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REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

SUBJECT Regional Growth Strategy Indicators Report

ISSUE SUMMARY

To receive the 2024 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Indicators Report.

BACKGROUND

The *Local Government Act (LGA)* section 452 sets out requirements for regional districts with adopted regional growth strategies. Specifically, a regional district must:

- a) Establish a program to monitor RGS implementation and the progress made towards its objectives and actions; and,
- b) Prepare an annual report on that implementation and progress.

The RGS Indicators Report was developed in 2019 to support consistent annual reporting and meet legislative requirements. The report consists of 19 indicators that measure progress towards achieving RGS targets and objectives. Each indicator includes a description of what is being measured, why it is important and a discussion of trends. Criteria for selection of indicators included: relevance, data availability, accuracy, cost, and effort. While many indicators use data that is available annually, some rely on Census data that is only available every five years. Changes in year-to-year performance do not always equate to a long-term trend. It may take several years of data collection to reliably identify a trend.

This report is based on data available for the 2023 reporting year (January–December 2023). In this reporting year, 13 of the 19 indicators were updated with new data. Of the six indicators not updated, four are reliant on Census data and the next Census will be conducted in 2026, one is based on the Origin Destination Household Travel Survey data that will be conducted again in 2027, and one is based on Climate Action work that will be completed in 2025.

This year, four indicators have seen changes to their performance meter (*see Appendix A, page 1*). Waste stream: solid waste disposal (2.2a) and vacancy rate by rental price quartiles (3.2c) have improved. The number of stormwater discharges with a high public health concern (2.1d) and average residential water consumption (2.2b) have worsened.

Additionally, for this report, indicator 3.1a, “Create Safe and Complete Communities,” was removed. This indicator was intended to track the percentage of the region living in complete communities as identified through Regional Context Statements. However, these statements did not contain sufficient quantitative information to develop a meaningful indicator. Refinements to indicators, including a measure of safe and complete communities, will be reevaluated within a future update to the RGS.

Please see Appendix A for the report and detailed information about the new data.

The report will be posted on the Capital Regional District’s (CRD) website. A copy of the report will be sent to municipal councils and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Director.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Annual indicator reporting addresses the Planning Community Need in the 2023-2026 CRD Corporate Plan. Initiative 8a-2 is to assess the need for an update to the Regional Growth Strategy. Annual monitoring contributes to this initiative by identifying progress being made toward RGS implementation and alerting the region to a need for change if progress is not being seen. Additionally, the indicators provide insight on progress on other Board priority areas such as transportation, housing and climate action.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

In addition to the RGS, indicators are updated as needed to align with a variety of guiding documents, including the Regional Transportation Plan, Parks and Trails Strategic Plan and the Regional Water Supply Strategic Plan.

This year, indicator 1.1a was revised to align more closely with BC Transit's 10-Year Vision. BC Transit has reduced its target for total trips made by transit from 15% to 12% by 2038. This has resulted in the adjustment of the overall target for combined active transportation and transit mode share from 45% to 42%. Additionally, indicator 2.2a was revised to align with the CRD's Solid Waste Management Plan. This Plan outlines a goal of surpassing the provincial per capita waste disposal target and aspiring to achieve a disposal rate of 125 kg/capita/year.

Intergovernmental Implications

The Development and Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC) reviewed the draft indicator report. Following receipt by the CRD Board, copies will be forwarded to municipal councils.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

Achieving RGS objectives requires collaborative partnerships between local, regional and provincial levels of government, each with specific jurisdictional authorities. The RGS indicators reveal how we are doing as a region rather than the performance of a specific CRD service. The region's growth management approach, policies and targets are to be reevaluated every five years to help the CRD Board in its consideration of the need to update the RGS. The upcoming five-year milestone is in 2026. Staff is currently undertaking studies that will inform the need for and scope of a potential RGS update in 2026.

There are several RGS policy areas where the indicators suggest a need to closely watch for progress.

1. From a growth management and transportation perspective, only 16% of growth occurs in areas meeting the mode share target of 42% for active transportation and transit in the past five years (1.1a). When looking at the supplemental map to indicator 1.1a, we can see that the areas with 25%-41% walk/bike/bus mode share are mostly adjacent to areas meeting or exceeding the target of 42%.

The two most efficient means to improve this indicator are to direct proportionally more development into areas already meeting the target and improving infrastructure and transit service in areas nearing the target (currently in the 25%-41% category). Significant and concerted investment in infrastructure and transit service is needed to increase walking, cycling and transit use in areas where the walk/bike/bus mode share is below 25%.

This indicator will be monitored for change as the result of the introduction of Bill 44 Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing and Bill 47 Transit-Oriented Areas. It is hoped these bills will lead to

more development in areas with high levels of active transportation and transit.

2. From a housing affordability perspective, the region is making steady progress to increase the supply of affordable housing, adding 2,711 units between 2020 and 2023 (3.2d), 490 of which were added between March 2022 to March 2023. Despite modest improvements over 2022, rental vacancy rates at all levels of the price spectrum indicate a market that is difficult for renters (3.2c). Low vacancy rates are compounded by average rent increases that have continued to outpace inflation (3.2b). The most efficient means to improve this indicator is to continue to deliver more affordable housing.
3. From an environment and infrastructure perspective, solid waste disposal (2.2a) has performed well compared to the provincial average. Nevertheless, recent years' data has shown that the region was unable to meet the provincial 2020 target. In 2023 the CRD Board approved significant Hartland Landfill policy changes including banning of wood waste along with other construction and demolition materials, and adjustment of the tipping fee schedule. These changes were implemented 2024 and are anticipated to reduce our per capita waste disposal numbers.

Service Delivery Implications

The legislation stipulates that all related services undertaken by a regional district after the Board has adopted a regional growth strategy must be consistent with its RGS. Any adjustments to service levels in support of achieving RGS objectives can be considered through the CRD's established service planning and budgetary processes. Based on current data, no items require adjustment.

CONCLUSION

The RGS Indicators Report monitors the region's annual progress towards the targets outlined in the RGS. For this reporting year, 13 of the 19 indicators were updated with new data. The RGS Indicator Report will be posted on the CRD website and forwarded to municipal councils.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no recommendation. This report is for information only.

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: 2024 RGS Indicators Report