
TO: Committee of the Whole **MEETING:** July 10, 2018
FROM: Jamai Schile
 Senior Planner **FILE:** 6780 30 ANN2017
SUBJECT: 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report - Implementation and Progress

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report – Implementation and Progress, be endorsed.
2. That a letter be sent to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to request that the Community Energy and Emissions Inventory data be updated.
3. That the Regional Growth Strategy policies relating to affordable housing be included in the approved Focused Regional Growth Strategy Review.

SUMMARY

The 2017 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) annual report represents a ‘snap shot’ of the state of growth management in the region and is intended to contribute to the RGS Monitoring Program to ensure that the effectiveness of the RGS policies and implementation actions are actively monitored and assessed.

The results of the 2017 report builds on previous years reporting to show progress that has been made across many of the RGS goals. For example, under Goal 3: Coordinating Land Use there have been significant gains in transit ridership since 2011. In addition, a clearer picture of the state of growth in the region is forming. The RGS policies related to Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres and Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity appear to be working together to direct the majority of development into the Urban Centres.

The report also brings attention to two areas where immediate actions can be taken to better monitor energy and greenhouse emissions and to investigate the shift in progress in affordable rental housing within the Nanaimo and Parksville Census Agglomeration¹.

Lastly, the 2017 report highlights the importance of acquiring accurate data annually from all member municipalities, RDN departments and external agencies. As additional years’ quantitative data becomes available, a more comprehensive assessment of the RGS policies and actions can be completed.

¹ The [Nanaimo and Parksville Census Agglomeration](#) includes the City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, French Creek, District of Lantzville, Electoral Area A, Electoral Area C, Snuneymuxw First Nations Lands, and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations Lands.

BACKGROUND

The RGS is a strategic plan intended to establish a consistent and coordinated approach to development across the region and to foster socially, economically and environmentally sustainable communities. The land use designations and polices in the RGS provide a general framework for directing growth and land use activities. Consistent with the direction found in the RGS, the detailed policies and regulatory framework are found in the RDN's and member municipalities' respective Official Community Plans and land use bylaws.

The *Local Government Act* Section 452(1)(b), and RGS Policy 5.2.1 require that a report be prepared on an annual basis. To provide consistent monitoring and reporting the RDN has established a RGS Monitoring Program that includes an annual report and a public website. Annual reporting ensures that the RGS is actively monitored and assessed in the ongoing development of the region. The RDN website is an online resource that includes individual progress sheets for 22 different indicators, a summary of progress towards the RGS goals and a library of all RGS annual reports dating back to 1998. This RDN webpage is available at: www.rdn.bc.ca/rgsmonitoring

Together, the annual reports and indicator sheets are a publically available resource that is consistent with the RDN's governing principles of 'Be Transparent and Accountable', 'Collaborate and Communicate' and 'Work Effectively as a Team'.

DISCUSSION

The RGS is based on 11 goals and related policies, grounded in sustainability principles that are intended to help guide the growth of the region towards a more sustainable future. The best way to evaluate progress towards the RGS goals is to measure specific characteristics (or indicators). The RGS contains 22 indicators that tell us whether or not the results of our actions are consistent with achieving set measures (or targets). For the complete list of RGS Goals, Indicators and Targets, refer to Section 5 of the 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report.

The annual report provides a "snap shot" of the state of growth management in the region referring to many sources of information, including information produced by the member municipalities, various RDN departments, Statistics Canada and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Every effort has been made to acquire comparable data with consistent geographies and methodologies. Where data limitations exist, these are noted within the annual report's charts or tables.

The consistent availability of data across all indicators remains the primary limitation to actively monitoring and assessing the RGS policies. 2017 marks the most complete quantitative data set since the RGS Monitoring Program was established in 2015. Of the 22 indicators, 2017 data is available for all of the indicators with the exception of Goal 1: Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption, Indicators #1 to #3. Local governments rely on the Province of BC's Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI) for this information, which was last updated in 2012. Since the lack of data hinders the RDN's ability to monitor our progress towards the RGS energy use and greenhouse gas reduction targets, it is recommended that this matter be brought to the attention of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and action be requested to update the CEEI in accordance with the provincial commitment to climate planning and actions.

It is also important to note that while 2017 data is now available for many of the indicators, this information may only represent one year of data. For this reason, data collection and monitoring should remain a priority for the member municipalities and the RDN.

The remainder of this report provides a summary of the quantitative data, with a focus on the goals that relate to growth management as well as a few initiatives that highlight the broad range of RGS related actions undertaken in 2017. The detailed results for all 11 RGS Goals, Indicators and Targets is presented in the attached 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report.

Quantitative Data

A fundamental objective of the RGS is to concentrate growth within the Growth Containment Boundaries (GCBs), specifically the four Urban Centres and the 14 Rural Village Centres. This intentional growth management strategy is represented by Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility, Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres, and Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity. The RGS policies and actions associated with these goals are intended to work together to simultaneously support the development of more complete, compact communities inside the GCBs, while protecting the integrity of rural areas and the natural environment.

Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility

Community design that is compact promotes land use patterns and mobility networks that enable more people to walk, cycle or use public transit as represented by Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility. Indicator/target #7 monitors whether the number of households living within close proximity (400 meters) to places to work, play, learn and shop has increased over time. While the data is limited, it does show an increase of households living within close proximity to bus stops, employment lands and shopping within the RDN.

With respect to transit, Indicator/target #8 measures the increase in the number of people using public transit. Since 2011, transit rides have steadily increased in the region. In 2011, there were 2,614,421 transit rides compared to 3,093,311 in 2017. This is an increase of 478,890 transit rides over a six year period. 2017 also marks the greatest increase in transit use - 19.8 transit rides per capita in 2017 compared to 17.8 transit rides per capita in 2011.

Given these results, it appears the RGS policies and actions have been effective in advancing Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility. As the region grows, on-going analysis is needed to ensure that land use patterns and mobility networks continue to be mutually supportive.

Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres

With respect to Goal 4 and compact communities, indicators #9 and #10 share the same target to increase the proportion of the population living within the GCB. The 2016 Census population data shows that the majority of residents, 115,566 (74%), live in the Urban Centres and 40,132 (26%) residents live in the electoral areas and First Nation communities. This is further supported by indicator/ target #10 that measures the density of dwelling units within the GCB. The average density of dwellings within the GCB is 3.74 units/hectare. The City of Nanaimo has increased the density inside the GCB from 4.68 units/hectare in 2015 compared to 4.87 dwelling units/hectare in 2017. The Town of Qualicum Beach has the highest density of dwelling units (6.48 units/hectare). Based on these initial results, it

appears that the related RGS policies and actions in support of Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres are moving towards the regional goals.

Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity

Closely linked with Goal 4 is Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity. Goal 5 sets out to protect and strengthen the region's rural economy and lifestyle by encouraging the majority of new development to be located within the GCB and by promoting more sustainable development patterns outside of the GCB (i.e., cluster development, density transfer, etc). The data for the related indicator/target #12 shows the target to increase the proportion of growth within the GCBs has been met. The greatest proportion (310 new lots/units) were created within the GCB compared to 38 new lots created outside of the GCB. This suggests that the RGS policies and actions have been working together to direct the majority of development into the Urban Centres as intended.

Goal 6: Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing

In addition to promoting more efficient land use and servicing, community design should also reflect social equity by providing provisions for adaptable, accessible, affordable, and attainable housing. These values are reflected in Goal 6: Facilitate the Provision of Affordable Housing and measure the amount of affordable market rental units available in the Nanaimo and Parksville Census Agglomeration².

Goal 6: Indicator/target #15 seeks to measure the increase in the proportion of households living in housing that meets their needs based on the affordable rent threshold as determined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Between 2011 and 2014 there was a rise in the number of lower income renter households paying more than 30% of their before tax income on housing. This trend reversed from 2014 and 2015, but has since regressed over the last two years and is gradually moving away from the desired results or RGS target.

In 2017, an estimated 2,724 or 62% of the total 4,399 renter households have to pay 30% or more of their total before tax income for housing that is adequate, suitable and affordable in accordance with the standards defined by CMHC.

In addition to this change, the target to increase the portion of non-single family dwellings inside the GCB remains relatively static between 2015 and 2017 for both Urban Centres and Rural Village Centres, despite an increase in the overall number of new units. The Urban Centres non-single residential units in 2015 made up 34% of the mix compared to 35% in 2017. In RVCs, 27% of the housing type was non-single residential in 2015 compared to 26% in 2017.

Given these results and the importance of affordable housing, it is recommended that the related RGS policies be reviewed as part of the scheduled Focused RGS Review process, and take into consideration the pending results of the RDN land supply and demand study as well as the 2018 City of Nanaimo Affordable Housing Strategy.

² The [Nanaimo and Parksville Census Agglomeration](#) includes the City of Nanaimo, City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, French Creek, District of Lantzville, Electoral Area A, Electoral Area C, Snuneymuxw First Nations Lands, and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations Lands.

Key Initiatives

Acknowledging that activities occur that are not captured within the scope of the RGS indicators/target, the annual report also includes initiatives and actions that contribute towards the RGS goals. Listed below are a few notable highlights from 2017. For a complete list, see the 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report.

A few 2017 highlights include:

Goal 1: Prepare for Climate Change and Reduce Energy Consumption

- The RDN Greater Nanaimo Pollution Control Centre co-generation system converted waste gas (methane) into 448,500 kilowatt hours of electricity, which is sold back to the electrical grid. This amount of energy production is equivalent to the power usage for 41 homes for one year.
- The City of Nanaimo's Strategic Energy Management Program, has resulted in a savings of 787,878 kilowatt hours of electricity, 3,876 gigajoules of natural gas consumption, and reduced emissions by 215 tonnes CO₂ (equivalent) by completing a mix of building, lighting, and systems upgrade projects.
- The RDN electoral areas and the District of Lantzville continued to participate in the provision of green building incentives through the RDN including wood stove exchanges, solar hot water, home energy assessments and electrical vehicle charging stations. The Town of Qualicum Beach and City of Parksville also participate in the woodstove exchange program.

Goal 3: Coordinate Land Use and Mobility

- The City of Parksville completed the update of its Transportation Master Plan. This Plan now incorporates alternative modes of transportation into the overarching transportation plan for the City.

Goal 4: Concentrate Housing and Jobs in Rural Village and Urban Growth Centres

- The RDN was awarded \$7,590,328 from the Federal-Provincial Clean Water and Wastewater Fund to establish a wastewater system for the Bowser Village Center. Within the year, a sewer service area was established and further engineering designs were initiated.
- The RDN Board approved a re-development proposal for Fairwinds Village. When completed the project will increase the diversity of the type of housing available and promote walkability resulting from the addition of a public waterfront boardwalk and boat launch.

Goal 5: Enhance Rural Integrity

- After a two year review process with extensive community engagement, the Electoral Area 'H' Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw No. 1335.06 was adopted.

Goal 7: Enhance Economic Resiliency

- In 2017, the Town of Qualicum Beach awarded the contract for the Memorial Avenue Upgrades Phase 3. This contract was the first major capital project to be awarded under the Social Procurement Policy, which seeks to proactively leverage the supply chain to achieve positive community objectives.

Goal 10: Efficient Services

- RDN Solid Waste continued to achieve the RGS Goal 10 by pursuing an approach to eliminate the need for waste disposal. Consistent with the RGS direction to achieve 'zero waste', the RDN has a region-wide diversion rate of 68% and continues to have one of the lowest provincial annual per capita disposal rates of 347 kg.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Receive the 2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report.
2. Provide other direction.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Proceeding with the considered recommendation has no implications related to the Board 2018 – 2022 Financial Plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLICATIONS

The 2017 RGS Annual Report is consistent with the 2016 – 2020 Board Strategic Plan. The Report outlines how the RDN and the member municipalities are contributing to all five of the RDN Strategic Priorities and the Governing Principles. As well, the report itself is consistent with the governing principles of 'Be Transparent and Accountable', 'Collaborate and Communicate' and 'Work Effectively as a Team'.



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June 20, 2018

Reviewed by:

- P. Thompson, Manager, Long Range Planning
- G. Garbutt, General Manager, Strategic and Community Development
- P. Carlyle, Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

2017 Regional Growth Strategy Annual Report