

To: Regional and Corporate Services Committee

Date: 2020-09-09

From: Robin Beukens, Planner II

File No: 6430-51-2011-01

Subject: Draft Regional Growth Strategy

INTENT

This report is intended to share the Draft Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Regional Growth Strategy (Appendix 1) with the Board. This Draft represents the culmination of a number of years of input from member municipalities, Indigenous agencies, the Board and others. Staff is not looking for a recommendation, but has forwarded this document for board members to review, provide comments and to take into consideration in upcoming Board strategic planning sessions at the FVRD. The draft will return to the Board for more formal consideration once the latest round of consultation is completed.

STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

Support Environmental Stewardship

Foster a Strong & Diverse Economy

Support Healthy & Sustainable Community

Provide Responsive & Effective Public Services

BACKGROUND

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is a strategic, high-level policy document for coordinating planning in the 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.

This report is a follow-up to a previous update report on the RGS process considered by the Board on March 18, 2020, shortly before the COVID-19 emergency was declared. The March report is included as Appendix 2 to provide additional information as to the process undertaken to-date, the applicable legislation and required content, among other things.

DISCUSSION

The Regional Growth Strategy is a strategic plan enabled by the *Local Government Act* that provides an overarching planning framework for coordinating the activities of local governments and the Provincial Government. It is a means to:

- Promote coordination among municipalities and regional districts that cross jurisdictional boundaries;
- Promote coordination among municipalities, regional districts and Indigenous communities as a means to establishing and maintaining meaningful and collaborative relationships;
- Strengthen links between regional districts and the Provincial ministries and agencies whose resources are needed to carry out projects and programs; and,
- Communicate the region's strengths to potential investors while demonstrating that local governments, Indigenous governments, and stakeholders are proactively addressing the key issues affecting the region's future. (FVRD Draft RGS p.4).

The 2020 draft RGS is an update of the existing *Choices for our Future* RGS, adopted in 2004. Many of the 2020 policies are similar to existing policy and have simply been updated to reflect new information, new plans, or have been reworded for clarity.

There are three new distinct policy areas and any new policies have come about as a result of one of three things: changes mandated through new legislation, input from the RGS engagement process, and/or because the policies address new opportunities or issues of regional concern that have arisen since 2004. The proposed updated RGS includes eight goals:

Collaboration	• To achieve our common goals for the future of the region by encouraging collaboration between jurisdictions, cultures, and neighbours. NEW
Economic Strength & Resiliency	• To realize the region's economic potential by providing opportunities in employment and education that will grow the economy by building on the region's strengths.
Living Well	• To ensure everyone is able to maintain a high quality of life, regardless of age, income, or ability. NEW
Community Building	• To create compact, complete communities that strengthen urban cores, maintain rural character and offer choice and affordability in housing.
Ecosystem Health	• To protect the air, water, and biodiversity on which we depend.
Transportation	• To develop an integrated, safe and efficient transportation system that supports compact urban development, promotes transit, walking and cycling and minimizes the transportation system's impact on air quality
Infrastructure & Services	• To provide efficient, sustainable, and cost effective services that contribute to compact and sustainable growth.
Energy & Climate Change	• To increase energy efficiency, lower energy costs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in order to minimize the region's impact on climate change and to mitigate impacts of climate change on our region. NEW

Updates since the 2014 RGS Draft

The following updates have been made since the last draft RGS was shared with the Board in 2014. More detail on some of these items can be found in Appendix 2:

- Moved Collaboration from the eighth goal to the first goal to reflect the importance of collaboration in developing and implementing the RGS;
- Incorporated comments from member municipalities, adjacent regional districts and other stakeholders;
- Incorporated comments from the People of the River Referrals Office and enhanced the prominence of collaboration with Indigenous communities;
- Reviewed major Official Community Plan updates in Abbotsford and Mission;
- Incorporated the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- Referred internally to FVRD departments and incorporated feedback from the Electoral Area Planning, Engineering, Emergency Services, Environment, Intergovernmental Relations, and Outdoor Recreation Planning departments;
- Informally referred the draft RGS to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and incorporated comments received as necessary; and
- Re-engaged People of the River Referrals office to discuss the updated draft and solicit advice on engagement with Indigenous communities in a COVID-19 environment.

COVID-19 challenges

COVID-19 has led to some challenges and changes to how engagement will occur. Engagement will be done remotely for the foreseeable future. Staff are exploring new methods of remote engagement recently used successfully by other organizations. These include tools such as Mural.com to facilitate an online version of a table top workshop exercise, and Zoom for targeted engagement with specific groups and organizations, which may include the use of Zoom breakout rooms to facilitate a larger group. Staff will be working on an Indigenous engagement plan and public engagement plan to map out the best way to move forward, as well as determining how to best facilitate group discussions such as the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC).

Fraser Valley Transportation Study

At its March 18, 2020 meeting, the Board was informed of the inclusion of a proposed *Fraser Valley Integrated Transportation and Land Use Plan* in both the throne speech and provincial budget. More recently the province has formally announced the *Fraser Valley Transportation Study (FVTS)* and specifically states:

"The Fraser Valley is a rapidly growing region and a vital national trade corridor. Supporting the growing transportation demands and rapid development in the Fraser Valley is a critical piece of COVID-19 economic recovery. "

At the staff level, the province has engaged with the FVRD and member municipalities as they have developed the structure and scope of the project. A formal terms of reference has not yet been provided but, through discussions, the province has been made aware of the broader RGS work program and the transportation needs at both the regional and municipal level. The FVRD will be working closely with the province to ensure that the RGS and FVTS are consistent and compatible. The FVRD looks forward to working with the province on this initiative, but it is important not to lose sight of the more immediate challenges that need to be addressed.

Next Steps

While many updates have been made since 2014, the RGS is still a draft document and revisions continue. Next steps include:

- Meetings with staff from member municipalities to informally discuss the draft plan and updated process.
- In consultation with member municipalities, finalize the updated Transportation Priorities.
- Reinstate the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (further information is in the March RACS report included as Appendix 2) and meet to discuss the draft.
- Engagement with Indigenous communities.
- Public engagement (recognizing COVID-19 challenges).
- Legal review.
- Prior to third reading of the bylaw to adopt the RGS, referral to and formal acceptance by affected local governments (member municipalities and neighbouring regional districts).
- Adoption by bylaw by the FVRD Board.

COST

N/A

CONCLUSION

The latest draft of the RGS has been shared with staff from member municipalities and FVRD staff will be meeting to discuss the draft soon. It is important to note that this is a draft document and revisions continue. Staff are sharing the Draft RGS at this time to provide board members with the opportunity to review, provide comments and to utilize in upcoming FVRD strategic planning sessions.

COMMENTS BY:

Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning: Reviewed and supported

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

Kelly Lownsborough, Chief Financial Officer/ Director of Financial Services: Reviewed and supported.

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.