

## Chapter 10 – Regional Context Statement

*\*\*replaced by Bylaw No. 418, 2019*

The Board of the Capital Regional District formally approved an updated Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in March 2018. The District of Highlands is a signatory to the RGS. As a partner, Highlands has established its commitment to the following:

- To plan and manage growth in a collaborative manner by participating in achieving the regional vision and the objectives.
- To consider the cross-boundary impacts of all development-related decisions.
- To work toward a more sustainable region by considering the environmental, economic and social implications of local government decisions.

The *Local Government Act* requires municipalities to adopt a “regional context statement.” This statement must identify the relationship between an Official Community Plan (OCP) and the RGS and, if applicable, must specify how the OCP will be made consistent with the RGS over time.

Regional context statements are a key implementation mechanism for the RGS. They also protect a municipal council's authority to make local planning decisions while ensuring that the council and the regional board agree upon matters of legitimate regional interest. While the RGS is not binding on the member municipalities, the regional context statements are.

Table 10.1 identifies the relationship between Highlands' OCP and the RGS.

### **Regional Context Statement – Objectives**

- To plan and manage growth in a collaborative manner by participating in achieving the regional vision and the objectives in the RGS.
- To consider the cross-boundary impacts of all development-related decisions.
- To work toward a more sustainable region by considering the environmental, economic and social implications of local government decisions.

RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
<b>Managing and Balancing Growth</b>	
1.1 Keep Urban Settlement Compact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only a small percentage of land in the Highlands falls into the Highlands Servicing Area Boundary (HSAB) as shown on Map 2.1. The Servicing Area is contiguous with the Regional Urban Containment Policy Area (RUCPA) as set out on Map 3a of the RGS with the purpose of limiting expansion of urban settlement. <b>This area contains industrial and commercial type uses, as well as relatively higher density residential uses.</b></li> <li>Policy 2.2 (22) of the OCP further supports the implementation of the RUCPA and states: “All land use and design decisions will seek to prevent unplanned growth.”</li> <li>Section 2.2 describes growth within Highlands as occurring slowly, at a rate of approximately 15 new homes per year. This contributes to slow growth in rural areas, which is in keeping with the RGS target of 95% of growth taking place within the Urban Containment Boundary (UCB) and only 5% growth outside of the UCB.</li> <li>Residential development within the HSAB is guided by Development Permit Area 5 – Intensive Residential. Guidelines promote: clustering and screening by native vegetation of housing; maintenance of natural drainage patterns; drought-resistant plantings; minimal alteration of natural features; maintaining or improving stormwater runoff in order to protect ground and surface water; enhancement of riparian areas; conservation and/or enhancement of identified green space areas; downward illumination; and design supporting transit.</li> </ul>
1.2 Protect the Integrity of Rural Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The OCP supports the continued conservation of and support for the rural community and lifestyle in Highlands. This is consistent with the RGS Rural/Rural Residential Policy Area objectives. The vast majority of Highlands (approximately 90%) is designated Park, Rural Residential and Rural land use in the OCP. These designations seek to protect rural character.</li> <li>The Rural and Managed Forest designations allow for agriculture and forestry, while the Rural Residential and Institutional (where determined by zoning) designations allow for agriculture.</li> <li>Policy 2.2 (7) encourages development applicants to explore various means to develop land that minimizes impacts on the natural environment.</li> <li>Policy 2.2 (17) encourages the retention of the visual landscape, including retention of naturally vegetated buffer zones adjacent to parks and road rights-of-way.</li> </ul>

RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
<b>Environment and Infrastructure</b>	
<p>2.1 Protect, Conserve and Manage Ecosystem Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlands' OCP acknowledges and supports the Capital Green Lands Policy Area (CGLPA) as set out on Map 3a of the RGS and the targets for completion of the sea-to-sea green blue belt and the regional trail network. These areas were originally defined in the previous RGS under the CRD Parks Master Plan.</li> <li>• Policies in Chapter 4 specifically discuss cooperation with the Regional District and Province in the conservation, continued establishment, development and management of regional parks, trails and natural areas.</li> <li>• Policy 4.2.1 states that: "Decisions regarding parks, trails and recreation should be guided, along with other relevant information, by the Highlands Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Trails Master Plan. The CRD Parks Master Plan and BC Parks should also be consulted as well as affected landowners".</li> <li>• Highlands is home, in part, to a number of regionally significant parks, as acknowledged in the RGS, including Thetis Lake and Mount Work Regional Parks, and home in entirety to Lone Tree Regional Park.</li> <li>• The OCP also recognizes the importance of identifying, protecting, enhancing and restoring healthy ecosystems consistent with the RGS policies for the CGLPA.</li> <li>• Section 3.2, Natural Hazard Conditions, discusses and provides policy direction for areas with steep slopes. Section 3.3 discusses Environmentally Sensitive Areas, and sets out detailed policies for sensitive vegetation, water features and riparian areas, and marine waters and shore lands. All of these policies are further supported by Development Permit Areas (Chapter 11) for Steep Slopes, Water and Riparian Areas, and Sensitive Vegetation, and are shown on Maps 11.1 and 11.2. By regulating land use and development, these policies and regulatory powers contribute to the RGS target for the reduction of contaminants in fresh and marine water bodies.</li> <li>• Policies 3.1 (2) and (3) encourage environmental information sharing, stewardship, and responsibility-taking among the District, its residents and landowners, and environmental groups and agencies.</li> <li>• Section 11.8 establishes Development Permit Area 6 – Promotion of Energy and Water Conservation and the Reduction of Greenhouse Gases. The entire District is subject to this Development Permit under the following circumstances: (1) construction requiring a building permit and (2) any other project requiring a Development Permit.</li> <li>• Section 2.1 draws attention to the importance of considering water in all land use decisions.</li> </ul>

RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
2.2 Manage Regional Infrastructure Services Sustainably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of land in the Highlands (approximately 90%) is outside of the Regional Urban Containment Boundary Area and not part of regional water or sewer systems. Policy 7.2 (11) includes Map 2.1 that shows Highlands' Servicing Area, which is consistent with the RGS. Limiting significant growth to this area supports the sustainability of the regional infrastructure system.</li> <li>• Policy 7.3 (6) provides for the servicing by public sewers or an alternative method of sewage disposal, which involves the use of reclaimed water, within the Bear Mountain Comprehensive Development Area.</li> <li>• Section 7.4 discusses managing solid waste, focusing on reducing, reusing and recycling.</li> <li>• Policy 7.4 (4) supports reduction of waste, reuse of materials, recycling, and backyard composting.</li> <li>• Policy 7.4 (7) states that the District will actively pursue ways to allow for the conversion, and rehabilitation of existing landfill, waste burning and demolition sites.</li> <li>• The OCP places a high level of importance on protection and management of the groundwater resources. Consistent with the RGS, appropriate management of groundwater resources will help to limit the need for extensions of the regional water system and is critical to preserving rural and rural residential areas and ecosystem health.</li> <li>• Section 2.1 draws attention to the importance of considering water in all land use decisions.</li> <li>• Section 3.5 discusses and sets policies for watershed and groundwater management.</li> <li>• Section 7.2 discusses and sets policies for water supply and well protection. Some specific policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Policy 7.2 (3) states, "In considering land use activity or change, the District of Highlands will consider the ability of surface water and groundwater to support human use without damaging ecosystems and aquifers..."</li> <li>○ Policy 7.2 (4) encourages water conservation.</li> <li>○ Policy 7.2 (5) encourages the use of drought-resistant native plant species in order to reduce irrigation need and to control potentially invasive species.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
<b>Housing and Community</b>	
3.1 Create Safe and Complete Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not applicable</b> for the most part because the vast majority of Highlands is outside of the Regional Urban Containment Boundary.</li> <li>• Lands designated as Bear Mountain Comprehensive Development provide for a mix of housing, employment, services and recreation.</li> </ul>
3.2 Improve Housing Affordability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy 2.2.13 addresses the need to encourage housing for a broad spectrum of housing needs and states that “Housing for people with special needs by reason of age, income or disability is encouraged to meet the community’s anticipated needs.”</li> <li>• Given the Rural/Rural Residential nature of the majority of Highlands, there is little opportunity to meet the RGS target to increase housing affordability. However, the OCP recognizes this limitation and encourages consideration of “a strategy for affordable housing stock through consideration of secondary housing” (Policy 2.2.24).</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation</b>	
4.1 Improve Multi-Modal Connectivity and Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OCP supports the RGS goal to improve the regional multi-modal transportation network through development of roadside trails and to encourage increased transit use. This supports the RGS target for 42% of all trips in the region to be by walking, cycling and transit.</li> <li>• Section 6.3 discusses roadside trails, the objective of which is “To develop and maintain a network of roadside trails, as outlined in the 2010 Trails Master Plan, for a variety of means of non-motorized travel that is consistent with the character and activities of the Highlands.”</li> <li>• Considerations for transit with respect to land use are directed through policies 2.2 (25), 2.2 (27), and 2.6 (8). <b>For the Commercial/Industrial area, there is policy support to replace parking stalls with the provision of transit passes.</b></li> <li>• Policies in section 6.5 support public transit, and an arrangement with a private provider in order to provide additional options for Highlanders.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Development</b>	
5.1 Realize the Region’s Economic Potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given the limited nature of the industrial and commercial lands in the Highlands, there is little opportunity to add to the Region’s economic potential and the target to increase the jobs/population ratio as contemplated in the RGS. However, policies in the OCP do acknowledge and support ongoing commercial, industrial and forestry activity.</li> <li>• Section 2.9 discusses the Managed Forest land use designation. An objective is, “To encourage good forestry practices.” Policy 2.9 (2) states that the District will seek to ensure long term protection of lands designated Managed Forest.</li> <li>• Uses allowed within the <b>Commercial/Industrial Regenerative Development</b> and Bear Mountain Comprehensive Development OCP designated lands are intended for regional or greater market areas.</li> </ul>

RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
<b>Food Systems</b>	
6.1 Foster a Resilient Food and Agriculture System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OCP supports a strong and sustainable regional agriculture and food distribution system. While the OCP does not explicitly include targets to increase the amount of land in food production, it does include policies that support food production on private properties, as well as community food gardens in new and existing development and on other underutilized lands. Emphasis is given to food production methods that are environmentally sustainable and do no harm to local ecosystems.</li> <li>• Policy 8.3.2 – “The District will support community food gardens in new and existing developments and in areas where lands are underutilized or residents do not have space on their own properties for gardens”.</li> <li>• Policy 8.3.4 – “The District encourages food production on private properties...”</li> <li>• Policy 8.3.5 – “Highlands will support the maintenance of a strong and sustainable regional agricultural and food distribution system”.</li> <li>• Policy 8.3.6 – “The District of Highlands may undertake an agricultural and Local Food planning process to support and guide future agricultural activities and to evaluate whether specific land use regulations may be necessary to help balance the full range of values expected by the community”.</li> <li>• Consideration of the RGS target for increased food production will be included in the next OCP review.</li> <li>• Section 8.3 sets out a number of policies in support of local food production and consumption.</li> </ul>
RGS Objectives	Relationship to Highlands OCP
<b>Climate Action</b>	
7.1 Significantly Reduce Community-Based Greenhouse Gas Emissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The OCP establishes policies and targets for Greenhouse Gas reduction. While the targets, a proposed 20% reduction from 2007 emissions by 2020, a 26% reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050 do not mirror the RGS targets of a 33% reduction by 2020 and a 61% reduction by 2038, the goal is the same. These target dates will be reviewed and updated as part of the next OCP update.</li> <li>• Policies specifically in chapter 5, “Energy, Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change Adaptation,” and generally throughout the OCP seek to promote greenhouse gas reduction, energy efficiency, renewable energy production, water conservation, waste reduction and use or reuse of waste as resource.</li> <li>• Development Permit Area 6, “Promotion of Energy and Water Conservation and the Reduction of Greenhouse Gases,” implements this policy direction. The entire District is subject to this Development Permit under the following circumstances: (1) construction requiring a building permit and (2) any other project requiring a Development Permit.</li> </ul>

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