

To: Electoral Area Services Committee

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Subject: FVRD Regional Growth Strategy ties to Electoral Areas

INTENT

This report is intended to advise the Electoral Area Services Committee of connections between the FVRD Regional Growth Strategy and the electoral areas. Staff is not looking for a recommendation and has forwarded this information should members want more clarification to discuss the item further.

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 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 Electoral Area Services Committee received a presentation and the latest draft of the RGS in September; that draft RGS is included as Appendix 1. The purpose of this joint Strategic Planning and Initiatives and Electoral Area Planning report is to:

- address questions raised by EA Directors;
- highlight the connections between the RGS and the FVRD electoral areas (EAs);
- discuss potential impacts to electoral area land use planning policy such as Official Community Plans, following the structure and goals of the draft RGS; and,
- generate discussion and input from an electoral area perspective.

DISCUSSION

The eight FVRD electoral areas (EA) are characterized by a diverse landscape containing rural communities, agricultural land, and crown land. While having a relatively small percentage of the region's overall population, the electoral areas contain the majority of the FVRD's land base. The electoral areas are an important part of the region and will be affected by the growth that is projected to occur over the next 30 years. By virtue of the Local Government Act, electoral areas are connected to the RGS; this report highlights some of these connections. The RGS contains policies that will affect the electoral areas, both from regional policies that will guide the region as whole and policies that apply directly to the electoral areas.

The RGS is a strategic, high-level policy document. It is not a land use plan. The RGS sets out general principles to guide growth in the region. The details of how and where the electoral areas will develop will be defined by the communities through Official Community Plans (OCPs) and other land use planning tools. The RGS serves as a high-level guide to local OCPs.

Population Projections

The RGS includes population, employment, and housing outlooks and projections to understand the amount of growth expected in the region over the next 30 years. The Lower Mainland, including Metro Vancouver and the FVRD, is expected to grow from around 2.9 million today to 4.1 million by 2050. It is expected that approximately 190,000 more people will be living in the FVRD by 2050. The majority of this growth is expected to occur in urban municipalities. The population of the FVRD electoral areas is expected to increase from 10,775 people in 2016 to approximately 15,500 people by 2050. Accurately projecting the population within the EAs from year to year is challenging, as one major development can significantly increase the population within an EA. While the absolute level of population growth in the electoral areas will be a comparatively small amount of the region's overall growth, the electoral areas will feel the effects of growth pressures that will occur throughout the FVRD and Metro Vancouver.

Defining Growth

One of the roles of the RGS is to understand different growth patterns in the region and to ensure that growth and development is appropriate within the larger regional context. The vast majority of future growth within the region will occur within the urban centres as delineated by the Regional Growth Boundaries. Growth in the electoral areas is described under "rural communities and resorts, and rural landscapes". Growth in these areas, as noted above in the population projections, is expected to be a comparatively minimal amount of the region's growth and the rural character of these communities is intended to be maintained.

The RGS defines rural communities as small areas of concentrated residential lots. These communities support lower densities and housing is primarily single family. The RGS notes that resorts can take a variety of forms, from ski hills to lakeside resorts. The focus of the RGS is on large, regionally-scaled resorts. These communities are intended to serve a more seasonal population throughout the Lower Mainland. Rural landscapes are described in the RGS as areas outside of urban and rural centres. These

areas are characterized by large rural lots, parks, agricultural land, and forested Crown land. The rural communities, resorts, and rural landscapes descriptors are meant to be general concepts only.

As the electoral areas are very diverse, growth is going to occur at different rates in each of the EAs. Staff from Strategic Planning and Electoral Area Planning are discussing the how these communities are defined in the RGS to ensure that the character of the EAs are properly reflected and that the vision for growth is clear.

Draft RGS Goals and the Connection to the Electoral Areas

The following section outlines the goals of the RGS and gives some examples of how they relate to the electoral areas, with some policies included as well. The goals and policies (*italicized below*) largely focus on the region as a whole, with some policies specific to the electoral areas. The electoral areas are interconnected with the larger region and as such, each goal has implications for the electoral areas. It is also important to note that all of the RGS goals are interconnected, and while the Collaboration goal is listed first to highlight the importance of collaboration to implementing the RGS, the order of the goals is not hierarchal.

Collaboration

Goal: To achieve our common goals for the future of the region by encouraging collaboration between jurisdictions, cultures, and neighbours.

1.1 Build and strengthen relations with Indigenous communities and governments

There are many Indigenous communities located within the geographical area of the FVRD electoral areas. Part of the goal of collaboration is to promote coordination of planning between local governments and Indigenous communities, and to support establishing MOUs and service agreements between Indigenous and local governments.

Recent updates to EA Official Community Plans have highlighted collaboration between Indigenous communities and governments and the FVRD. For example, the draft OCP for Popkum-Bridal Falls includes policies encouraging and prioritizing partnership opportunities between Indigenous groups and the FVRD in areas of mutual interest and where feasible opportunities exist. In practice, the FVRD and Cheam First Nation are exploring joint sewer servicing arrangements which will provide a much needed service to both EA residents and on-reserve residents.

1.2 Work together to ensure success

The electoral areas are an integral part of the FVRD and closely connected with the larger region. Many people who live in the EAs may work or access services in the municipalities; and many municipal residents from the FVRD and beyond visit the EAs for recreation and other purposes. Collaborating to promote regional objectives, educate residents, pool resources, and secure funding and investments can ensure the electoral areas and broader region has a strong voice.

Economic Strength and Resiliency

Goal: 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.

This goal includes policies promoting employment and economic development in the electoral areas, improving high-speed internet connectivity, and promoting growth and development in agriculture, and maximizing the tourism potential of the region. Several of the EAs contain large agricultural areas and it is important for the Region that these areas have the opportunity to benefit from the agricultural economy. This includes implementing recommendations from the *Clean Economy Study* and the *Future of B.C.'s Food System* report where appropriate.

The electoral areas contain attractive tourism destinations that provide an opportunity for economic development but also a challenge for managing increasing numbers of people coming to explore the region. Parks, tourism, transportation, and infrastructure are further addressed through a number of other goals in the RGS.

The significant impacts of high seasonal use of the various recreational assets in the electoral areas is an important regional issue. Ensuring regional support and resource allocation for the responsible management and preservation of these assets is critical to the sustainability of the region's tourism economy. The RGS is an important tool in identifying this priority and supporting a coordinated response from all levels of government.

Living Well

Goal: To ensure everyone is able to maintain a high quality of life, regardless of age, income, or ability.

Many of the parks and green spaces in the FVRD are located in the electoral areas. With an increase in the regional population, more people will be visiting the EAs to access recreation opportunities. There are plans in place to both promote and protect the areas parks and recreation opportunities via initiatives such as the *Experience the Fraser* project and the *Outdoor Recreation Management Plan*.

Community Building

Goal: To create compact, complete communities that strengthen urban cores, maintain rural character and offer choice and affordability in housing.

This section of the RGS contains several policies that directly apply to planning in the electoral areas.

4.2 Maintain the character of rural areas and communities

Maintaining the character of rural areas and communities is a primary value in many EA OCPs. These policies focus on concentrating growth, providing rural lifestyle and housing, recognizing the role of the EAs in attracting tourism and ensuring the required support, compatibility of land uses, limiting

development in areas with geotechnical and environmental hazards, and working with senior governments to improve the land use management of crown lands.

a. Concentrate growth within existing rural centres, and encourage compact, energy efficient development that minimizes infrastructure and development costs.

The *Local Government Act* states the purpose of a RGS: 428 (1)The purpose of a regional growth strategy is to promote human settlement that is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and that makes efficient use of public facilities and services, land and other resources. To achieve this, the RGS includes policies such as encouraging compact development. The majority of the growth that occurs within EAs should take place within more compact rural centres with appropriate services rather than distributed throughout the rural landscape. This is generally in keeping with existing EA OCPs. Electoral area community members have a direct say in the future of their communities through tools such as OCPs, zoning, and servicing requirements that will define where development occurs, densities, parcel sizes, etc.

4.3 Promote sustainable regionally-scaled resort development

The electoral areas contain a number of different resort developments, from ski hills to lake side communities. The EAs are also potential locations for new resort proposals, and these policies are meant to guide decision making for both regionally-scaled existing and prospective resorts. While the details of resort development are determined through OCPs, the RGS policies aim to ensure the resorts protect public investment by demonstrating financial viability with regards to the establishment of community-wide infrastructure and servicing, are compact and prioritize hazard avoidance, consider appropriately timed self-governance, properly engage with Indigenous communities, and develop emergency management plans to ensure public safety. The RGS provides high level policy direction for regionally-scaled resort development, but it may be in the interest of the electoral areas to develop policy specific to resort development in the EAs in Official Community Plans to provide more detailed guidance to the Board for consideration of these large scale projects.

Ecosystem Health

Goal: To protect the air, water, and biodiversity on which we depend.

Much of the FVRD land base is in the electoral areas, including both public and private lands. These lands play an important role in the regional ecosystem and require appropriate protection and land use management. EA Planning works to protect the environment through limiting development in ecologically sensitive and hazardous areas through tools such as establishing Development Permits Areas which can require riparian area assessments and geohazard assessments in advance of development. Policies related to the work of the Environmental Services department address air quality and solid waste management initiatives that impact both rural and urban areas.

Transportation & Mobility

Goal: To develop an integrated, safe, and efficient transportation system for people and goods that promotes walking and cycling, and minimizes the transportation system's impact on air quality.

Senior governments place significant weight on priorities identified in the RGS when considering projects for funding. Within this goal is a Transportation Priorities Map, which identifies both large transportation projects such as Highway 1 HOV lane expansion, smaller routes focused on local safety, as well as active transportation and transit projects. For the region and the electoral areas to be able to manage the increasing numbers of both residents and visitors over the next thirty years, major transportation improvements will be required. In the electoral areas this may include road improvements, transit expansion, and active transportation (biking and walking) improvements.

The transportation priority access projects are still being updated. Transportation priority projects currently identified in the electoral areas:

- West-side Harrison Lake to Lillooet Lake - FSR Improvements
- Cultus Lake - 2nd Access Route/emergency access route
- Morris Valley Rd Bridge Replacement
- Columbia Valley Hwy - pedestrian and bike upgrades

Infrastructure and Services

Goal: To provide efficient, sustainable, and cost effective services that contribute to compact and sustainable growth.

Similar to transportation infrastructure, senior governments look to the RGS when considering funding applications. Earlier policies under Community Building require all communities, regardless of size, to be compact in a context-appropriate manner. Compact communities have more compact infrastructure, which is generally more cost-effective/financially sustainable than more spread out, sprawling communities.

Emergency management is also located under this goal. All of the EAs can at some point be affected by emergency situations such as natural disasters. EA Emergency Services works to ensure the electoral areas are properly prepared to respond to emergencies.

Energy and Climate Change

Goal: To increase energy efficiency 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.

The Local Government Act requires all Regional Growth Strategies to include GHG emission reduction targets and actions. An official community plan must also include targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the area covered by the plan, and policies and actions of the local

government proposed with respect to achieving those targets. GHG reduction targets are being incorporated to EA OCPs as they the plans are updated. Staff are currently working on updating the RGS GHG targets.

Response to Questions and Comments from EA Directors at September RACS, EASC, and Board Meetings

What is the approximate timeline until formal adoption?

The current plan is to have engagement complete by summer of 2021 (COVID depending), then move to official bylaw which follows prescribed timeline (90 days) to adoption.

Can the RGS be updated without having all the OCPs up to date?

While the RGS can be informed by OCPs, primarily in relation to the municipal urban growth boundaries, the OCPs do not need to be updated prior to the RGS being finalized. Municipal OCPs must be amended to include a “regional context statement” within three years of a new or updated RGS being adopted. The context statements note how the OCP is consistent with the RGS, and if they aren’t consistent how they will be made consistent. Some of the existing electoral area OCPs were adopted before the current RGS was adopted in 2004. The RGS provides high-level policy direction for the OCPs and can provide a framework for developing new or updated OCPs. EA OCPs informed the RGS policies that specifically relate to the EAs.

Recently updated OCPs, including the draft OCP for Popkum-Bridals Falls and the draft Hemlock Valley OCP, include a section on the Regional Growth Strategy which aims to demonstrate how the Plan is consistent with the RGS and meets the goals of the RGS per Section 445 of the Local Government Act.

Can the rural broadband strategy be added to agricultural policies section to help with the promotion and development of agriculture using technology?

The rural broadband policy is included under policy 2.1 *Create opportunities for employment and education*. Staff will explore if this is the best location, and will include a reference under policy 2.2 *Promote growth and development in agriculture* to acknowledge the importance of broadband for agritech and agricultural competitiveness.

Who sets the regional transportation priorities and are they in an order of priority?

The regional transportation priorities are based on discussions with each of the member municipalities, MOTI, BC Transit and FVRD staff. There are groups of priorities (critical, high, medium-long term) but within the group, the projects are not listed in order of priority, with the exception of Highway 1, which the Board has indicated is the highest priority improvement. The transportation priorities are still draft and will be updated through discussion with EA and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure staff. Input from FVRD directors is also important to make sure all priorities are included.

Tourism pressures are an issue in several of the EAs, and the EAs do not have adequate supports from police and other services to match the number of people coming for recreation. It is vital to have a tourism policy to address traffic, parking, public safety, and garbage issues arising from increased tourism. Infrastructure supports need to be in place.

Tourism is both an opportunity and a challenge. Strategic Planning, EA Planning and Outdoor Recreation Planning staff will review policies relating to the impact of tourism in the electoral areas, to account for the increase in visitors in these areas. The FVRD Outdoor Recreation Management Plan may also addresses some of these issues.

Page 33 photo is of Area G, not Area F.

This will be corrected in the next draft.

The draft RGS does not have a statement about the order of the RGS goals. Can language be added to the draft RGS which clarifies there is no priority/order for goals apart from collaboration?

Collaboration is important and naturally fits as the first identified goal given its role in implementing the RGS. All the goals are interrelated and connected. The next draft will include a statement that the goals are not listed in a hierarchal order.

The rural communities definition needs reworking; "concentrated small residential lots" does not accurately depict the rural areas. The 2004 RGS has a statement around concerns regarding loss of rural lifestyles, would like to see similar language in the draft RGS.

Staff from Strategic Planning and EA Planning are reviewing how rural communities, resorts, and rural landscapes are described, and are working on developing wording that will better reflect these communities and acknowledges protecting rural lifestyles.

Need robust public engagement for the EAs.

Staff are in the process of updating the RGS engagement plan to account for COVID-19. The updated RGS engagement plan will be brought to the Board.

Over years the electoral areas have seen a number of large resort development proposals. How does the RGS provide direction for these proposals? Would an RGS amendment be required for a large resort development?

The RGS contains a number of high-level policies related focused on regionally-scaled large resorts. If resort development is increasing density in rural areas, there may need to be a RGS amendment. As the RGS is a high-level, strategic policy document, it may be better to have an EASC approved policy for resort development that contains more detail.

Many resort proposals are on crown land and are under jurisdiction of the Province. Although the FVRD may be limited in influence over the approval of Master Plans for resort development, the FVRD does adopt bylaws to guide resort development and private developers are required to follow FVRD bylaws (OCPs, zoning, etc.) at the time of development.

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 and for informing provincial priorities. While a comparatively minor amount of the current population of the Region, the EAs will be affected by growth occurring in the EAs as well as the FVRD and Metro Vancouver. The RGS lays out a framework for how communities within the FVRD will collaborate towards common goals. The details of how the electoral areas will grow and change will be determined through official community plans and other land use planning tools.

Appendix 1 – Draft Regional Growth Strategy August 2020 (same as distributed at September Board meeting)

COMMENTS BY:

Alison Stewart, Manager of Strategic Planning: Reviewed and supported.

Graham Daneluz, Director of Planning & Development: Reviewed and supported.

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

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

Jennifer Kinneman, Chief Administrative Officer: Reviewed and supported.