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REPORT TO PLANNING AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2024

SUBJECT District of Saanich Regional Context Statement

ISSUE SUMMARY

To review the District of Saanich regional context statement (RCS) in relation to the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Bylaw (Bylaw No. 4017).

BACKGROUND

On March 14, 2018, the CRD Board adopted the RGS (Bylaw No. 4017). On April 14, 2021, the CRD Board amended the RGS with updated population projections (Bylaw No. 4328).

An RCS, adopted within a local government's Official Community Plan (OCP), relates OCP provisions to the RGS. Per section 446 of the *Local Government Act* (the *Act*), an OCP in a local government to which an RGS applies must include an accepted RCS. The *Act* stipulates that upon receipt of a proposed RCS, the CRD Board must respond by resolution within 120 days to the municipal council to indicate whether or not it accepts the RCS. The Board is deemed to have accepted the RCS if it does not respond within the 120-day period.

On April 11, 2018, the CRD Board approved a framework to guide the evaluation of regional context statements.

On December 12, 2023, the District of Saanich submitted an RCS for Board acceptance (see Appendix A). The RCS was prepared to reflect the content of a new 2023 District of Saanich OCP in relation to the 2018 RGS. The CRD Board has until April 10, 2024, to review and respond to the District of Saanich RCS. The CRD Board approved Saanich's previous RCS on March 11, 2020.

CRD Regional and Strategic Planning staff have evaluated the District of Saanich RCS in accordance with the Board-approved "Regional Context Statement Framework". This framework identifies three criteria against which staff should evaluate an RCS:

- 1) **All relevant content is included:** The RCS addresses all RGS content relevant to the OCP. Content that is not applicable in the context of the OCP should be identified as "not applicable".
- 2) **Clearly articulates relevant content:** The RCS provides a sufficient level of detail to convey how the specific OCP content relates to the RGS.
- 3) **Plan to be consistent over time:** The RCS identifies how the OCP will become consistent with the RGS over time if content is not immediately consistent.

Appendix B presents a summary of the evaluation.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Saanich regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Alternative 2

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Saanich regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and not be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Alternative 3

That the District of Saanich regional context statement report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Planning and Protective Services Committee direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Service Delivery Implications

Reviewing RCSs for consistency with the RGS is an ongoing standard procedure completed for all updated OCPs in accordance with section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

Intergovernmental Implications

Board acceptance of the RCS is a key RGS implementation tool as the context statement relates a local government's OCP to the RGS. The OCP provides policies that guide decisions related to land use, infrastructure, mobility, housing, parks, and other content under the authority of a local government. The District of Saanich has submitted a proposed RCS to fulfill its statutory obligation to have an accepted RCS that demonstrates the relationship of its new OCP to the RGS. An accepted RCS is necessary for Saanich to adopt its new OCP.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The District of Saanich's proposed RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS that will work toward achieving the RGS vision and objectives, based on CRD staff's analysis against the RCS evaluation criteria. The RCS fully captures all relevant OCP content (*criteria #1*) and identifies how the OCP relates to the RGS (*criteria #2*). The RCS does not identify the need for any OCP areas to become consistent with the RGS over time (*criteria #3*).

As outlined in Appendix B, the RCS addresses population projections and RGS objectives for growth management, environment and infrastructure, housing and community, transportation, economic development, food systems and climate action. The District of Saanich will direct the majority of future growth into the Uptown Core, urban centres of McKenzie and Quadra, Shelbourne, Royal Oak and Burnside and Tillicum, and growth corridors along McKenzie Avenue, Quadra Street, and Shelbourne Street. These areas are aligned with the RGS growth management plan described in RGS Maps 3a and 3b. OCP policies on the Urban Containment Policy Area are aligned with the RGS and is consistent with the RGS objectives to keep urban settlement compact.

Environmental & Climate Implications

The CRD Climate Action Strategy identifies sustainable land use, planning, and preparedness as an important goal area to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. RGS implementation, including the approval of RCSs that will help reduce community-based GHG emissions, is a key action. As shown in Appendix B, the District of Saanich RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS by prioritizing compact development, supporting climate adaptive agriculture, protection of rural lands and natural areas, adopting energy efficiency for building performance and municipal infrastructure, transportation policies that support transit and active transportation options, adopting policies focused on reducing carbon emissions by 2030 and eliminating emissions by 2050, increasing renewable energy use, and integrating climate action and adaptation into local government decision-making.

CONCLUSION

Provincial legislation requires that a municipal OCP contain an accepted RCS. Board acceptance of the RCS is a key tool for RGS implementation. Staff have reviewed the District of Saanich’s proposed RCS in accordance with the Board-approved evaluation framework. The District of Saanich’s RCS demonstrates a strong relationship to the RGS and will work toward achieving RGS vision and objectives.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning and Protective Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:

That the District of Saanich regional context statement be considered in relation to the 2018 Regional Growth Strategy (Bylaw No. 4017) and be accepted in accordance with the requirements of section 448 of the *Local Government Act*.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Saanich Regional Context Statement Referral
- Appendix B: Regional Context Statement Evaluation