

# **THE RGS CORPORATE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

## **Rationale for this Report**

The Board of the Capital Regional District adopted a regional growth strategy in August 2003. According to provincial legislation, the provisions of a regional growth strategy are binding on the regional district.

According to Section 865 of the Local Government Act, the Regional District must conform to its regional growth strategy. It further states:

865 (1) All bylaws adopted by a regional district Board after the Board has adopted a regional growth strategy, and all services undertaken by a regional district after the Board has adopted a regional growth strategy, must be consistent with the regional growth strategy.

865 (2) All bylaws adopted by a greater board or an improvement district board after the adoption of a regional growth strategy applicable to its jurisdiction, and all works and services provided by a greater board or an improvement district board after the adoption of a regional growth strategy applicable to its jurisdiction, must be consistent with the regional growth strategy.

865 (3) A regional growth strategy does not commit or authorize a regional district, municipality, greater board or improvement district to proceed with any project that is specified in the regional growth strategy.

## **RGS Requirements for a Corporate Implementation Strategy**

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) contains the following implementation policy pertaining to corporate initiatives:

*I-5 Establish, within one year of the adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy, a Corporate Implementation Strategy including policies, programs, and procedures that permit the CRD to demonstrate that all its bylaws, services, and spending are consistent with the adopted Regional Growth Strategy as required by legislation.*

This strategy responds to that policy statement.

## **Proposed Process for Ensuring Consistency**

As with an Official Community Plan (OCP), consistency with the Regional Growth Strategy will be assessed on an on-going basis. This requires the Regional Board to consider the RGS as part of its day-to-day decision-making.

The process for ensuring consistency of CRD bylaws, services and programs with the Regional Growth Strategy will involve the following actions:

1. Seek Board approval for the Corporate Implementation Strategy.
2. Distribute this report to all CRD department heads.
3. Conduct meetings with the relevant CRD Department heads to explain the policies and land use designations contained within the adopted RGS – and their implications for the CRD departments.
4. Provide on-going assistance to these departments from Regional Planning Services to explain and interpret the RGS requirements.
5. Require that a section be added to all CRD Committee and Board reports, including Juan de Fuca planning reports, to indicate whether the proposed bylaw, policy, acquisition or service extension is consistent with the provisions of the RGS. This would be similar in form to the section on “Financial Implications” now included on all Committee and Board reports.
6. Require that the RGS be referenced in all CRD comprehensive plans, including but not limited to, the Juan de Fuca OCPs (and their equivalent), Parks Master Plans, and the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy. The reference can be included in the introductory section of plans, where one commonly references the legislative and regulatory context such as the provisions of the Local Government Act and the Agricultural Land Commission.
7. Require that any request for CRD services to areas outside the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area boundary be flagged by the relevant CRD department and forwarded to Regional Planning Services. It would be the responsibility of Regional Planning Services to deal with the policy and RGS conformity implications, rather than the departments responsible for service provision. The requests for servicing would be brought forward in a report to RPC and the Board for consideration, recognising that service extensions beyond the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area would likely require an amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy.
8. On-going communication among the relevant departments to track policy changes and updates related to the RGS policies. For example, the RGS makes a number of references to the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy. As this plan, and the Master Parks Plan are updated, the updates will need to be reflected in the RGS.

## **Implications of the RGS for CRD Departments, Services and Programs**

The Corporate Implementation Strategy, prepared by CRD Regional Planning Services identified the policy statements and action items contained within the RGS that pertain to a number of CRD responsibility areas, especially water & sewer services, and parks.

### **1. Water Services**

An important growth management technique is to control the outward extension of development by limiting water and sewer service extensions to defined areas. In the case of the RGS, urban-capacity water and sewer services are to be directed to designated growth areas, and not extended into lands outside of the Regional Urban Containment Boundary.

*Relevant Policy/action: 1.1. (5) The CRD and member municipalities agree not to further extend urban sewer and water services, or increases in 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. Where the expansion or existing capacity of existing sewer and water services is proposed beyond the RUCS boundary, member municipalities agree to comply with the requirements of the Master Implementation Agreement prepared as required under Implementation measure 2, and to include guidelines for service expansion and extension in their Regional Context Statements, required by Implementation measure 4.*

Service Implications: To be consistent with the RGS, the CRD would need to align servicing initiatives with the RGS in the following manner:

- Water service extensions are required to respect the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Area as indicated on RGS Map 3, and support increased densities within the designated centres.
- Servicing intended to support urban development and urban densities in areas beyond the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Area is not permitted, unless specifically directed by the Regional Board following an amendment to the RGS.

### **2. Wastewater Services , and Wastewater and Marine Environment Program**

The RGS contains a number of action items that could affect the CRD wastewater services.

- Sewer service extensions are required to respect the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area as indicated on RGS Map 3, and support increased densities within the designated centres.

- Servicing intended to support urban development and urban densities in areas beyond the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area is not permitted, unless specifically directed by the Regional Board following an amendment to the RGS.

Under the strategic initiative, *Manage Natural Resources and the Environment Sustainably*, the RGS states: “The CRD will request that the Provincial and Federal Governments, in collaboration with the CRD and member municipalities, prepare a coastal zone management plan for the marine areas identified as Blue Space Core Policy Area on Map 4, within 5 years of the adoption of the RGS.”

Should that move forward, it would likely involve consideration of waste treatment practices and standards.

While not necessarily a consistency issue, the RGS contains an action item requiring the co-ordination of 5-year reviews. Action item #6 on page 11 states: “The CRD agrees to review and update in concert with the 5-year review cycle of the Regional Growth Strategy, the Strategic Plan for Water Management, the Solid Waste Management Plan, and the Core and Peninsula Liquid Waste Management Plan.”

While this type of alignment may not be feasible, there will need to be mechanisms in place to co-ordinate changes (updates and amendments) to these major plans – to the text and maps contained in the RGS.

### **3. Environmental Services (general)**

The RGS contains an action item that could have implications for departmental work plans (more so than any consistency issues). On page 11 of the RGS, Action item #1 states: “The CRD, member municipalities, and the Vancouver Island Health Authority agree to establish – through a Master Implementation Agreement – best practices, policies, procedures, benchmarks, and targets for the management, delivery, and extension of physical and environmental services, consistent with the principles of sustainability and overall intent of the Regional Growth Strategy.” The nature and extent of this undertaking would have to be determined and approved through the Board.

### **4. Electoral Area Land Use Planning**

The provisions of the RGS apply to the Juan de Fuca Electoral area. However, the RGS does not cover the Southern Gulf Islands or Saltspring Island electoral areas because these areas are under the planning jurisdiction of the Islands Trust. The RGS identifies the entire Juan de Fuca electoral area as outside of the Regional Urban Containment and Urban Servicing Policy Area. Much of the area is designated under the Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area, a designation which intends the area to remain rural in character with

subdivisions and development remaining within designated capacities in the official community plans, as determined at the date of RGS adoption (August 2003).

The RGS contains four specific policy areas of importance to the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area:

(1) *The long-term rural vision:* Under the strategic direction, “Keep Urban Settlement Compact”, the RGS states (action #6): “The jurisdictions responsible for administering the Juan de Fuca electoral area, within two years of adopting the Regional Growth Strategy, agree to update current Official Community Plans in a manner that maintains a long term rural vision for the Electoral Area.”

(2) *The Containment Boundary:* Should communities within the Juan de Fuca electoral area wish to change the rural designation to either accommodate urban-style growth or to include lands within the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area it must do so through a RGS amendment. The RGS provides the electoral area with a two-year time frame to define such a boundary. The RGS states:

To support quality of life and community character in rural areas, the Regional Growth Strategy proposes that rural communities (and contained urban areas) in the Saanich Peninsula, rural Western Communities, Sooke and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area grow moderately and slowly consistent with existing official community plans. Due to the recent incorporation of the District of Sooke, the regional urban containment and servicing area has not been defined for the District of Sooke and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. The CRD Board intends to work with the District of Sooke Council and jurisdictions responsible for land use planning in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area, to define the regional urban containment and servicing area in Sooke/Juan de Fuca as official community plans are reviewed and updated. (RGS, page 6).

(3) *The Servicing Policy:* The policies for compact urban form and protecting rural character include a policy which restricts the extension of piped services beyond the regional urban containment boundary. RGS initiative 1.1, Action 5 states: “The CRD and member municipalities agree not to further extend urban sewer and water services, or increase servicing capacities to encourage growth beyond designated official community plan limits at the time of adoption of the Regional Growth Strategy bylaws, outside the Regional Urban Containment and Servicing Policy Area generally described on Map 3, except to address pressing public health and environmental issues, to provide fire suppression or to service agriculture. Where expansion or increased capacity of existing sewer and water services is proposed beyond the RUCS boundary, member municipalities agree to comply with the requirements of the Mater Implementation Agreement prepared as required under Implementation measure 2, and to include guidelines for service expansion and extension in their Regional Context Statements, required by Implementation measure 4.”

(4) *The Growth Projection:* Table 1 in the RGS identifies the projected level and distribution of growth in the region to 2026. The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area is projected

to grow from a 1996 population of 4,140 to a 2026 population of 6,500. The strategy also anticipates an additional 820 dwelling units over the next 25 years (from 1,680 to 2,500)

## **5. CRD Housing Corporation**

The Housing Corporation plays an important and obvious role in implementing the RGS policies on housing affordability. Consistency issues would only arise in siting decisions, if housing projects were proposed outside of the urban containment boundary.

## **6. Community Health and Hospital Planning**

This department has contributed expertise to the housing affordability elements of the RGS. Consistency issues would only arise in siting decisions, if hospital and related facilities were proposed outside of the urban containment boundary. The servicing and infrastructure needs of such facilities are extensive and can affect surrounding uses over time.

## **7. Regional Parks**

A considerable component of the RGS reflects the policy direction and mapping schedules established in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy. The RGS promotes the completion of the Sea to Sea Green/Blue belt running from the Saanich Inlet south to Juan de Fuca Strait. The RGS also supports the development of an integrated system of parks and trails, linking urban areas with rural green space.

The services and programs of CRD Parks also support the RGS policy direction on transportation and the development of commuting alternatives, economic development and tourism, land acquisition and protection, and in a more general sense, effects the extent of amenity migration attracted to the region.

While there is an obvious alignment of policy between the RGS and the Parks Master Plan, there may be need to communicate and co-ordinate changes made to either – due to the timing differences in Board adoption, updates and amendments. Changes to park-related land use designations should also be incorporated into the RGS. The current RGS legislation makes amendments difficult (if not impossible) due to the onerous amount of process the province imposes. This creates a challenge for the CRD and its member municipalities when related policies and plans are updated and amended. The CRD will try and reach agreement with the province to facilitate plan updates, such as may occur with new land acquisitions.

The RGS contains a number of land use designations and policy areas that incorporate CRD parks and CRD land holdings. These include:

1. Capital Green Lands Policy Area: this includes ecological reserves, CRD water lands, and major parks identified in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy.
2. Renewable Resource Lands Policy Area: this includes lands in the ALR, the forest land reserve (now defunct) and the crown forest lands identified in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy.
3. Unprotected Green Space Policy Area: this includes the lands identified in the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy as unprotected core green space.

The RGS also establishes targets that affect CRD Parks. On page 9, the RGS states:

“The Regional Growth Strategy proposes that the CRD, member municipalities, and the province aim to protect a minimum of 100% of the Sea to Sea Green/Blue Belt by 2011, and complete 100% of the Regional trail network by 2016”.

“The Regional Growth Strategy proposes that the CRD and member municipalities work together to protect from development, as much as possible, the lands identified as Unprotected Green Space Policy Area on Map 3 & 4.

## **8. CRD Departments (general)**

The RGS contains a number of additional action items that will affect a number of CRD departments, should the Board choose to initiate them. They include:

- Establish best practice policies, procedures, benchmarks and targets for the management, delivery and extension of physical and environmental services, as part of a Master Implementation Agreement. (page11)
- Establish an Integrated watershed planning approach to managing surface water, drainage and groundwater in non-catchment watersheds, as part of a Master Implementation Agreement. (page 11)
- Establish and monitor policies & targets regarding air quality, environmental contaminants, and energy efficiency, as part of an Implementation Agreement. (page 11)
- Review the long-term strategic resource needs in the Capital region, including food (paying specific attention to local food production), energy, water and aggregate materials (and consider preparation of an aggregate resource management plan). (page 11)

The nature and extent of the RGS implementation actions will be determined by the Board. While the RGS recommends a number of initiatives to move the region toward the established goals and targets, the strategy does not commit the Board to undertake them. The RGS can, however, provide the rationale and the guiding framework for subsequent projects and investments.

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