

# Economic Development Cowichan

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**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2018 » 2022**





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# MESSAGE

## FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COWICHAN (EDC)

Developing this four-year strategic plan has involved an extended process of listening, building new relationships and setting clear priorities.

To acknowledge the past activities and insights of local business and community leaders, this plan draws on the Sustainable Economic Plan created by EDC in 2011. The Cowichan Valley Regional District Corporate Strategic Plan for 2014 to 2018 and its focus on excellence in land use planning, climate change, sound fiscal management, community engagement and advocacy also inform this document. Like previous plans, this strategy places value on creating a vibrant economy for Cowichan by:

- » **Increasing high quality employment opportunities**
- » **Building a more diversified and sustainable local economy**
- » **Supporting existing and emerging businesses that bring new investment to the region**

Through this strategy, Economic Development Cowichan will act on recommendations to:

- » **Activate regular consultation with regional businesses**
- » **Develop regional partnerships**
- » **Create detailed land use inventories**
- » **Communicate Cowichan's business success stories**
- » **Support communities**

The development of this strategy began in August 2016 and since then, EDC has engaged with individual business owners, community members and sector representatives from across the region to ensure the strategy reflects their aspirations. Economic Development Cowichan has also consulted with the CVRD Board of Directors, Chamber of Commerce organizations and not-for-profit organizations throughout the strategy's development stages.

This strategy builds on regional strengths in sectors like agriculture, forestry and tourism while acknowledging emerging sectors like advanced manufacturing, food processing, technology and film as economic contributors. By pursuing new opportunities that align with the values of the CVRD, Economic Development Cowichan aims to create shared prosperity and a sustainable future for Cowichan residents.

**AMY MELMOCK, MANAGER**  
**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COWICHAN**



## VISION

Economic Development Cowichan connects business, community and local government to position the region for success and shared prosperity. We respect and communicate the uniqueness of our communities and create value by acting on sustainable opportunities for partnership, collaboration, resource development and investment.

### **EDC's Role within the Cowichan Valley Regional District**

Economic Development Cowichan is an entity within the Land Use Services Department of the CVRD. It supports and upholds the priorities of the department and works in concert with fellow CVRD staff to create efficient and coordinated growth and development in the region.

### **Developing Partnerships in Economic Development**

As a regional entity, EDC works with communities throughout Cowichan to create new partnerships and projects in economic development. EDC also works with a broad range of federal, provincial and regional partners in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to support sector development and address regional opportunities and challenges.

### **Accessing Resources**

Economic Development Cowichan uses its resources in a fiscally responsible manner to leverage support and collaboration from provincial and federal agencies and other sources for the benefit of communities within Cowichan.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES







# GOALS

## GOAL 1

**Business Retention,  
Expansion  
& Attraction**

## GOAL 2

**Sector  
Development**

## GOAL 3

**Strengthening  
Communities**

## GOAL 4

**Communicating  
Our Story**

## GOAL 5

**Aligning with  
CVRD Strategic  
Activities**



# BUSINESS RETENTION, EXPANSION & ATTRACTION

## GOAL

Create new opportunities for business expansion and attraction through collaboration, networking and leveraging shared resources.

## WHY?

Retaining our business base, opening up new opportunities for business expansion and attracting new and innovative businesses is essential to the economic and social health of our region.

ACTIONS	MEASURE	TARGET
<b>1.1 INDUSTRIAL LAND USE ACTION PLAN</b> Working in collaboration with industry and municipal planning staff, EDC will conduct a comprehensive analysis of industrial lands in the region and build a foundation for new business attraction and investment based on capacity and current trends.	Selection of a qualified consultant and launch of study research	Q1 2018
	Municipal and industry engagement in the plan and formation of Industry Advisory Panel	Q2 - Q3 2018
	Municipal and CVRD endorsement of the plan	Q4 2018
	Creation of key strategies and plan implementation	Ongoing
<b>1.2 BUSINESS CONNECTOR PROGRAM</b> The Business Connector Program will provide existing and emerging individual businesses with timely, partnered support and information in product development, market and infrastructure expansion, access to labor and other current issues.	Establish an EDC Advisory Panel	Q1 2018
	Visit a minimum of 60 businesses annually to assess their current needs and recommend partnered mechanisms for support	Ongoing
	Host partnered workshops on issues relevant to the business community	Q1 2018 Ongoing





## SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

### GOAL

Based on their social and economic impact, support the development of existing and emerging sectors in the Cowichan region.

### WHY?

The landscape of sector activity is changing in the Cowichan. Traditional sectors are in transition and new opportunities are emerging that will diversify and strengthen the regional economy, provide well-paying jobs, opportunities for new investment as well as the retention and attraction of skilled workers.

ACTIONS	MEASURE	TARGET
2.1 <b>COWICHAN TECH STRATEGY</b> Support the development of a strategy that identifies our value proposition as a region, supports the growth of the existing sector and acts on opportunities for new growth.	Release study results to CVRD Board and the community	Q1 2018
	Implement recommendations in skills development, business development and attraction and investment	Q2-Q4 2018 Ongoing
2.2 <b>AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING</b> Act on Board recommendations to establish an Agriculture Select Committee for the CVRD. Support a viable and diverse agricultural industry by creating practical tools and assistance programs for producers and by assisting in the development of new food processing, value-added and agri-tech initiatives.	Bring together select committee stakeholders and establish terms of reference	Q1 2018
	Release the results of Equipment Bank Study and act on priority needs	Q1 - Q4 2018
	Facilitate the creation of a land lease program for Cowichan	Q1 - Q4 2018
	Partner in the development of new agriculture initiatives	Q3 2018 Ongoing





2.3 **VALUE ADDED WOOD AND CUSTOM DESIGN**

Host and create events and programs that support, promote and diversify value added wood and custom design businesses in Cowichan.

Co-host the inaugural Island Wood Trade Show and Forum with Vancouver Island Economic Alliance

Q1 2018

Create online profiles of wood and custom design businesses

Q1 - Q4 2018

Promote sector growth through business expansion and attraction and special events

Ongoing

2.4 **TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Champion emerging tourism products that will enhance the growth of the sector and compliment the destination marketing focus of Tourism Cowichan Society.

Identify and act on new product development opportunities related to cycling

Q1 2018

Identify and champion other new product development opportunities as they emerge

Ongoing

2.5 **FILM COWICHAN**

Continue promoting Cowichan as a film destination by highlighting distinct locations and film production opportunities in the region, raising awareness of film and by providing film liaison services to business, municipalities and incoming production companies.

Promote RONA Building as film production facility

Q1 2018

Work toward the development of permanent film production facilities and film services in the Cowichan Valley

Ongoing

Update Cowichan's film location library on Creative BC Reel Scout program

Ongoing

Assist in the development of new regional film events and film training opportunities

Ongoing

2.6 **PARTNERED SECTOR CONSULTATIONS**

Work with business, community and government partners to connect existing and emerging sectors with information and resources and to stimulate new sector growth.

Create partnered strategies that address skills development and employment issues in Cowichan

Ongoing

Create new sector opportunities as they emerge

Ongoing





# STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

## GOAL

Strengthen the capacity of key sub-regions, villages and towns throughout the region to act on new community infrastructure, business investment and community economic development opportunities.

## WHY?

The next generation of business investors, entrepreneurs and workers will be attracted to communities that enhance their liveability and demonstrate a cohesive, forward-thinking approach to community development and business retention, expansion and attraction.

ACTIONS	MEASURE	TARGET
3.1 <b>SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES</b> Assist in developing partnered economic development strategies that will influence the economic and social wellbeing of municipalities and sub-regions in Cowichan.	Assist municipalities and sub-regions in the development of partnered economic development and sector attraction strategies	Q1-Q4 2018
	Act on strategy recommendations by leveraging new financial resources	Ongoing
3.2 <b>VILLAGE CORE STRATEGIES</b> Take part in design charrettes and other partnered activities aimed at strengthening and creating connections between village cores.	Help local business and community organizations to resource recommendations stemming from the design charrettes	Q2 2018
	Create investment profiles for village cores that highlight new development opportunities	Ongoing
3.3 <b>COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES</b> Help community organizations throughout the region strengthen their governance, strategic planning and fundraising capacity.	Assist in the development of community infrastructure and special initiatives that are supported by a strategic and partnered approach to development	Ongoing





# COMMUNICATING OUR STORY

## GOAL

To effectively communicate the business and lifestyle advantages of living in Cowichan and raise the profile of economic development activities in the region.

## WHY?

A dynamic and timely approach to promoting the region is required to foster external interest and knowledge of the Cowichan Region and to create a positive perception of the region amongst local business and community members.

ACTIONS	MEASURE	TARGET
4.1 <b>WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT</b> Create and promote a comprehensive Economic Development Cowichan website that provides information on the business and lifestyle advantages of the region in a compelling, dynamic and up-to-date format.	Launch new website	Q1 2018
	Continue to add current event information and Changemaker profiles to the website, along with up-to-date demographic information about the region	Ongoing
	Introduce industrial land profiles, update community investment profiles	Q3 2018
4.2 <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FORUMS</b> Participate in and host economic development forums aimed at raising awareness of activities in the Cowichan Region.	Make regular presentations to municipalities, local business organizations and the private sector	Q2 - Q4 2016
	Host bi-annual Economic Development Forums and annual review of the Strategic Plan	Ongoing
4.3 <b>SECTOR PROFILES</b> Continue to research and develop the business case for specific sectors within the Cowichan Region.	Conduct detailed research and update profile information related to key sectors in the region	Q2 2018 - Ongoing





# ALIGNMENT WITH CVRD STRATEGIC ACTIVITIES

## GOAL

To take an active role in the strategic initiatives of the CVRD that have a direct impact on economic development and effective management of CVRD resources.

## WHY?

Many of the strategic initiatives of the CVRD have implications for Economic Development Cowichan. To add value to these initiatives, Economic Development Cowichan will be proactive in working with CVRD divisions and the Board of Directors.

ACTIONS	MEASURE	TARGET
5.1 <b>LAND USE MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS LICENSING</b> Explore opportunities for new land use and business licensing protocols.	Work with CVRD colleagues to explore the potential for leasing CVRD lands for industrial, agricultural and other purposes	Q1 2018 – Ongoing
	Create an internal CVRD working group to determine a business licensing protocol and present findings to the Board	Q1 2018 – Q4 2018
5.2 <b>FIRST NATIONS CONSULTATIONS</b> Conduct and participate in relationship building activities with First Nations throughout the Cowichan Region.	Participate in relationship building opportunities with fellow CVRD staff and conduct individual discussions with First Nations economic development staff	Ongoing
5.3 <b>COWICHAN 2050</b> Participate in the Cowichan 2050 project management team and provide organizational support for the Vancouver Island Placemaking Speaker Series.	Assist in organizing and promoting speaker series events and other placemaking initiatives	Ongoing
	Work with CVRD staff and community partners to develop a Creative Economies conference in 2019	Ongoing