:
 - RV campsites for temporary housing of seasonal workers
 - Permitting to allow short-term vacation rentals
- **Zoning** of a property often determines whether a TUP is needed to operate a proposed operation



TUP Case Study - Ucluelet

- **The District of Ucluelet** piloted a project in 2021 to issue fast-tracked Temporary Use Permits for approved RV campsites for temporary housing of seasonal workers
- Private property owners can apply for the TUPS
 - RS zoned properties
 - Commercially zoned properties
- The permit is valid for a minimum of 30 days and a maximum of 6 months



Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Extended Stay Hotels

- More personalized services and amenities (e.g. laundry, gallery kitchen)
- Target guests stay **5 or more nights**
- Workers that may seek extended stay hotels include:
 - Nurses
 - Emergency service workers (e.g., firefighters)
 - Short-term contract workers



Extended Stay Hotels

- **Home2Home Suites** offers extended stay accommodation at locations across Canada including:
 - Fort St. John
 - Halifax
 - Edmonton
 - Vancouver



Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Modular Construction

- Modular construction allow for housing to be **constructed off-site**
- The housing is **constructed in a warehouse** under **controlled conditions** and designing code
- Modular construction fosters the delivery of housing units at an **accelerated timeline**



Modular Construction Case Study - Burnaby

- **City of Burnaby** developed a streamline process that positioned it to receive funding from CMHC's rapid housing initiative
- Fostered the construction of 28 new modular housing units for women (Elizabeth Fry Society)
- Units were built off-site and assembled on City-owned land



Modular Construction Case Study - Kitimat

- **LNG Canada** constructed a high-density work camp to support workforce
- The development accommodated 450 employees
- Reduced potential strain on Kitimat's housing, public service and infrastructure capacity



Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Adaptive Reuse

- Adaptive reuse to the **use of an existing building for another purpose** than it was originally built for
- Adaptive reuse can include:
 - Temporary housing converted into long-term housing (e.g. Athletes Village; housing for temporary construction workers repurposed into long-term permanent workforce housing)
Repurposed hotels/motels
 - Repurposed multi-residential buildings (e.g. student housing)
 - Repurposed non-residential buildings (e.g. vacant office buildings, large format retail, warehouses, shell-like spaces)




Adaptive Reuse Case Study

- The **City of Brantford**, Ontario, purchased a former student residence to convert into 28 affordable housing units (2022)
- The reuse and conversion of the former residence had benefits for the community including:
 - Increasing the city's affordable housing stock
 - Reenergize the downtown core by creating long-term housing
 - Generate economic activity for local businesses



Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Extended Permitted Use of ADUs

- **Policies and zoning** to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units (attached or detached housing units including secondary suites, garden suites, tiny homes, or laneway homes) for long-term rental use
 - **ADU Benefits:**
 - Provide **affordable rental options**
 - Generate **rental income** for homeowner
 - Provide **housing options** with maintaining (or enhancing) neighbourhood character
 - **Attract working-age residents** to communities
 - ADUs **require less resources** to build than a single-detached dwelling
- 

Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Extended Permitted Use of ADUs

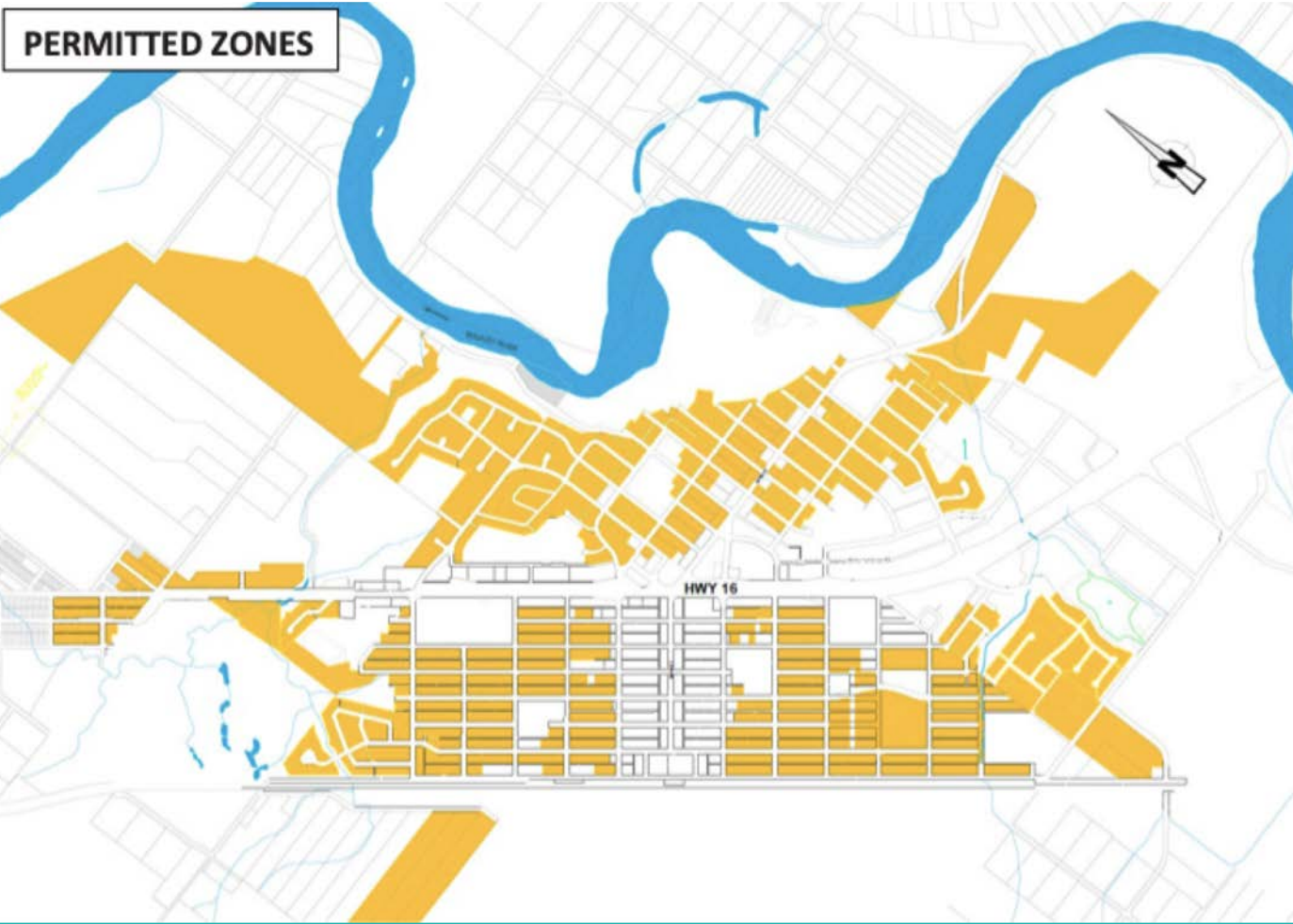
- Common **barriers to building** ADUs in communities include:
 - No policies or regulations in place
 - Lack of parking
 - Cost of construction
 - ADU permitting restrictions



Extended Permitted Use of ADUs Case Study

- **Town of Smithers** adopted zoning bylaw amendments to extend the permitted use of ADUs in single-detached and semi-detached dwellings (2020)
- Bylaw amendments permitted:
 - The use of ADUs in close proximity to the downtown area
 - Removed size restriction on secondary suites





PERMITTED ZONES

HWY 16

Tools to Accelerate Housing Solutions – Pre-approved ADU designs

- A set of **pre-approved plans for ADUs** that residents can access (for free)
- **Speeds-up the designing, permitting and development process** for property owners who might want to develop ADUs on their property
- Can be **cost effective**
 - Depending on the city, may decrease permitting fees because less time is needed for review



Pre-approved Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Designs Case Study

- The **City of Quesnel** amended their Zoning Bylaw to regulate ADUs in residential zones
- Waived building permit fees (2019)
- Held virtual open houses to collect public input on 5 pre-reviewed energy efficient accessory dwelling unit design plans (2022)



Accelerated Housing Solutions – Key Takeaways

- A **diversity of tools** to accelerate workforce housing development can be considered for the Cowichan Region.
- Exploring a combination of accelerated housing tools can **offer different solutions** to a variety of land/development situations.
- While many tools can be implemented through a municipality or regional district, often **cross-departmental as well as multi-sectoral collaboration is key** to successful implementation.



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Interactive Discussion

Sharing Space for Discussion

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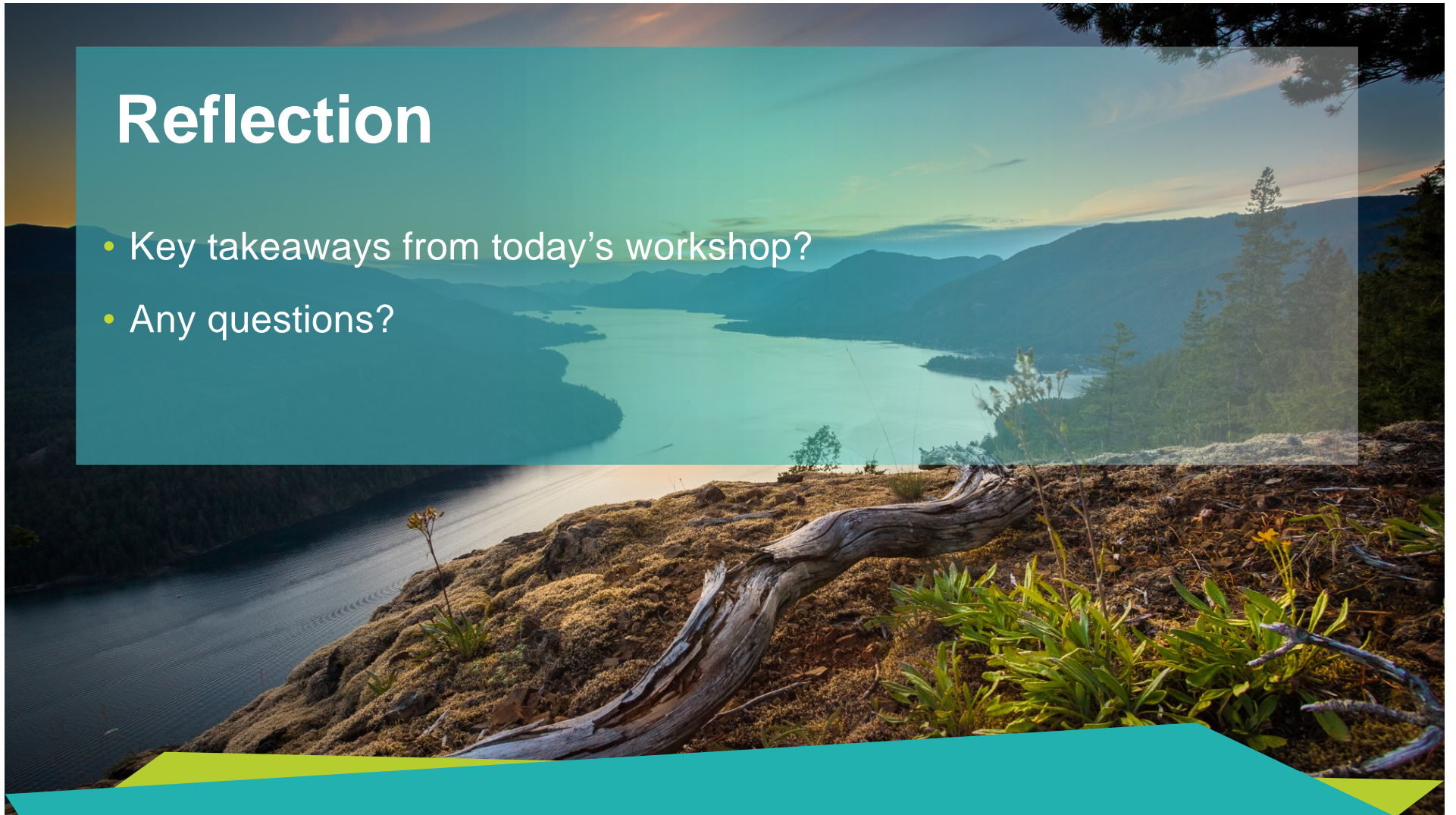


Consideration for Discussion

- What do you think are the **benefits and challenges** to each tool discussed today?
 - How could we address challenges?
 - How might implementing these tools **impact** your business/organization?
 - Can you think of **situations** where (TOOL) would alleviate regional workforce housing issues?
 - What tool do you think would be the most **easily implementable**?
 - Is this strategy worth exploring further? Why or why not?
- 

Reflection

- Key takeaways from today's workshop?
- Any questions?



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Next Steps

Next Steps:

- Additional engagement throughout May
- Summarize what we heard
- Knitting solutions together / drafting the Strategy
- Ready to launch / finalizing the Strategy



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Thank You!