

**REPORT TO THE PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2007****SUBJECT**

Regional Context Statement for Metchosin

PURPOSE

The District of Metchosin has submitted "District of Metchosin Bylaw No. 5050, Official Community Plan Amendment Bylaw to Adopt a Regional Context Statement" (Attachment A), for acceptance by the Capital Regional District Board under Section 866 of the *Local Government Act*.

BACKGROUND**1. Legislative Requirements**

Section 866 of the *Local Government Act* requires that each CRD member municipality prepare, as part of its Official Community Plan (OCP), a regional context statement which identifies the policy linkages and differences between the municipality's OCP and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The regional context statement must identify the relationship between the OCP and the RGS, and if applicable, specify how the OCP will be made consistent with the RGS over time. A regional context statement is binding on a municipality and, as such, acts as a key implementation mechanism of the RGS.

The context statement must indicate:

1. The extent to which the OCP is consistent with the RGS;
2. If it is not consistent, how the municipality intends to bring itself into consistency;
3. The elements of the RGS that are not, or should not, apply to the municipality; and
4. The elements of the OCP subject to inter-municipal and regional review.

Under the Act, a municipality refers its context statement to the Board for review and acceptance. The Board must respond by resolution within 120 days after receipt indicating whether or not it accepts the context statement. If the Board does not accept the context statement, it must indicate:

- a. Each provision to which it objects; and
- b. The reasons for its objections.

If the Board fails to act within the period for acceptance or refusal, the Board is deemed by the Act to have accepted the context statement. The end of the review period for the Metchosin context statement is *August 2, 2007*.

2. District of Metchosin Regional Context Statement

The District of Metchosin's role in the region is reflected in *The Framework For Our Future Vision*, contained within Appendix A of the RGS:

Metchosin is a community of rural character with a choice of rural lifestyle options. Agriculture has diversified with a great range of specialty products and organic crops grown. Natural areas, sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity are preserved, and there is a system of local and regional parks and natural open spaces linked with multi-use trails, along with improved access to shoreline areas. Metchosin village is the primary commercial centre with room for limited expansion.

The Metchosin OCP and Regional Context Statement provide support for this vision through their OCP policies which preserve, enhance and maintain agricultural lands and operations. Other relevant policy supports include:

- Reflecting the Capital Green Lands Policy Area in the OCP for easternmost parts of Matheson Lake Park, Blinkhorn Nature Park, Witty's Lagoon Park and Sooke Hills Regional Park.
- Protection of Renewable Resource Lands, including policies that support forest management activities and ALR protection.
- Residential policies which limit rural subdivision and development to designated OCP capacity levels in place at the time of the RGS adoption
- Green space protection policies which aim to protect landscape character, ecological heritage and biodiversity throughout the district.

The District had formally submitted a regional context statement to the CRD on November 22, 2006. However, an inconsistency between the RGS and Section 14.1.1 of the Metchosin context statement was noted by CRD staff. The section of concern in the previous context statement was as follows:

Section 12.8 of the OCP encourages the expansion of a community water system throughout Metchosin, and also promotes the development of a "water strategy" to guide decision-making with respect to water quality and quantity, and to determine the impact of development on water resources in general. In this context, Metchosin considers the future expansion of piped water services to be in keeping with Initiative 1/Action 5 of the RGS.

The RGS servicing policy, as described in Initiative 1/Action 5 of the RGS, states:

The CRD and member municipalities agree not to further extend urban sewer and water services, or increase servicing capacity to encourage growth beyond designated official community plan limits at the date of adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy bylaw, outside the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing (RUCS) Policy Area generally described on Map 3, except to address pressing public health and environmental issues, to provide fire suppression or to service agriculture.

Provision is made within the RGS to allow water servicing to areas beyond the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area, as described above. To be consistent with the RGS, the District was requested to indicate how it would manage water servicing expansions and extensions so as not to increase the development capacity of the municipality beyond that stated in the OCP in place at the time of RGS adoption. In response to this request, the District of Metchosin withdrew its context statement and modified the text to bring it into consistency with the RGS. The relevant section of the revised context statement, re-submitted on April 3, 2007, now reads:

Section 12.8 of the OCP supports the expansion of a community water system to existing residents, and to service the limited growth contemplated by and consistent with the OCP. The build-out density anticipated by the OCP, and the associated land use policies, have remained consistent and in effect since 1995. That these densities remain unchanged after more than 10 years is evidence of the District's commitment to the OCP's objective of maintaining the rural character and integrity of Metchosin. Notably, the District's bylaws do not require the extension of community water; however, the District remains committed to community water as an option to ensure appropriate levels of water quality and quantity for residents.

The OCP also promotes the development of a "water strategy" to guide decision-making with respect to water quality and quantity, and to determine the impact of development on water resources in general. In this context, Metchosin considers the future extension of piped water services to be in keeping with Initiative /Action 5 of the RGS.

As noted above, the balance of the regional context statement provides appropriate policy to reflect the RGS directions and land use designations relevant to the District of Metchosin.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of Metchosin, Bylaw No. 505, and notify the District of Metchosin to this effect.
2. That the Board refuse to accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of Metchosin, Bylaw No. 505, and notify the District of Metchosin to this effect, indicating: (a) each provision to which it objects, and (b) the reasons for its objection.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

GROWTH MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The RGS servicing policy is intended to do two things:

- (1) reduce sprawl development throughout the region by containing the majority of urban and suburban type growth within a containment boundary, defined as the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area.
- (2) Minimize the costs associated with extending, operating and maintaining piped infrastructure throughout the region.

The basic philosophy of the RGS is to contain urban growth within defined urban areas, while protecting the rural, resource and park lands, to prevent incremental loss of these amenities through unmanaged growth. Limiting the outward extension of servicing is intended to provide a signal to the development community as to where development should be directed and where public infrastructure investments will be made.

While the District of Metchosin's regional context statement doesn't meet the strict interpretation of the RGS servicing policy, it meets the intent of the growth policies of the RGS by including policy that limits the nature and extent of development in the community and retains its rural nature. It should be noted, however, that servicing expansions to lands outside of the current OCP boundaries and servicing to accommodate increased density levels beyond the current OCP would not be consistent with the RGS.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The RGS servicing policy has implications that extend beyond one municipality. The RGS water servicing policy was included in the RGS as a means to control sprawl and manage the associated infrastructure costs. Of particular concern are the possible costs associated with water servicing infrastructure expansions in some of the region's communities and rural areas.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The District of Metchosin Regional Context Statement adequately reflects the intent of the RGS and largely follows the guidelines set out in the Municipal Requirements for Regional Context Statements, a framework drafted by the CRD and distributed to all municipalities after RGS adoption. The District has established an appropriate level of certainty in the OCP and regional context statement that limits development and population to levels established in the District's existing OCP.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Board accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of Metchosin, Bylaw No. 505, and notify the District of Metchosin to this effect.

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COMMENTS: