

Attachment 4 Planning Implications

Regional Growth Strategy and Growth Management Implications

The RGS designates the property as Resource Lands and Open Space (see Attachment 5 – Regional Growth Strategy Designation Map). The proposal will require a change in designation to Rural Residential. The Resource Lands and Open Space (RLOS) designation is primarily intended for resource uses, such as agriculture, forestry, and aggregate development or recreational and open space uses. The Rural Residential designation allows for modest rural residential subdivision to occur without affecting the rural economy or environmental quality. Under RGS policy, the RLOS designation is not permitted to change and the minimum parcel size may not be reduced:

5.2 Minimum parcel size for lands designated Resource Lands and Open Space or Rural Residential will not be decreased below the minimum size established in the relevant OCP that is in place at the time Shaping Our Future 2040 is adopted.

5.3 Requested changes of land use designations from Resource Lands and Open Space to Rural Residential will not be supported.

Given this policy, the RDN may not amend the OCP without amending the RGS. Any RGS amendment must also be carefully considered with the intention of these policies.

Any amendment should support the framework of the RGS to maintain land outside of the Growth Containment Boundary for resource lands, recreational activities or environmental preservation. Existing RGS policy allows reconfiguration of existing permitted residential dwellings through clustering or density transfer, where other goals are met to preserve open spaces or conservation areas. However, this proposal does not demonstrate protecting more open space or environmental benefits, rather will allow significantly more residential development than currently permitted and will permanently alter the land. Similar to most conventional subdivisions, the environmental conservation proposed for riparian areas represents the minimum requirements of the Riparian Area Protection Regulations (RAPR) and the proposed 5% parkland dedication represents the minimum requirements of the *Local Government Act*.

Without a justification for the subdivision that achieves regionally significant goals, the implications of converting RLOS to Rural Residential also establishes precedent for other lands previously classified as Privately Managed Forest Lands. Permitting a rezoning and subdivision without suitable justification may compromise the intent of the RGS goals to maintain the character rural areas and resource economy. Such a change in direction would conflict with broader strategic goals of the RDN to manage growth and environmental stewardship.

Official Community Plan Implications

The OCP designates the subject property as Resource Lands within the Forest Land Reserve (FLR), which establishes a minimum parcel size of 50.0 hectares per lot created through subdivision (see Attachment 6 – Official Community Plan Designation Map). The OCP confirms that if land is removed from the FLR that the designation shall remain Resource and permitted uses are limited to rural and resource activities. Therefore, this policy supports the retention of the designation and large lots for rural and resource land uses as the FLR was replaced by the Privately Managed Forest Land designation. Thus, this change in classification would not change the OCP support to protect Resource lands for rural and resource activities.

Zoning Implications

Should the OCP and RGS amendment be approved, the applicant may submit a zoning amendment application to amend the zone from Forestry Resource (FR-1) to Rural Residential 2 (R-2). This amendment represents a significant change in land use from rural resource to residential. The property has previously been used for silviculture and resource activities as Privately Managed Forest Lands. Under the FR-1 zone, permitted uses include a dwelling unit, agriculture, log storage and sorting yard, primary mineral processing, silviculture, and wood processing. The R-2 zone would permit one dwelling unit per hectare and accessory uses, allowing a large residential subdivision of the proposed 16 lots with up to 16 dwelling units and 16 secondary suites in an area previously used for forestry.

Land Use and Environmental Implications

The applicant has provided a Preliminary Hydrogeological Assessment prepared by Elanco Enterprises Ltd., and dated January 14, 2025 (the Hydrogeological Report). The Hydrogeological Report was prepared to comply with *RDN Board Policy B1.21 Hydrogeological assessment requirements for rezoning un-serviced lands and for development permits (Policy B1.21)*. The property is within Aquifer 220, a low productivity bedrock aquifer, and partly within Aquifer 216, an overburden sand and gravel aquifer. Based on well records from the building strata lots on Elk Trail, the report identifies that each proposed lot within the subdivision is expected to be capable of siting a well producing 3.5 m³ of potable water per day year round without affecting wells on neighbouring properties. The report anticipates that some of the wells will be within the bedrock Aquifer 220, with most in Aquifer 216.

The 2023 *French Creek Water Regional Phase 3 Water Budget* identified relative stress assessments for both these aquifers. The water budget characterized Aquifer 220 as lower stress and Aquifer 216 as high to very high stress under current conditions which is not referenced in the Hydrogeological Report. To meet Board Policy B1.21, clarification in the report will be needed to reconcile the recommendations with the high to very high stress characterization for Aquifer 216 in the water budget. Further clarification will also need to be provided on groundwater and surface water interactions, including with the ephemeral watercourse on the property and the Englishman River on an aquifer scale. At this time, no revisions to the Hydrogeological Report are requested unless the application continues to proceed.

The applicant has provided an Environmental Assessment prepared by Toth and Associates Environmental Services and dated June 6, 2025 (Environmental Report). The Environment Report identifies that most of the property had been logged between 1968 and 2002. The property contains a watercourse that extends from the southwest to northeast portions and ephemeral wetland on proposed Lots 4 and 5. As a preliminary assessment, the Environmental Report identifies a 15-metre Streamside Protection and Enhancement Area for the watercourse on the property under the RAPR. The wetland is not connected to fish habitat and is not subject to the RAPR and Freshwater and Fish Habitat Development Permit Area. Should the amendment applications be approved, the applicant will require a full RAPR assessment and development permit at subdivision stage. Both the watercourse and wetland are considered “streams” under the provincial *Water Sustainability Act*.

At the time of subdivision, five per cent parkland dedication will be required under Section 510 of the *Local Government Act*. The proposed Park shown on the proposed subdivision plan would represent this minimum required dedication. The application identifies that the Park contains older second growth forest. The proposal also includes a 4.0-metre wide pathway into the regional park, which is in a location

currently used to access the park by the community. While the Park may contain older forest and is adjacent to a regional park, the proposed parkland is not a regionally significant large parkland acquisition for the RDN. Further, the Park dedication does not expand the regional park which is owned by nature conservancies and the Province.

Community Engagement

No public consultation or agency referrals have taken place. If the Board decides to proceed with this amendment application, a consultation plan will be prepared under Section 434 of the *Local Government Act* and approved by the RDN Board. The consultation plan identifies opportunities for consultation with persons, organizations and authorities that the board considers will be affected by the regional growth strategy amendment, including residents, affected local governments, First Nations, school district, or provincial and federal agencies. The consultation plan will reflect the RDN notification bylaws including property signage, mail notices, and a dedicated webpage. A public hearing must be held for the OCP amendment, though the consultation plan may need to consider if another Public Information Meeting held by the applicant is necessary for meaningful engagement with the community.

Intergovernmental Implications

As an RGS is an agreement between the RDN and member municipalities, a property owner cannot apply to amend the RGS. Only a member municipality or the RDN may initiate an amendment to the RGS. If this application is supported by the RDN, the Electoral Area Services Committee will become the sponsor of the RGS amendment (see Attachment 7 – Legislated Regional Growth Strategy and Official Community Plan Amendment Process).

If the Electoral Area Services Committee sponsors this RGS amendment, the proposal will follow the process for RGS preparation and amendments outlined within the *Local Government Act*. This process includes the preparation of a consultation plan for the public and affected governments prior to consideration of any readings for the bylaws. Following the public hearing each member local government of the RGS will have a 60-day period to accept or not accept the RGS amendment. If the amendment is not accepted by any member local government, the Province of BC will direct a resolution process.