

Christina Hovey

From: Shelley Cook <shelley.cook@cowichanhousing.com>
Sent: Friday, August 25, 2023 8:43 AM
To: Christina Hovey; Chris Osborne
Subject: Affordable Housing Policy

Good morning,

Thank for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Affordable Housing Policy for North Cowichan.

As discussed during the meeting, CHA is eager to work with North Cowichan to support the work around the development of affordable housing in the area. Specifically, CHA can assist with data related to rental housing and unit types, costs, locations, etc. through the spatially based Rental Housing Inventory for the CVRD that will be hosted on CHA's website this fall. CHA is committed to updating this information to ensure its accuracy and relevance on an ongoing basis. The Rental Housing Inventory will provide a baseline of rental housing in the CVRD that will allow us to track the addition and loss of affordable rental housing in the region. Additionally, CHA can also assist with seed funding for project development through our Project Development Fund tied to the CVRD Housing Trust. We encourage North Cowichan to utilize this fund for project development saving your funds for capital investment/construction.

Thank you again for taking the time to hear my feedback.

Kind regards,

Shelley Cook, PhD (she/her)
Executive Director
Cowichan Housing Association
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Helping House Cowichan

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I acknowledge and am honoured to work on the traditional unceded territory of the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Pauquachin, Ditidaht & Pacheedaht Peoples who have lived here since time immemorial.

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August 30, 2023

File No.: 0400-60 MNC 2023

Christina Hovey
Project Planner, Planning & Building Dept
Municipality of North Cowichan
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DUNCAN BC V9L 6A1

via email: christina.hovey@northcowichan.ca

Dear Ms. Hovey:

Re: Referral - Draft Affordable Housing Policy and Implementation Plan

Thank you for referring the Municipality of North Cowichan's draft Affordable Housing Policy and Implementation Plan to Economic Development Cowichan (EDC) staff for review.

As you are aware, EDC is leading the development of a Regional Workforce Housing Strategy (WHS). The goal of the project, due for completion later in 2023, is to identify actions for increasing housing availability and affordability for the labour force that can be implemented collaboratively by local government, non-profits, and private industry.

EDC staff are supportive and appreciative of the significant efforts North Cowichan is taking through the introduction of policy measures to advance affordable housing in the Municipality. It is hoped that, together with other measures, the WHS and North Cowichan's Affordable Housing Policy we will work in concert to advance regional housing affordability and regional prosperity. To support alignment, EDC suggests North Cowichan's Policy provide sufficient flexibility to support the implementation of any recommendations stemming from the WHS.

EDC staff comments are provided below as follows:

Partnerships: The WHS project has identified the potential for a Cowichan Housing Authority. EDC suggests including language in the policy to support future partnerships with such an agency.

Affordable Housing Reserve Fund: EDC supports the development of this fund and asks that the policy supports this fund being available for the full range of projects that may emerge from the WHS. For example, as a strategy area, the WHS is exploring specific tools that can be used to quickly deliver workforce housing units to the market while longer-term solutions are being put in place.

Real Estate Acquisition: EDC sees value in real estate acquisition for affordable housing development and while the potential to purchase motels, and hotel accommodations may be beneficial, this should be balanced against the supply of adequate hotel accommodations in the region, which is currently understood by EDC to be deficient.

Municipal Real Estate: EDC is supportive of the draft Policy approach to Municipal real estate to support affordable housing development. EDC suggests Municipal land for affordable housing be balanced, in particular, with industrial land needed for employment generation.

Financial Incentives: EDC is supportive of this policy approach and expects that property owners and developers will have a particular interest in understanding the conditions on which financial incentives for affordable housing may apply. The Municipality may also wish to consider, as part of this Policy or separately, a permissive tax exemption program or application fee reductions and waivers to support the development or redevelopment of hotels or motels in order to increase short-term commercial accommodation options (and reduce pressure on the long-term rental market).

Short-Term Rentals: EDC is supportive of this policy approach and notes the WHS may provide some additional clarity on how the region may best approach this subject.

Accessory Dwelling Unit Strategy: In consideration of an Accessory Dwelling Unity Strategy, you may also wish to consider policies to incentivize the conversion of single-family dwellings into multiple dwelling units (i.e., duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes). The region has many large homes with relatively small households.

Employer-Provided Housings: Employer-provided housing, historically more common in resort communities, is an emerging housing solution in the region. For example, an employer may purchase a large home and rent rooms to their workers. The Municipality may wish to consider how this type of housing can be supported or facilitated through policies and regulations.

Should you have any questions or wish to follow up on the comments please contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,



Barry O'Riordan, Manager
Economic Development Cowichan

BO:jm