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## REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024

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**SUBJECT**     Regional Growth Strategy Indicators Report

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

To receive the 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 20 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 indicators 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 2022 reporting year (January 2022 – December 2022). In this reporting year, 18 of the 20 indicators were updated with new data. 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*

This year, two indicators were revised to better align with the Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032. Total Regional Park land acquired (2.1a), was revised to include all park land acquisitions rather than exclusively focusing on the Sea-to-Sea Green/Blue Belt which was largely completed by land acquisitions during 2000-2010. Percentage of the Regional Trail Network

completed (2.1b) was updated to track the completion of the three regional trails (Galloping Goose, Lochside and E&N) rather than the network identified in the 2012-2021 Regional Parks strategic plan which is superseded by the 2022-2032 plan.

#### *Environmental & Climate Action*

In 2022, the CRD's annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions totalled approximately 1.86 million tonnes. This represents a 7% decline from the 2007 base year GHG emissions, and a 1% increase from 2020. Building and transportation related carbon pollution continue to be the largest sources of the region's carbon pollution at approximately 75%. On a per capita basis there has been a decline of 25% between 2007 and 2022. This speaks to the efforts by the CRD, local, provincial and federal governments to reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions. However, the current trend suggests that we will not meet the target by 2038 unless greater effort is made.

#### *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 show 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 five-year milestone is 2026. Staff will report on the timing and implications of the work required to consider an update to the RGS in Q1 2024.

Managing and Balancing Growth, Housing and Community, Environment and Infrastructure, Economic Development, and Transportation are RGS policy areas where the indicators suggest a need to closely watch for progress against RGS objectives.

1. From a growth management and transportation perspective, only 15% of growth occurs in areas meeting the mode share target of 45% 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%-44% walk/bike/bus mode share are mostly adjacent to areas meeting or exceeding the target of 45%.

The two most efficient means to improve this indicator are to direct development into areas already meeting the target and improving infrastructure and transit service in areas currently in the 25%-44% category. Significant and concerted investment in infrastructure and transit service would be needed to increase walking, cycling and transit use in areas where the walk/bike/bus mode share is below 24%.

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 3,796 units between 2016 and 2022 (3.2d), 483 of which were added between March 2021 to March 2022. However, low 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).

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 will be implemented in 2024 and are anticipated to reduce waste by up to 40,500 tonnes/year, having a positive impact on decreasing our per capita waste disposal numbers.
4. From an economic development perspective, there has been a shift with the sub-regional jobs to population ratios (5.1a). Data from 2021 show a pattern of employment shifting from the core, which has historically maintained the highest job to population ratio to the West Shore which has had the lowest ratio. This trend may be influenced by the increased number of people working from home brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. From a transportation perspective, the overall active transportation and transit mode share (4.1a) has increased due to a sizeable increase in cycling trips and a steady increase in walking. The region's high level of success with walking and cycling suggest that these modes should be strongly considered when making land use and infrastructure decisions if the goal is to reduce dependency on personal vehicles.

#### *Service Delivery Implications*

The legislation stipulates that all 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 progress towards the targets outlined in the RGS and is updated annually. For this reporting year, 18 of the 20 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: 2023 RGS Indicators Report