

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

SUBJECT

Regional Context Statement for North Saanich

PURPOSE

The District of North Saanich has submitted "District of North Saanich Regional Context Statement – Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1130", (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 each provision to which it objects, and 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 North Saanich context statement is August 11, 2007.

2. District of North Saanich Regional Context Statement

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

Situated at the northerly tip of the Saanich Peninsula approximately 27 kilometres north of downtown Victoria, the District of North Saanich is a collection of coastal focused neighbourhoods which surround agricultural lands. The community's long term development plans are based on the desire of residents to retain rural character and safeguard environmental qualities. External demands for housing growth are not accommodated. The District's policies reflect a strong commitment to preserve the agricultural land base and agricultural activities in the municipality.

Many of the policies within the North Saanich OCP and Regional Context Statement provide support for the vision and strategic directions of the RGS. Relevant policy directions include:

- Protection of regional green and blue spaces through parks, and policies for the protection of ecologically sensitive areas.
- Protection of renewable resource lands through ALR land protection and the establishment of Rural Protection Areas, limitations on subdivision, and policies to reduce conflicts with non-farm uses.
- Support for a range of travel modes, including cycling and walking.
- Support for economic activities that complement the rural environment, including farming, home-based business, small professional offices, neighbourhood convenience shopping and agri-tourism. The Plan also includes policy direction on marine-commercial, education-commercial land uses and limited light industrial uses.
- Support for seniors and affordable family housing and a commitment to undertake a housing strategy.

The District of North Saanich did not include any lands within the Regional Urban Containment Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA) at the time of RGS adoption in August 2003. In keeping with this, the regional context statement submitted by the District states that North Saanich is located entirely outside the boundaries of the RUCSPA. Residential development within the municipality is largely contained within the Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area of the RGS. The definitions of these two policy areas are as follows:

Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area: Includes lands, at the date of the adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy bylaw, designated in official community plans primarily for urban development (including attached housing, detached and duplex housing, commercial, industrial and large scale institutional and utility designations). The Regional Growth Strategy proposes that the majority of future development that requires urban sanitary sewer and water services take place within this designated area. As such, the Regional Growth Strategy proposes no extension of urban-standard sewerage and water service beyond the boundary of this policy area except as proposed under action 5.

Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area: Includes lands at the date of adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy bylaw, designated in official community plans for rural and rural residential purposes. The policy area also includes pockets of small lot detached, duplex and other housing, and isolated commercial and industrial land uses, in areas of predominantly rural character. The Regional Growth Strategy proposes that these areas remain rural in character with subdivision and development remaining within designated capacities in official community plans, as determined at the date of the adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy bylaw.

To ensure that their regional context statement more closely reflected existing land uses as well as lands serviced or to be serviced in the future, the municipality has proposed a North Saanich

Servicing Area within the Rural/Residential Policy Area (i.e. outside of the RUCSPA). The servicing area policy from the regional context statement reads as follows:

Certain parts of North Saanich already identified for residential, commercial and industrial uses are recognized as the North Saanich Servicing Area. The North Saanich Servicing Area is shown in Figure 2. Any change to the boundary of the North Saanich Servicing Area will require the approval of the CRD Board through the acceptance of a revised regional context statement.

Consistent with the goals of the RGS, the District will not further extend water or sewer services outside of the North Saanich Servicing Area, except to address pressing public health and environmental issues, to provide fire suppression, or to service agriculture. The District may expand water or sewer services within the North Saanich Servicing Area. However, in keeping with Action 1.1 (5) of the RGS, services will not be expanded to encourage growth beyond the limits designated in the 1998 OCP (District of North Saanich Bylaw #874)

Action 1.1 (5) of the Regional Growth Strategy reads as follows:

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 the 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.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the Board accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of North Saanich, Community Bylaw No. 1130, and notify the District of North Saanich to this effect.
2. That the Board refuse to accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of North Saanich, Community Bylaw No. 1130, and notify the District of North Saanich 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

At the time of adoption of the RGS it was agreed that the CRD Board, in partnership with its member municipalities, would work to reach agreement on a regional context statement for each municipality. The proposed context statement fulfills the requirements of the RGS implementation initiative I-4 (page 18 of the RGS bylaw) for the District of North Saanich.

The North Saanich Servicing Area was proposed by the municipality, as an alternative to designating a Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Area (RUCSPA), to better reflect existing land uses and the limited development capacity and low-density residential nature of the lands within this defined area. The RUCSPA includes policy direction supporting the development of mixed use centres, a mix of housing forms and urban density developments. This form of development was not contemplated for North Saanich, yet the designation of

Rural/Rural Residential (which is what is applied to most of the District's lands that do not fall within Renewable Resource or Capital Green Lands in the RGS) does not accurately reflect the pre-existing land uses and areas serviced (or to be serviced) by sewer and water. Applying the RUCSPA to such areas, may attract development interest that is not appropriate to the area or consistent with the community's vision for growth.

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.

The establishment of the North Saanich Servicing Area (NSSA) is intended to limit future servicing extensions to the areas defined within the relevant OCP map (Figure 2), while retaining the largely rural nature of the municipality and limiting growth to the 1998 OCP levels. The North Saanich Servicing Area is not intended to capture an increased portion of the region's growth. The RGS does not attach regional population, housing or development targets to this municipality.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The inclusion of the North Saanich Servicing Area (NSSA) within the RGS has possible implications for other municipalities and the JDF electoral area. The RGS includes only two land use designations for predominantly residential areas: the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area (RUCSPA) and the Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area. Water and sewer servicing extensions are permitted within the RUCSPA, but limited within Rural/Rural Residential Areas. The North Saanich Servicing Area suggests an approach which acknowledges pre-existing servicing and allows limited servicing extension within a Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area. This could set a precedent for other municipalities and communities within the JDF electoral area that may seek to include a similar servicing provision in their OCPs.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The District of North Saanich 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 Regional Context Statement, as submitted, adequately addresses the policies and land use designations of the RGS relevant to the municipality. The areas included within the North Saanich Servicing area are consistent with the intent of the RGS and better reflect the actual land uses.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Board accept the Regional Context Statement for the District of North Saanich, Community Bylaw No. 1130, and notify the District of North Saanich to this effect.

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Concurrence

COMMENTS: