

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee
From: Robin Beukens, Planner II

Date: 2022-12-08
File No: 6430-51-2011-01

Subject: Regional Growth Strategy Update

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Fraser Valley Regional District Board of information pertaining to the final steps of the Fraser Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) update and to share the latest draft RGS. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is a strategic, high-level policy document for coordinating planning in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and for informing provincial priorities. An RGS is a framework for planning and coordinating the activities of local governments, the provincial government, and other agencies to ensure that the region as a whole is working toward a common future.

The RGS considers issues that spill across the boundaries between neighbouring municipalities and regional districts. It also provides a framework for official community plans in Fraser Valley municipalities and directs development in unincorporated areas. It considers issues that impact all of us, such as transit, housing, parks, the environment, air quality and economic development from a regional perspective. In recent years, building relationships with Indigenous communities has taken on a much more important role in the FVRD, and the updated RGS reflects this change. The RGS update is nearing conclusion with expected completion in 2023. The draft RGS is included as Appendix 1.

Additional information about the RGS background including legal requirements, process, and engagement is included as Appendix 2.

DISCUSSION

Recent RGS Policy Updates

A number of policy updates have been made since the previous RGS draft was used during public engagement in 2021. These updates are based on new census information, and recent engagement with local governments, the Province, Indigenous communities, and the public.

These updates include:

- Updated population, employment, and housing projections
- Indigenous communities and peoples policies
 - Added a land acknowledgment and list of First Nations to the beginning of the RGS
 - Acknowledged reconciliation agreements and other agreements
 - Recognized the importance of protecting natural areas for hunting, fishing, and traditional cultural uses
 - Added policy for the province to prioritize forestry roads that provide access to remote communities
- Transportation policy updates related to active transportation, electric vehicles, goods movement, and rapid transportation
- Climate change
 - Prior to the heat dome and atmospheric river events, it was recognized that the climate change section of the RGS needed more prominence. The focus of this goal **has change from “energy and efficiency and climate change” to just ‘climate change’**, with two policies sections split into climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation. Policies have been added related to both GHG emissions and improving climate change resiliency.
- Edits throughout the RGS based on feedback related outdoor recreation, growth pressures in rural areas, transportation, emergency management, and others.

Next steps

Staff will be sharing the updated draft RGS with the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC - senior staff from local governments, the Province, other agencies and, Indigenous community/agency representatives) in the new year, re-engaging Indigenous communities and agencies, and meeting with affected local governments to seek informal agreement on accepting the RGS. If informal agreement is received, the FVRD will proceed with the formal referral process for the RGS, and subsequent adoption of the RGS by the FVRD Board after that. The schedule is dependent on no significant changes to the RGS and receiving agreement from affected local governments.

Tentative schedule:

- IAC meeting (1st quarter)
 - IAC committee will meet in the new year to review and discuss the draft RGS. One meeting is planned at this time. If required, an additional IAC meeting will be held.
- Indigenous engagement (1st quarter)
 - Staff will be reaching out to Indigenous communities and organizations who shared that they were interested in a follow up meeting to discuss the RGS. The focus of these meetings will be on the changes made based on feedback from Indigenous communities and organizations.
- Presentations to affected local governments (1st quarter)
 - FVRD will present to the councils of member municipalities and the boards of adjacent regional districts.
 - Part of the purpose of these meetings will be to seek informal agreement on accepting the RGS prior to initiating the formal bylaw process. Should there not be agreement, the process for adopting the RGS would be delayed.
- First reading of the bylaw for the RGS (2nd quarter)
 - Formal referral process (60 days – acceptance by affected local governments)
- Adoption by the FVRD Board of the updated RGS (2nd quarter)

COST

N/A

CONCLUSION

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is a strategic, high-level policy document for coordinating planning in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) and for informing provincial priorities. The RGS is a framework for planning and coordinating the activities of local governments, the provincial government, and other agencies to ensure that the region as a whole is working toward a common future. Work on the RGS is nearing conclusion and it is expected to be formally adopted in 2023, pending acceptance from affected local governments.

COMMENTS BY:

Stacey Barker, Director of Regional Services: Reviewed and supported.

Kelly Lownsbrough, Director of Corporate Services/CFO: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.