



REGIONAL
DISTRICT
OF NANAIMO

2022 REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY ANNUAL REPORT

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Board receive the 2022 Regional Growth Strategy Annual 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 most 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 1980s and early 1990s. The RGS was updated in 2011 using a set of clearly stated sustainability principles 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 both 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.

Discussion

The RGS contains eleven goals and related policies founded on sustainability principles to guide regional growth towards a more sustainable future. The 2022 RGS Annual Report measures progress made during the year through 19 of the 22 indicators to determine if growth is achieving set targets. The complete list of RGS Goals, Indicators and Targets, is contained in Section 6 of the 2022 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report (see Attachment 1 – 2022 RGS Annual Report).

The 2022 RGS Annual Report 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 report content, charts, and tables.

Land Use Implications

The 2022 edition of the RGS Annual Report evaluates progress made in 2022 toward advancing the eleven established RGS goals. Consistent with previous years, the 2022 Annual Report is part of the overall RGS Monitoring Program to measure progress on 19 of the 22 indicators and gauge the effectiveness of RGS policies and implementation. The three indicators for Goal 1 – Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption are not reported on as data has not been available since 2012. Progress towards these goals is measured by qualitative and quantitative data provided by the RDN, member municipalities, and multiple external agencies.

In 2022, progress towards the RGS Goals varied with 10 indicators showing positive progress, four indicators remaining stable, and six indicators moving away from the regional goals (see Attachment 2 – 2022 Summary of Indicators). Full details of the qualitative/quantitative data and key findings for all RGS Goals are in the 2022 RGS Annual Report (Attachment 1).

Similarly to what was observed in previous years with 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 supporting these goals have either shown positive progress or have remained in stable condition. A notable increase in housing diversity within the GCBs occurred with 76 per cent of the new dwelling units being ground-oriented dwellings and apartment dwellings. During 2022, the following indicators showed an increase: the amount of protected areas; the number of households within 400 meters of employment lands, shopping, schools, transit and recreation facilities; per capita transit use; and in population within the GCB with 98.8 per cent of the newly created lots were located within the GCB.

Goals 5 and 6 had mixed results with some indicators showing both progress towards the goals, while other indicators appeared to be moving away from the goals. Goal 5 – Enhance Rural Integrity, aims to protect and strengthen the region’s rural economy and lifestyle by encouraging most new development to be located within the GCB and by promoting rural forms of land use. Although most new lots/units created through subdivision were located within the GCB, which showed progress towards the goal, the number of parcels with Farm Status was stable and there was a decrease in the amount of land classified as Privately Managed Forest Lands. Similarly to Goal 5, there was an increase in the diversity of housing within the GCB showing progress towards Goal 6 – Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing; however, housing affordability continues to be a growing problem in the region. In 2022, a total of 5,333 renter households in the region were spending 30 per cent or more of before-tax income on housing. This is 2,609 more households than reported in 2017. This shows the region is moving away from the target of increasing housing affordability, as the cost of housing continues to outpace the increases in household income.

With 14 of 19 indicators showing either positive progress or remaining stable, the state of growth management in the region is strong and progressing in a positive direction towards achieving the shared vision for a healthy and more sustainable region as set out by the RGS. The four 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 and Update that began in 2018.

Member municipalities have advised of staff resource constraints in collecting both the information required to report on the RGS Indicators and on projects undertaken to progress the RGS Goals. As a result, this issue will be reviewed with member municipalities in 2024 along with the feasibility of an online dashboard reporting tool.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Preparation of the 2022 RGS Annual Report is included in the Board 2023-2027 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 2022 RGS Annual Report is consistent with the 2019 - 2022 Board Strategic Plan as it shows 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:

- K. Fowler, Manager, Long Range Planning, Energy and Sustainability
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- D. Holmes, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2022 RGS Annual Report
2. 2022 Summary of Indicators
3. 2022 Regional Growth Strategy Presentation