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Agenda Item # 5

REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2008

SUBJECT RGS State of the Region Report: Executive Summary

PURPOSE:

To present the RGS State of the Region Executive Summary and seek approval for public release and distribution. The full technical report on the RGS State of the Regional Report will be released by the end of August 2008.

BACKGROUND

The provincial legislation requires the Regional District to develop a program for monitoring the progress of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) and to report annually on its implementation. In addition to the annual progress reports, the RGS monitoring program includes the development of a more comprehensive report, entitled the State of the Region, to be produced every five years. The timing of the report development aligns with the 5-year anniversary of the RGS adoption as well as the 5-year release of Census data.

The monitoring program is designed to meet the requirements of the provincial legislation and provide information to the region's elected officials and municipal staff. The information obtained from the State of the Region report will inform the 5-year review of the RGS. It also provides indicators for use by other agencies and groups that produce monitoring and/or research reports, including the CRD Round Table on the Environment, Community Council and the Victoria Foundation.

The document attached to this report is the Executive Summary of the State of the Region Report (*Attachment One*). This was produced to provide easy-to-access information to the region's elected officials, interested publics, stakeholders, and the media. The indicators in the RGS State of the Region Report are organized under the eight key policy directions of the RGS, which include:

- Keep urban settlement compact
- Protect the integrity of rural communities
- Protect regional green/blue spaces
- Manage natural resources and the environment sustainably
- Build more complete communities
- Improve housing affordability
- Increase transportation choice
- Strengthen the regional economy.

The distribution strategy for the Executive Summary is to distribute a hard copy to:

- Each of the region's elected officials,
- Municipal administrators and planning directors
- Newspaper and electronic media, targeting those that cover local government issues.

Email notices announcing the on-line availability of the Executive Summary (and related RGS information and documents) will be sent to all those in the RGS contact database. This includes senior government representatives and First Nations, agencies who have been involved in RGS issues and implementation, interested publics, which includes anyone who has participated in meetings and hearings and has agreed to be in the database, and representatives of RGS-related interest groups.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The RGS State of the Region report indicates that the region is on track with meeting some of the RGS targets, but falling behind on others.

On target:

- 2007 population for the growth management planning area is 343,612 up from 317,960 in 1996. This represents about 2,333 new people a year to region, a figure somewhat lower than the 3,000/year projected in the RGS
- As projected, the West Shore communities are growing at a faster rate (2.4% a year) than the Core communities (1%) and the Peninsula (0.7%)
- The RGS included a target to attract 15% of new dwelling units within the City of Victoria from the base year of 1996. Since that time period the City has attracted 24% of the new dwelling units.
- 932 ha of land were added to the Sea to Sea green/blue belt
- The share of new dwelling units located within the regional urban containment boundary is on target at 90%. However, this calculation does not include the District of Sooke, which does not have a regional context statement and containment boundary. The District of Highlands has requested an amendment to the RGS to expand the urban containment boundary by 267 ha.

Below target:

- Losses to resource lands have been significant: 281 ha of land were removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) land between 2001 and 2006. The forest land reserve was abolished by the Province in 2003, and since that time 28,000 hectares of forest land have been removed from tree farm licenses.
- Housing affordability continues to be a challenge in the region. The median house price (previous quarter 2008) is \$554,092. The income required to purchase a house at this price is \$146,679; well beyond the reach of many households.
- The rental vacancy rate is only 0.5% and the region continues to lose rental units.
- The transit mode share target is 10%, yet recent mode share data shows transit capturing 6% of daily trips.
- The mode share target for walking and cycling is 15%. To date, these modes captured 13% of daily trips. Cycling figures have increased over the last five years, but rates for walking have fallen.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Development of the RGS monitoring reports is funded through the Regional Growth Strategy planning budget.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of the RGS State of the Region Report will provide useful input to the 5-year review of the Regional Growth Strategy. Combined with the previously produced annual reports, the monitoring program provides good indicators of the RGS strengths and weaknesses, including where targets are strategic areas that are not well defined; and areas where the region is losing ground.

RECOMMENDATION

That the RGS *State of the Region Report Executive Summary* be approved for public release and distribution.

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COMMENTS: