

The *Local Government Act* sets requirements for regional districts with adopted regional growth strategies to consider a review at least once every five years. This requirement was most recently met on February 27, 2018 when the Board reviewed the findings of a preliminary review or “scoping” exercise and passed the following motions to proceed:

1. *That the Board proceed with Option 3 – Focused Regional Growth Strategy Review*
2. *That the Board direct the preparation of a Consultation Plan for a focused Regional Growth Strategy Review.*

On July 10, 2018 the Board approved RGS Consultation Plan by passing the following motion:

- *That the Board adopt the Consultation Plan for the Focused Regional Growth Strategy Review.*

Subsequently, a RGS webpage was launched to publicly share general information, pertinent documents, and updates on the RGS review www.getinvolved.rdn.ca/RGSreview

Regional Housing Capacity Study

Based on the findings of the 2017 RGS Annual Report², the Board supported the recommendation to include RGS Goal 6 - Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing and related policies into the focused RGS review program by passing the following motion:

- *That the Regional Growth Strategy policies relating to affordable housing be included in the approved Focused Regional Growth Strategy Review.*

In December 2018, the RDN initiated a sub-project of the focused RGS review known as the Regional Housing Capacity and Gap Analysis. The study is currently underway and when complete the findings will be used to evaluate and update policy options to promote housing affordability.

RDN Board Strategic Plan

On May 28, 2019, the Board adopted the 2019 - 2022 RDN Board Strategic Plan. One of the key strategic areas and related actions relevant to the RGS is:

- Growth Management, with the goal to provide effective regional land use planning and responsible asset management for both physical infrastructure and natural assets.
 - Action 4.3 Conduct a full review of the Regional Growth Strategy

This new direction provides an opportunity to consider the scope of the current RGS review program against the key strategic areas set out in the Board’s Strategic Plan to ensure continued coordination between these two key documents.

² RGS Annual Reports 1998 to 2018 are located on the RDN webpage: www.rdn.bc.ca/rgs-progress-reports

Three options are provided for proceeding with an RGS review (see Attachment 1 – Summary of Options for Reviewing the RGS). Each option considers the scope of policy areas to be reviewed as well as associated resources needed to carry out the work. Time and cost estimates are based on past and current experience, but do not include future emerging issues, such as a request from a member municipality or private entity to amend the RGS bylaw in addition to the review process. Depending on the nature of the request, it may be of benefit to incorporate it into the RGS review process or consider it separately. Either approach has implications for the scope, resources and timelines needed to maintain the current level of service required to implement the RGS and to undertake a review of the RGS bylaw. If such matters arise, the Board will be provided with an update and recommendations for proceeding.

Option 1 – Focused RGS Review (current)

The purpose of the focused RGS review includes the following areas:

Meet *Local Government Act* requirements: The *Act* requires a periodic review of the RGS, with a review to be considered at least once every five years. For the purpose of the review, a regional district must adopt a Consultation Plan that provides opportunities for early and on-going consultation throughout the review process.

Review of policies and processes by subject areas:

- Select Land Use and Servicing Policy Review - The preliminary review identified an opportunity to update select land use and servicing policies that currently limit the potential of intended planning approaches to support more sustainable rural development patterns, specifically Rural Village Centres and Alternative Forms of Rural Development.
- Housing Policy Review
- Implementation Process Policy Review – to consider if the Criteria for Minor Amendments and amendment process requires further revision.

Continued collaboration: The development and implementation of a RGS requires collaboration with all levels of government and especially the regional, local and provincial authorities. The RGS review is designed to continue the collaborative efforts through working directly with municipal staff as noted in the Consultation Plan.

Improved implementation: Through the implementation of the RGS bylaw, several of the measures (indicators/targets) used to monitor the RGS have been challenging to implement and need to be reviewed to determine if there are more suitable alternatives. In addition, the majority of the RGS implementation items have been completed or are considered on-going activities indicating that the implementation plan should be updated.

Required information updates: Since the RGs was last adopted in 2011, new information has become available, such as census data and changes to references to legislation and other sources that are scheduled to be updated.

Approach to engagement: The current RGS review Consultation Plan is focused on affected local governments, key stakeholder and approving bodies while maintaining ongoing opportunities for all residents to learn about the review process and to provide input through the RDN Get Involved webpage, by contacting staff and the public hearing process.

Timeline and cost: The current focused RGS review program budget is up to \$75,000 with combined staff time of 1.0 full time equivalency (FTE) of which 0.5 FTE is an additional resource with an estimated cost of \$50,114. Overall, the program is progressing within the updated timeline and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2020.

Option 2 – Full RGS Review

The second option incorporates Option 1 and considers the key strategic areas in the 2019 – 2022 Board Strategic Plan to provide an enhanced program with additional subject areas and a formal approach to continue collaboration between jurisdictions. Option 2 includes an expanded series of policy reviews by subject area, consistent with the RGS Goals, to identify any gaps and opportunities for improvement. The policy reviews are designed to be supported by a combination of technical assessment, policy analysis and engagement activities to generate innovative ideas to further policy development as follows:

Review of policies and processes by subject areas:

- Climate Change Policy Review –The review would consider how the impacts of a changing climate³ relates to the RGS and how to promote pathways to becoming net zero by 2032. Sub-topic for policy development could include promoting more sustainable and innovative approaches to: infrastructure design (water and sewer), corporate procurement and service efficiency.
- Transportation Policy Review – includes integrating the RDN Transit Future Plan and any applicable developments arising from the proposed Vancouver Island Transportation Plan.
- Select Land Use and Servicing Policy Review (as per Option 1)
- Housing Policy Review (as per Option 1)
- Implementation Process Policy Review – to consider if the Criteria for Minor Amendments and amendment process requires further revision (as per Option 1)

Continued collaboration: Same as Option 1

Improved implementation: Same as Option 1

Approach to engagement: Same as Option 1

Estimated timeline and cost: The review program could be completed by the end of 2021 or early 2022 at an estimated cost of \$100,000 to \$150,000 for consulting that can be funded from existing funds reserved for the RGS review. The combined staff time is 1.3 FTE of which 0.5 FTE is an additional resource with an estimated cost of \$50,114. The enhanced program will require support from external consultants to achieve the timeline and scope, which is reflected in the budget increase.

³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2018: Summary for Policymakers. In Global Warming of 1.5°C. Special Report www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_LR.pdf

Option 2 presents a balanced approach to enhancing the review program by including regionally significant matters within available resources. For this reason, it is the recommended approach for undertaking a full RGS review.

Option 3 – Extensive RGS Review

The third option is aligned with the review undertaken by the RDN between 2008 and 2011 that resulted in the adoption of the current RGS bylaw. A review of this nature is the equivalent of initiating the development of a new RGS bylaw and would involve all of the components identified in Option 2, plus additional areas resulting in an extended timeline (to 2023) and associated costs. This extended scope would enable a systematic review to identify any gaps and new opportunities or emerging regional issues as follows:

Review of policies and processes (all sections):

- Vision and sustainability principles;
- 11 subject areas (social, environmental and economic) represented by the 11 RGS Goals;
- RGS monitoring program reporting process and 22 Indicators and targets;
- Implementation plan
- Land use maps
- Consider gaps/opportunities to include other regional matters (e.g., health & well-being, equity)

Continued collaboration: As per Option 1 and 2.

Approach to engagement: Broader in scope to seek initial public input and at key stages of policy development as well as on-going engagement with key stakeholders. This expanded scope is reflected in the cost.

Estimated timeline and cost: An extensive review has an estimated timeline of 3 years (2023), which extends beyond the current Strategic Plan. One or more external consultants would be hired to review the policies and processes with an estimated cost of \$250,000 to \$300,000 which exceeds existing budget funds. The combined staff time is 1.3 FTE of which 0.5 FTE is an additional resource with an estimated cost of \$50,114.

In implementing the direction in the RGS and assessing performance through the RGS monitoring program, it is clear that the long-term vision for sustainably managing growth in the region has been advanced. Though there are opportunities for improving identified policy areas, there is a lack of evidence to support the need to undertake an extensive review. For this reason, Option 3 is not recommended at this time.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive the report for information and proceed with Option 1, the current focused RGS review.
2. Proceed with Option 2, full RGS review and prepare an updated Consultation Plan.

3. Proceed with Option 3, extensive RGS review and prepare a Request for Proposals and updated Consultation Plan.
4. Provide alternate direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the RGS implementation and review is presented in two categories of consulting for studies, technical review and/or assisting with project management depending upon the option chosen; and, staff resources required. These are summarized in Attachment 1.

For staff resources, a 0.5 FTE planner is required for all three options for the duration of the review (2 years). The 0.5 FTE planner is required collectively manage corporate strategic plan priorities for housing (Actions 3.1, 3.2 & 3.3), climate change (Actions 1.2 & 1.3), social wellbeing 8.2). The estimated cost for 0.5 FTE planner is \$50,114 annually.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Proceeding with the RGS review will bring the RDN in compliance with the provincial legislation to consider an RGS review every five years and to update required information. Further to this, proceeding with an update to the RGS aligns with the 2019 - 2022 RDN Board Strategic Plan goal on growth management and corresponding action item to undertake a full review of the RGS.

Growth Management - Provide effective regional land use planning and responsible asset management for both physical infrastructure and natural assets.



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September 24, 2019

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Attachment:

- Summary of Options for Proceeding with RGS Review