

## REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY 5-YEAR REVIEW

Please note: this item was deferred from the December 6, 2022 Board meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the Board receive the Regional Growth Strategy 5-Year Review report as provided in Attachment 1.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is the shared vision for the region and serves to guide growth by establishing a consistent and coordinated approach to foster socially, economically and environmentally sustainable communities. By directing the majority of new development within designated Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs), urban settlements are compact; the integrity of rural and resource areas are preserved; the environment is protected; servicing efficiency is increased; and mobility across the region is maintained.

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) adopted its first RGS in 1997 in response to residents' concerns about the impacts of rapid population growth and development in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The most recent RGS review was undertaken in 2011 to address emerging concerns, including climate change, food security and affordable housing. The current RGS (Bylaw No. 1615) is based on a set of clearly stated sustainability principles designed to manage growth within designated growth areas, support economic diversity, and promote innovation to help shape the future of the region.

The *Local Government Act*, Section 452 (1) (b), and RGS Policy 5.2.1 require an annual report on implementation and progress towards RGS goals and objectives. To provide consistent monitoring, evaluating and reporting, the RDN established an RGS Monitoring Program utilizing 22 different indicators. Data and other information are collected annually to assess progress on these indicators. The annual reports and RGS Monitoring Program are available at: [www.rdn.bc.ca/regional-growth-strategy](http://www.rdn.bc.ca/regional-growth-strategy).

### **Discussion**

The RGS contains eleven goals and related policies founded on sustainability principles to guide regional growth towards a more sustainable future. The RGS 5-Year Review measures progress made between 2017 and 2021 through 19 of the 22 indicators to determine if growth is achieving set targets. For the complete list of RGS Goals, Indicators and Targets, refer to Section 6 of the attached Regional Growth Strategy 5-Year Review (see Attachment 1 – RGS 5-Year Review Report).

The RGS 5-Year Review provides insight into the state of growth management in the region by combining data on the indicators from member municipalities, various RDN departments, Statistics Canada, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and BC Assessment. While the intent is to acquire comparable annual data with

consistent geographies and methodologies, some data limitations exist and are noted within the 5-Year Review report content, charts, and tables.

### ***Land Use Implications***

The RGS 5-Year Review evaluates the progress made between 2017 and 2021 towards advancing the eleven established RGS goals. Consistent with previous years, the 5-Year Review is part of the overall RGS Monitoring Program that measures progress on 19 of the 22 indicators to help gauge the effectiveness of RGS policies and implementation. Note that three of the original 22 indicators are no longer reported on as the data has not been made available from the Province of BC since 2012. Progress towards these RGS goals is measured by qualitative and quantitative data provided by the RDN, member municipalities, and multiple external agencies.

Over the past five years, progress made toward the RGS goals varied with nine indicators showing positive progress, five indicators stable, and five indicators moving away from the regional goals (see Attachment 2 – 5-Year Summary of Indicators). The longer five year review and trend analysis has shown some different results compared to a yearly review. In the yearly review, some indicators were identified as ‘moving towards’ their target for small yearly progress while the long-term trend shows the indicators are ‘moving away’ from their targets. This has resulted in a slight decrease in the number of indicators identified as ‘moving towards’ or meeting their targets and a few more identified as ‘moving away’ from their targets compared to the 2020 annual report. Inclusion of 2021 Census data resulted in decreases to per capita roads and per capita trails due to a significant increase in total population while the length of roads and trails remained fairly stable. Full details of the qualitative/quantitative data and key findings for all RGS Goals are in the RGS 5-Year Review (Attachment 1- RGS 5-Year Review Report).

Of the 11 RGS goals, the most positive gains are: Goal 2 – Protect the Environment; Goal 3 – Coordinate Land Use and Mobility; Goal 4 - Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres; Goal 7 – Enhance Economic Resiliency; and Goal 11 – Cooperation among Jurisdictions. The indicators which support these goals have either shown positive progress or have remained in stable condition. There was a notable increase in the amount of protected areas; an increase in the number of households within 400 meters of employment lands, shopping, schools, transit and recreation facilities; an increase in population within the GCB; and an increase in density within the GCB.

Some RGS goals showed mixed results with indicators showing both progress towards achieving their targets, while other indicators appear to be moving away from their targets. Goal 5 – Enhance Rural Integrity, aims to protect and strengthen the region’s rural economy and lifestyle by encouraging the majority of new development within the GCB and by promoting rural forms of land use. Of the three indicators for this goal, one showed progress with the majority of new lots/units located within the GCB, while the number of parcels with Farm Status remained stable, and the land classified as Privately Managed Forest Lands decreased moving away from the target. Similarly, Goal 6 – Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing had one indicator moving away from the target as the number of renter households above or equal to the affordable rental threshold (ART) has almost doubled, increasing from 2,724 in 2017 to 4,823 renter households in 2021. While the proportion of non-single family dwellings inside the GCB has increased 23% more ground-oriented dwellings and apartment dwellings have been constructed than single-detached dwellings. Goal 9 – Celebrate Pride of Place; and Goal 10 – Efficient Services also showed mixed results.

With 14 of 19 indicators showing either positive progress or remaining stable, the state of growth management is strong and progressing in a positive direction towards achieving the shared vision for a healthy and more sustainable region, as set out in the RGS. The five indicators moving away from the regional goals require further monitoring in future years. As a note, some of the indicators such as Indicator 4 - Total Water Consumption and

Indicator 21 - Per Capita Cost to Provide Water and Sewer Systems are being reviewed as a part of the full RGS review.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Preparation of the 2021 RGS Annual Report is included in the Board 2022-2026 Financial Plan.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

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

The 2020 RGS Annual Report is consistent with the 2019 - 2022 Board Strategic Plan by outlining how the RDN and member municipalities are contributing to the eight Key Strategic Areas and associated goal statements and action items. The Annual Report is also consistent with the Strategic Plan's values and guiding principles of 'Collaboration and Relationships' and 'Good Governance'.

### **REVIEWED BY:**

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### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Regional Growth Strategy 5-Year Review Report
2. 5-Year Review Summary of Indicators
3. Regional Growth Strategy 5-Year Review Presentation