



**REPORT TO THE
PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2012**

SUBJECT: **REGIONAL CONTEXT STATEMENT FOR THE CITY OF VICTORIA**

PURPOSE:

The City of Victoria has submitted "City of Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP), OCP Bylaw No. 12-013", (Section 4.1), 'Regional Context Statement' for acceptance by the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board as required by Section 866 of the *Local Government Act*.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Victoria is completing a two year review and update of its OCP. The OCP Bylaw No. 12-013 received first reading by Victoria City Council on April 12, 2012, and will need to proceed through second and third reading in addition to a public hearing prior to adoption. The OCP update helps "make sustainable choices for the kind of city Victoria will be in the 21 century."

The City of Victoria OCP includes the Regional Context Statement (RCS), and as required by Section 866 of the *Local Government Act*, the City of Victoria has officially submitted the RCS for approval by the CRD Board.

The referral was received on April 19, 2012 and circulated internally to the appropriate departments. The end of the review period requested by the City of Victoria (60 days) for the context statement is Monday, June 18, 2012.

Regional Context Statement Requirements

Section 866 of the *Local Government Act* requires that each CRD member municipality prepare a RCS which identifies the policy linkages and consistencies between the municipality's OCP and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The RCS addresses how local planning and land use policy will work towards the goals and objectives of the RGS to achieve consistency. A RCS is binding on a municipality and, as such, acts as a key implementation mechanism of the RGS.

The RCS must demonstrate:

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, and
3. the elements of the RGS that are not, or should not, apply to the municipality.

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 RCS. If the Board does not accept the RCS, 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 (in this case, by August 17, 2012), the Board is deemed by the *Act* to have accepted the RCS.

ALTERNATIVES

1. That the CRD Board accept the Regional Context Statement for the City of Victoria.
2. That the CRD Board refuse to accept the Regional Context Statement for the City of Victoria, and notify the City of Victoria to this effect indicating: (a) each provision to which it objects, and (b) the reasons for its objection.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

REGIONAL GROWTH IMPLICATIONS

The RCS review determines the degree to which the OCP responds to the strategic direction of the RGS's five applicable land use designations and the eight strategic initiatives. The RCS summarizes how the OCP demonstrates consistency through cross referencing the Strategic Direction of the RGS with the applicable sections of the OCP which contain specific policies.

Initial comments on the April 2011 draft OCP were provided to the City of Victoria based on input from Regional Planning, Environmental Sustainability and Regional Parks staff via letter in June 2011. The RCS and OCP were reviewed for consistency with the original RGS, and were also given consideration with regard to the Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS) policy directions, regional transportation initiatives (Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan (PCMP)).

In April 2012, a preliminary memo was received and circulated to other CRD departments prior to the official letter of referral, documenting the changes made to the RCS based on the June, 2011 letter. Overall, Victoria has done a good job of meeting the expectation of the CRD and its departmental review. The Victoria OCP generally acknowledges the region in addition to the policy areas of the RGS. No RGS conceptual conflicts were noted; comments were limited to minor wording changes and suggestions with regard to future regional plans currently under development. An overview of how the Victoria planning and land use policy will work towards the goals and objectives of the RGS to achieve consistency is summarized in Attachment 1.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS

The City of Victoria RCS reflects the intent of the RGS and its policies. Early dialogue between city and regional staff allowed for comments and suggestions to be integrated into the OCP during an early phase of the process. Cross referenced policies demonstrate the consistency between the OCP and RGS goals and objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Planning, Transportation and Protective Services Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the Regional Context Statement for the City of Victoria, Official Community Plan (OCP), OCP Bylaw No. 12-013", (Section 4.1), be accepted.

"Original Signed"

Jeff Weightman
Planning Analyst

Marg Misek-Evans, MCIP
Sr. Manager, Regional & Strategic Planning
Concurrence

Robert Lapham, MCIP
GM, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence

Kelly Daniels
Chief Administrative Officer
Concurrence

Attachment: 1

APPENDIX 1

1. Keep Urban Settlement Compact

The OCP acknowledges the variety of settlement density in the region within this section, and is on the urban end of the continuum. The forecast growth in the OCP is in keeping with regional projections and the City's urban place designations largely correspond with the growth centres identified in the RGS. Based on existing projections, forecast growth is greater than the capacity under the existing zoning for ground oriented and apartment units. In response to this, the OCP aims to accommodate future growth and employment within the downtown core and its surrounding urban villages, employment districts, transit corridors and town centres.

In order to meet the demand for housing a range of housing types are required, the majority of which will be attached housing. The plan specifies that the additional housing capacity will be compact and walkable, supporting the maintenance of the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area.

2. Protect the Integrity of Rural Communities

The City does not have rural areas but supports this Strategic Direction by housing a substantial proportion of the region's population in compact, complete communities. On the whole, the City offers a sizable market within which local food products can be sold. Areas identified in the Capital Green Lands Policy Area are protected as Public Facilities, Institutions, Parks and Open Space in the OCP and further protected by policy direction.

3. Protect Regional Green and Blue Space

The OCP designates all areas identified by the RGS as green and blue space for protection through Marine and Working Harbour designations or designated Public Facilities, Institutions, Parks and Open Space. The plan further supports the E&N railway alignment, Greenways Plan and Parks Master Plan.

4. Manage Natural Resources and the Environment Sustainably

The OCP supports the RGS's goal to conserve scarce resources through policy meant to address the impacts of climate change, sustainable resource management, greenhouse gas emission reduction, renewable and district energy, green building and infrastructure, biodiversity, improved ecological function, air and water quality, marine and shoreline management and urban forest. The plan also establishes policies that provide integrated watershed planning to Cecilia and Bowker Creek.

5. Build Complete Communities

The OCP continues to focus the majority of the City's growth on the Urban Core (RGS designated Metropolitan Core) and smaller Town Centres and Urban Villages connected with rapid and frequent transit. The City has the highest density in the region; this allows for better availability of employment and community services in nearby walkable centres. Other OCP policy focuses employment growth within the Urban Core, Town Centres and Urban Villages. Most of Victoria is located within walking distance (500 m) of a transit route, and over 50% of the population is within 400 m of a rapid transit route.

6. Improve Housing Affordability

The OCP directs the updates of the City's Comprehensive Housing Strategy which responds to regional directives established in the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy. The City helped to develop and approve the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy, and was a founding member of the Regional Housing Trust Fund. The housing policies in the OCP support the regional goals to: increase the supply of more affordable housing; reduce the number of people in core housing need and reduce the number of homeless and support the transition out of homelessness.

7. Increase Transportation Choice

The City was a participant in the development and approval of the TravelChoices sub Strategy, and is currently participating in partnership with the CRD, BC Transit and others on implementation initiatives. The city surpassed the TravelChoices target to achieve a 40% non-auto mode share for journey to work trips in 2006, reaching 46%.

The OCP prioritizes walking, cycling, public transit, and goods movement before single occupancy vehicle travel using an integrated approach. Transportation and land use are linked through a vision to develop walkable centres connected through transit and greenways. The plans broad objective is to provide the residents of the City with the ability to meet daily needs within a 15 minute walk.

Clear policy language recognizes a coordinated approach to transportation planning at the regional level addressing alignment of municipal transportation plans and initiatives with regional transportation goals and objectives specifically transit, commuter rail, goods movement, emergency response and travel behaviour.

8. Strengthen the Regional Economy

As an employment center, Victoria has fallen short of attracting the targeted 20% of regional economic growth between 2001 and 2006, with 13%. The OCP proposes a number of policies to improve its economic growth such as: increased allowable size and development density in the Core Business District and identifying areas of employment intensification. Further OCP direction calls for the development of an economic development strategy that outlines major and emerging sectors, guides coordination of the local economy in the City, Region and encourages small, local business development. Much of the RGS policy focuses on the development of resource lands, while Victoria does not have substantial control over these lands, it does provide a market for product sales.