

Appendix 1.8 Affordable Housing MRDT Plan

The following table **must** be completed if the designated recipient wishes to use MRDT revenues on affordable housing initiatives, regardless of whether revenues are solely from online accommodation platforms or from general MRDT revenues.

Project Name and Address
<p>Cowichan Regional Housing Service</p>
Project Goals, Rationale and Details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this project respond to affordable housing needs in your community? • What is the need, issue, or demand? • What kind of project are you spending on (such as acquiring or constructing buildings, providing funding to an existing housing project or towards a rental or social housing program, or entering into a partnership agreement)? • What documentation do you have authorizing the project to proceed (such as a contribution agreement or contract, or permits or schematics)? Submit the documents with your report. • How will you measure success on the housing project? <p>In Cowichan, population growth has outpaced housing development. The 2021 Cowichan Regional Housing Needs Assessment report estimates that 4,955 new housing units are needed in Cowichan by 2025, or 991 units per year, to meet population growth. Currently, an average of just 500 new units are permitted per year, a shortfall of 491 units per year. The imbalance between population and housing growth has translated into significant increases in the price of housing, lack of housing availability, and instability in the local workforce and economic environment.</p> <p>In 2018, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) adopted Bylaw 4201, establishing a Regional Housing Service to provide an annual financial contribution to a local non-profit, Cowichan Housing Association (CHA). The annual contribution is meant to assist CHA with costs associated with providing programs and services related to affordable housing and homelessness prevention in the Cowichan region. The Regional Housing Service is funded through property tax requisition from the CVRD’s nine electoral areas and four member municipalities.</p> <p>Using a portion of the Regional Housing Service funds, CHA manages two programs that support local organizations to address the significant shortfall of affordable rental housing stock in Cowichan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Development Fund: The goal of this grant is to assist housing developers and community groups interested in developing affordable housing to conduct the pre-development work required to obtain funding from senior levels of government. • Rental Housing Capital Contribution Fund: This fund is to be used for community equity contributions to leverage additional capital funds related to affordable rental housing

construction, demolition, renovation, and repair projects in the Cowichan Region.

Currently, both funds are available to non-profit and for-profit organizations through an established application process. Applications are assessed based on a number of criteria, including urgency of the need, number and size of units created or preserved, contributions from other sources, and potential impact of the project to address regional and local housing needs. Applications are reviewed by the CHA Executive Director, an Allocations Committee, the CHA Board, and finally the CVRD Board, before funding can be awarded.

We propose to direct MRDT revenues from Online Accommodation Platforms (OAPs) to the existing Regional Housing Service grant programs, from which the funds will be distributed based on the established application process. The CVRD will request that Cowichan Housing Association amend the criteria for the Project Development and Rental Housing Capital Contribution Funds as needed to align with the eligible uses of MRDT funds as set out in the MRDT Program Requirements.

MRDT Contribution

- Also indicate if the contribution is from OAP or general MRDT revenues.

100% of OAP MRDT will be allocated towards the Regional Housing Service. OAP MRDT is anticipated to be approximately \$176,000 in 2024.

Housing Provider/Project Owners/Project Lead

Cowichan Valley Regional District

Funding Partner(s)

Cowichan Housing Association

Contribution from Funding Partner(s)

OAP MRDT will be added to the existing pool of funds within the Regional Housing Service, strengthening this source of funding to support local organizations to develop affordable housing projects.

Estimated Completion Date

The Project Development and Rental Housing Capital Contribution Funds have an ongoing intake period. The allocation of OAP MRDT revenues towards these funds will be reviewed annually during the development of the CVRD’s Annual MRDT Tactical Plan and Budget.

Estimated Number of Housing Units Completed

- The number of housing units (such as rooms available for individual dwelling) acquired, completed, maintained, or renovated.

The number of housing units acquired, completed, maintained or renovated will depend on the applications received to the Project Development and Rental Housing Capital Contribution Funds.

Evidence of Consultation with Local Governments for Affordable Housing (if applicable)

- If the designated recipient is not a municipality, provide evidence of consultation (such as support letters) from the applicable local government(s) in your area in regards to using MRDT revenues for affordable housing.
- If your affordable housing spending has already been approved through the submission of a Five-Year Strategic Plan, this section is not required.

The potential to use OAP MRDT revenues for affordable housing initiatives was first presented to the CVRD Committee of the Whole on September 22, 2021, during discussions around the preparation of the MRDT Five-Year Strategic Business Plan renewal application. At a subsequent CVRD Board meeting on October 13, 2021, staff were directed to report back to Committee with more information on the potential for OAP MRDT revenues to be used for affordable housing.

Staff reported back to the Committee of the Whole on October 27, 2021 with clarifications around the allowable uses of OAP MRDT funds for affordable housing, but recommended that any decision to reallocate funds be delayed until after the MRDT Five-Year Strategic Business Plan renewal was complete, and more fulsome stakeholder engagement had taken place. As a result, the CVRD's MRDT Five-Year Strategic Business Plan states:

The Cowichan Valley Regional District is considering the use of Online Accommodation Platform revenues to support affordable housing initiatives. Although there are no current plans to direct OAP revenues towards affordable housing at this time, the Regional District may conduct stakeholder engagement and direct OAP revenues to affordable housing in the future.

Following additional stakeholder engagement, staff reported back to the Committee of the Whole on November 8, 2023 with a recommendation to redirect OAP MRDT revenues to affordable housing. This recommendation was supported by Committee of the Whole, and subsequently by the CVRD Board later that same day. The certified Board resolution is attached to this plan.

Following Board approval, the CVRD sent letters to each municipality within the region seeking Council support for the reallocation of Online Accommodation Platform MRDT revenues to affordable housing. Each municipality responded with a letter of support, which are attached to this plan.

Finally, this Affordable Housing Plan was approved by the CVRD Committee of the Whole on December 13, 2023, and subsequently by the CVRD Board later that same day.