



REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NORTH OKANAGAN
REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY
"One Region, One Future"

Regional Growth Strategy Phase I Summary Report



8/5/2009

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The Regional Growth Strategy Phase I Summary Report

Executive Summary

The objective of the Regional Growth Strategy Phase I Summary Report is to summarize the major milestones, accomplishments, deliverables and outcomes of the first phase of the project.

It is the intent of the document to summarize the participation activities and outcomes, as it relates to growth management in the North Okanagan with an overall goal to assist the RDNO in planning for the future. The document is a summary of the key issues raised during the process to date, and sets the framework for the development of growth issues policy recommendations and alternative growth scenarios in the region during the next phases of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) process.

The input on the Regional Growth Strategy, obtained through the public participation process, focused on the eight (8) growth issues:

- Economic Development
- Environment and Natural Lands
- Urban Containment
- Governance and Service Delivery
- Water Stewardship
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Agriculture and Food Systems
- Affordable Housing

Within the regional growth issues, general themes and concerns were identified during the public participation activities, which have been summarize in this report..

Another product of the participation process has been the development of a regional vision statement. The purpose of the Regional Vision Statement is to answer the question “where do we want to be by 2031?” In the context of this project the vision states the possible and desirable future growth in the North Okanagan. The new vision statement developed through the Elected Officials’ Forum is:

“The Regional District of North Okanagan is a unique region that will continue to be recognized for its diverse natural habitats, robust economies, outstanding recreational opportunities and the high quality of urban and rural lifestyles provided in established communities. As such, the Regional Board will strive to conserve and enhance the very reasons that make the North Okanagan so attractive by ensuring:

- ***Growth is managed to reflect our social, environmental and economic values;***
- ***The Region’s natural constraints to growth are water availability, agricultural lands, and environmentally-sensitive areas;***
- ***Rural and urban lifestyle choices are maintained through designated growth areas and urban boundary management;***

- ***Agricultural lands are protected and a sustainable regional food system is supported and encouraged;***
- ***A strong, sustainable, and diverse economy that reflects our values and the identities of our communities;***
- ***Our natural systems, including air, land and water, are respected and protected; and***
- ***Inclusive, accountable and effective governance based upon a foundation of regional cooperation***

The Regional Growth Strategy Phase I Summary Report is only the starting point for further discussion and has been designed to assist the Regional District of North Okanagan in the development of growth issues goals, objectives, strategies and policies. The key challenge for the RGS will be to validate the vision and to clarify the underlying principles and objectives of the vision and issues.

The input from the Elected Officials' Forum and comments received from the Open Houses and growth issues comment forms revealed some common recommendations and potential policy directions for the eight growth issues. The following is a brief summary of agreement on broad strategic direction between elected officials and the commenting public:

Economic Development

Recommendations from the public and elected officials have focused on very similar issues:

1. The need for regional cooperation on economic development;
2. The need (or lack of) for an increased industrial land base; and
3. Local and regional economic diversity, with a jurisdiction-specific focus.

Environment and Natural Lands

Elected officials and the commenting public have identified a series of common recommendations:

1. The preservation of urban and rural natural lands using a series of techniques and tools;
2. The increase in urban green space and the trail network; and
3. Polluting land uses and watershed protection will need to be addressed.

Urban Containment

Elected officials and the commenting public agreed on several urban containment directions:

1. Urban containment boundary management was necessary, using a variety of tools;
2. Development should be focused on existing communities; and
3. Smart Growth principles should be considered when making land use decisions.

Water Stewardship

Elected officials and the commenting public agreed on several water stewardship policy directions:

1. Coordination and collaboration of various levels of government on water stewardship issues, including addressing data gaps;
2. Watershed and water resource protection initiatives;

3. Developing policy and implementing techniques that will increase water conservation within a semi-arid environment; and
4. The need for a uniform and transparent regional water quality management and reporting system.

Transportation and Infrastructure

Elected officials and the commenting public have generally agreed on several policy directions:

1. The regional transportation network requires appropriate investment, inclusion of various modes of transportation and cooperative relationships with various levels of government;
2. Land use planning and transportation decision-making should be integrated; and
3. Appropriate infrastructure should be in place prior to development.

Governance and Service Delivery

Elected Officials and the commenting public agreed on several policy directions, including:

1. Focus on regional service provision and delivery – appropriate, efficient, effective and cooperative; and
2. Regional and municipal coordination and cooperation will be necessary when developing regional/sub-regional services.

Agriculture and Food Systems

Elected Officials' Forum outcomes and input received from the commenting public highlight several agricultural policy directions:

1. Preservation of the Agricultural Land Reserve will be key to maintain the agricultural sector;
2. Collaboration and coordination by various levels of government on developing supportive local agricultural policies, incentives and infrastructure funding opportunities;
3. The development of a viable, sustainable and profitable agricultural sector will require diversification, value added production and local distribution; and
4. Greater involvement by citizens in the regional food system.

Affordable Housing

Elected officials and the commenting public focused on numerous methods to achieve a diverse housing mix within the region.

1. The challenge moving forward will be determining the appropriate tools and policies that reflect the needs and realities of the North Okanagan.

These participation outcomes from Phase I of the Regional Growth Strategy process may be considered by the Regional Board, Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee and the Working Groups during the development and evaluation of growth issues policy recommendations.

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1.0 Introduction

The Regional District of North Okanagan initiated the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) process in 2007 and is currently in transition between Phase I and Phase II of the Project. The RGS will involve the cooperation and coordination of the Region's six (6) member municipalities, which include the City of Vernon, District of Coldstream, Village of Lumby, City of Enderby, City of Armstrong, and Township of Spallumcheen, and the five (5) Electoral Areas (B, C, D, E and F) and two First Nations (Okanagan Indian Band and Splatstin Nation). Phase I key milestones attempt to answer the question "Where are we going?" and begin to ask the question "where do we want to be?" Public and elected official input will be essential throughout the process and when considering the strategic direction of the Working Groups when developing growth issue policy recommendations. This summary report provides an overview of the Phase I key milestones and a growth issues policy direction recommendations based upon the public and elected official input received to date.

2.0 Legislation

Provincial and local government concerns, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, about continued population growth impacts within the Okanagan Basin, Vancouver Island, and the Lower Mainland resulted in the re-establishment of the regional district planning function. The enactment of the *Growth Strategies Act* in 1995 and its incorporation into the *Municipal Act* provided the authority for regional districts to undertake growth management strategies. Three new inter-related planning tools were made available to address regional growth issues in an integrated way, including:

- Regional Growth Strategy is a regional vision that commits affected municipalities and regional districts to a course of action to meet common social, economic and environmental objectives. It is initiated and adopted by a regional district and referred to all affected local governments for acceptance.
- Regional Context Statement forms a portion of a municipality's official community plan (OCP) that sets out the relationship between the regional growth strategy and the municipality's plan. This statement is prepared by the municipality and referred to the regional district for acceptance.
- Implementation Agreement is a partnership agreement between a regional district and other levels of government, their agencies or other bodies which spells out the details of how certain aspects of a regional growth strategy would be implemented.

The *Growth Strategies Amendment Act*, now Part 25 of the *Local Government Act*, responded to rapid growth by providing a framework for interactive planning. It established a system that relies on a cooperative process, rather than a formal hierarchy of plans. It made it possible for municipalities and regional districts to prepare a regional growth strategy as equal partners, and for local governments and the provincial government to tackle the real regional issues related to changes in population. The required elements of a Regional Growth Strategy are:

- Minimum 20-year period;
- Comprehensive statement of the future of the region that includes social, economic, and environmental objectives;
- Population and employment projections;
- List of actions to meet projected needs;
- Other matters which cross boundaries, not managed by one jurisdiction;
- Provide opportunities for early and ongoing consultation; and
- Methodology of investigation.

3.0 The Regional Growth Strategy Process

The Regional Growth Strategy process is based strongly on the principle of reaching political consensus, between the Regional District of North Okanagan (RDNO) and its member municipalities, electoral areas, on priorities and directions for the future. The process began on the basis of work already done by the RDNO and its member municipalities.

The Regional Growth Strategy process has been developed using a three phase approach. Phase I of the process has concluded and Phase II has begun.

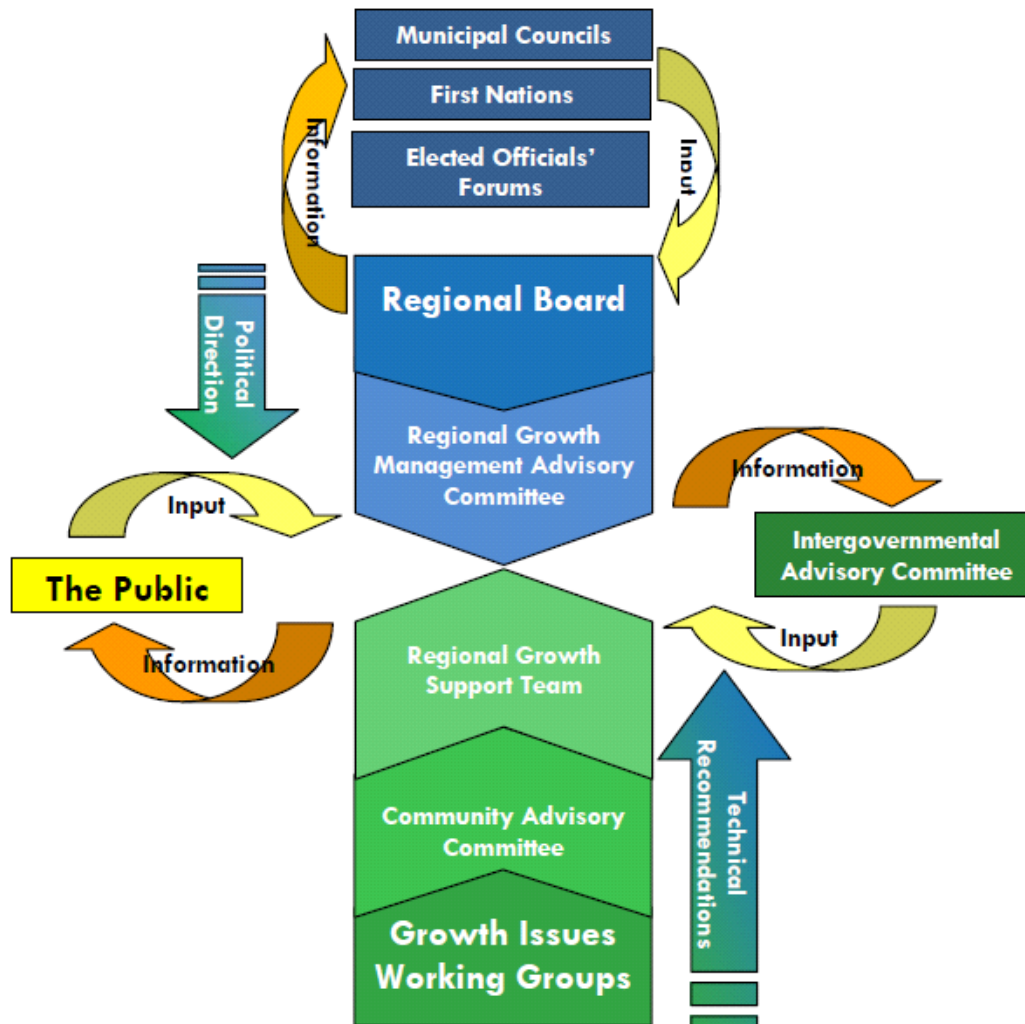
Phase	Tasks	Expected Timing
I: Building a Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Terms of Reference • Development of a Participation Plan • Projections for population and employment for 20 year period • Growth scenario base case • Explore the growth issues 	January 2007 – April 2009
II: Planning, Analysis, Evaluation and Trade-offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop growth issues goals, objectives, strategies and indicators • Develop alternative growth scenarios and policy alternatives • Evaluation of growth scenarios and policy alternatives • Choose a growth scenario 	May 2009 – June 2010
III: RGS Final Draft Preparation and Bylaw Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of Draft Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw • Negotiation of agreement between all affected local governments • Acceptance of RGS Bylaw by affected local governments • Adoption of Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw • Implementation and Monitoring 	July 2010 – August 2011

It is through this next phase of the project that development of specific goals, objectives and strategies for the eight key growth issues will occur. The adopted growth issues policy recommendations will form the basis of the alternative growth scenarios that may inform the development of the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw.

The Regional Growth Strategy organization and process have been designed to be transparent, inclusive and iterative. The Regional Board formed the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee to oversee the development of the Regional Growth Strategy and provide recommendation to the Board on strategic direction, goals, objectives, strategies and indicators to be included and preferred scenarios.

Under the direction of the Steering Committee a number of committees and working groups have been established to provide accountability, transparency, expertise and public input into the process of developing the RGS. See Figure 1 for the organizational overview of the RGS structure.

Figure 1: Regional Growth Strategy Organizational Structure



To ensure accountability and transparency, a comprehensive public participation plan was developed and implemented, with public input reported to the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee for consideration when developing recommendations to the Regional Board and providing strategic direction to the Working Groups. Consultation and expertise for the RGS was developed through an Inter-governmental Advisory Committee (IAC) which was created with representation from a variety of ministries and agencies from all levels of government, member municipalities and local First Nations. The eight Growth Issues Working Groups provide the technical expertise in the development of growth issues goals, objectives strategies, policies and indicators recommendations. A Community Advisory Committee, made up of Working Group

Chairs, will review and provide feedback on Working Group recommendations using social, economic and environmental criteria. These Working Groups and the Community Advisory Committee consist of community members, local and provincial government representatives, community organizations and First Nations who are involved with or have expertise in related fields. Finally, a Regional Growth Strategy Support Team consisting of planner from local and regional governments and First Nations was formed to provide expert advice on the growth issues recommendations and other Regional Growth Strategy matters.

4.0 Phase I Key Milestones

4.1 Vision Statement

The Elected Officials' Forum, held on April 16th at the Prestige Hotel and Conference Centre, used a visioning exercise that resulted in small roundtable vision statement drafting, based upon elected official group consensus. Each group consisted of elected official from numerous jurisdictions and these groups were encouraged to think regionally when developing these vision statements. A vision statement was drafted that captured the direction and essence of the original elected official suggestions

The resulting vision statement provides an overall snapshot of the visioning input that the forum generated. The adopted vision statement reflected the collective input from our elected officials on the desired future of the North Okanagan. The Regional Board adopted the Vision Statement on June 17th, 2009.

“The Regional District of North Okanagan is a unique region that will continue to be recognized for its diverse natural habitats, robust economies, outstanding recreational opportunities and the high quality of urban and rural lifestyles provided in established communities. As such, the Regional Board will strive to conserve and enhance the very reasons that make the North Okanagan so attractive by ensuring:

- ***Growth is managed to reflect our social, environmental and economic values;***
- ***The Region's natural constraints to growth are water availability, agricultural lands, and environmentally-sensitive areas;***
- ***Rural and urban lifestyle choices are maintained through designated growth areas and urban boundary management;***
- ***Agricultural lands are protected and a sustainable regional food system is supported and encouraged;***
- ***A strong, sustainable, and diverse economy that reflects our values and the identities of our communities;***
- ***Our natural systems, including air, land and water, are respected and protected; and***
- ***Inclusive, accountable and effective governance based upon a foundation of regional cooperation.”***

4.2 Terms of Reference

The Regional Growth Strategy Terms of Reference provide a strategic framework and structure for developing the Regional Growth Strategy, including the regional vision statement, guiding principles, objectives and organization. The Regional Board at a key strategy session, held on January 8th and 9th, 2009, determined that reconfirmation of the Regional Growth Strategy Terms of References by newly elected member municipal councils was considered a priority before concluding Phase I of the Regional Growth Strategy process.

All municipal councils within the North Okanagan have reconfirmed and supported the Terms of Reference:

Municipality	Presented to:	Presentation Date	Outcome
City of Vernon	Council	January 12, 2009	Council Resolution – January 26, 2009
District of Coldstream	Committee	February 2, 2009	Council Resolution – March 9, 2009
City of Armstrong	Committee	February 23, 2009	Council Resolution – February 23, 2009
City of Enderby	Council	March 2, 2009	Council Resolution – March 2, 2009
Village of Lumby	Council	March 2, 2009	Council Resolution – March 16, 2009
Township of Spallumcheen	Committee of the Whole	March 16, 2009	Council Ratification – April 6, 2009
Electoral Area Advisory Committee	Committee	March 17, 2009	Resolution of Support – March 17, 2009

The Regional Growth Strategy Terms of Reference were adopted by the Regional Board on May 6th, 2009.

4.3 Work Plan

The Regional Growth Strategy Work Plan outlines the process, timeline and tasks required to generate the content that will become the Regional Growth Strategy. The Work Plan was adopted by the Regional Board on January 14th, 2009. Since the development of a Regional Growth Strategy is a long-term project, the Work Plan will be revised at key milestones within the process. The Work Plan was updated on July 2nd, 2009 to reflect an accelerated timetable.

4.4 Participation Plan

The draft Participation Plan was endorsed by the Board on November 5th, 2008 and referred to all municipalities, the Ministry of Community Development, and First Nations for comment. A participation plan is a required component of the RGS, under the *Local Government Act*. The goal of this Participation Plan is to ensure broad and comprehensive public participation within the

process throughout the three phases of the project, with emphasis on engagement and input at key stages within the RGS process. Two components of the Participation Plan, the Youth Engagement Strategy and Seniors' Engagement Strategy, have been implemented. Three series of public open houses were scheduled, one series during each phase of the project. In addition, several public surveys will be undertaken to provide additional opportunities for public comment through the process.

The Participation Plan was endorsed by the Regional Board on November 5th, 2008 and has an updated Plan adopted on June 17th, 2009.

4.5 Literature Review

The Planning Literature Review is a summary of the past and current planning work that has been undertaken in the North Okanagan, with a focus on the eight growth issues (economic development, affordable housing, environmental effects of growth, water stewardship, urban containment, transportation and infrastructure, and governance and service delivery and agriculture and food systems). It is intended for use as a background report or discussion paper to generate discussion on the key growth issues affecting the Regional Growth Strategy.

The growth challenges, future vision, and policy direction of the North Okanagan are reflected in the current and past policies, initiatives, and plans of local government in the North Okanagan. The Regional Growth Strategy will be informed by the initiatives and commitments that have been developed in the past and will address gaps in growth management policy. The Literature Review provides a summary of policy initiatives and action that will have been developed over the last 35 years, with emphasis on current strengths, weakness, and policies gaps and will be used as a reference by the Growth Issues Working Groups and Regional Growth Strategy Committees when developing and evaluating growth issues recommendations.

4.6 Intergovernmental Advisory Committee

The formation of an Intergovernmental Advisory Committee is a legislative requirement, under Part 25, Section 867 of the *Local Government Act*, of the Regional Growth Strategy process. There will be Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (IAC) meetings throughout the RGS process. The role of the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee is to advise the Regional District on the development and implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy, and to facilitate coordination of Provincial and local government actions, policies and programs as they relate to the development and implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy. It is essential to maintain this contact with all levels of government participating in the regional growth strategy process, and to obtain updates from agencies on their own plans and processes.

Intergovernmental Advisory Committee meetings were held on March 26th, 2008, June 25th, 2008 and January 28th, 2009. The next meeting will be in late September 2009.

4.7 Growth Issues Working Groups

The Working Groups will identify and prioritize issues, propose strategies throughout the process. These groups will also be responsible for identifying informational needs and gathering the

information required supporting their efforts. They will also be responsible for regular reporting through the chain, to the Community Advisory Committee.

As specified within the Regional Growth Strategy Terms of Reference and the draft Participation Plan, the Growth Issues Working Groups will be the major technical groups responsible for developing recommendations for goals, objectives, and strategies for each growth issue area, which include economic development, governance and service delivery, affordable housing, environment and natural lands, transportation and infrastructure, agriculture and food systems, urban containment and water stewardship.

The draft Terms of Reference for the Growth issues Working Groups was endorsed by the Regional Board on November 5th, 2008. The Growth Issues Working Groups' membership was endorsed by the Regional Board on June 17, 2009 and the Orientation Session was held on July 20th, 2009 to provide an overview of the responsibilities and purpose of the Working Groups, distribute Working Group information packages and participate in a facilitated exercise to solicit preliminary objectives, goals, strategies and policies recommendations. A Working Group schedule has been completed, with the first meetings taking place in September 2009.

4.8 Population, Employment and Housing Projections

The Population, Employment and Housing Projections Report: 2008-2031 is currently under review and the finalized document is anticipated in the near future. This Report is a key component that has provided population, employment, and housing projections that cover the period between 2008 and 2031. The North Okanagan is a diverse and complex area, with six (6) member municipalities, five (5) Electoral Areas and two (2) First Nations that exhibit different rates of growth, economic influences, and demographic profiles. As a result, each of these 11 areas will exhibit a distinct population, employment, and housing projection, with influencing factors that are inter-related at the local, regional, and provincial levels. Each municipality and electoral area has its own Official Community Plan (OCP) which informs the projections.

These projections will assist the Growth Issues Working Groups, Community Advisory Committee, Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee, Regional Growth Strategy Support Team, Intergovernmental Advisory Committee, Regional Board and the public during the identification, development and evaluation of growth issues recommendations by providing an overview of what the North Okanagan will look like and the challenges that the region will face in the future.

4.9 Base Case Model

The preliminary draft of the CommunityVis Base Case has been completed and is under review. The Regional Growth Strategy *CommunityVis* Base Case scenario incorporates information and data layers, including the results of population, housing, and employment projections, development constraints, Official Community Plans, and growth issue-related layers.

The CommunityVis Base Case model is based on modular sub-models broken down by jurisdiction and special planning areas, such as Comprehensive Development Zones. The approach taken allows for the application of area-specific growth rates and various land use assumptions which will be helpful in modifying model settings and in creating other alternative growth and land use

scenarios. The CommunityVis Base Case Model will form the basis for the development of alternative growth scenarios based upon the policy options that are developed throughout the Regional Growth Strategy process.

5.0 Public Participation Activities

5.1 Communication Activities

The Regional District of North Okanagan utilized a broad range of marketing and outreach methods to spread the word about the Regional Growth Strategy and to get the community involved. North Okanagan residents, business owners, community groups and organizations enjoyed a wealth of opportunities to learn about and participate in Phase I of the Regional Growth Strategy process.

A specially designed, easily recognizable signature was included in all publications and display materials in circulation. The Regional District also facilitated awareness through a Regional Growth Strategy website (www.rdno.ca), numerous newspaper articles, and speaking invitations throughout the region and at meetings held with various community groups.

Public displays were set up throughout the last 6 months of Phase I at the Enderby, Lumby, Armstrong and Vernon public libraries to provide information about the latest participation events and methods of comment. The website contained an extensive amount of information, including a Regional Growth Strategy overview and opportunities for involvement.

Some methods of input were facilitated by the click of a mouse. An open comment form, a general growth issues comment site, and the Phase One growth issues survey focused on the growth issues considered most important for the Regional Growth Strategy were on the Regional Growth Strategy webpage.

Print and radio media helped keep members of the community apprised on the process of upcoming events and of past results.

5.2 Elected Officials' Forum

The Regional District of North Okanagan hosted the first Regional Growth Strategy Elected Official's Forum on the evening of April 16th at the Prestige Hotel and Conference Centre to begin to answer the question 'Where do we want to be by 2031?'. Answering that question was the focus of the discussions and facilitated exercises.

The purpose the first Elected Officials Forum was to provide an opportunity for elected officials and First Nations to define the direction of the Regional Growth Strategy process, discuss growth issues objectives and goals, and share ideas about the Regional Growth Strategy Vision of the future.

The 41 participants in attendance were elected officials (26) and senior staff (15) from the City of Armstrong, District of Coldstream, City of Enderby, Village of Lumby, City of Vernon, Township of Spallumcheen and Electoral Areas 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E' and 'F'. First Nations were invited to the Elected

Officials Forum and were not in attendance at the event.

The first exercise concentrated on refining the 2007 Terms of Reference Vision statement to reflect current regional priorities, values and expectations for the future. Four groups of elected officials, supported by senior staff, discussed changes to the vision statement and, through group consensus, put forward several suggestions for new vision statement statements. The revised draft vision statement that is included in this report is a synthesis of all visioning exercise elected official input.

The growth issues that were explored during the second and third exercises were economic development, agriculture and food systems, water stewardship, environmental impacts of growth, transportation and infrastructure, affordable housing, governance and service delivery and urban containment. Broad strategic objectives and goals for each were agreed upon by group consensus during the second exercise and additional goals were suggested through an individual exercise at the end of the forum.

5.3 Open Houses

The Regional Growth Strategy held three (3) open houses to gain input into the growth issues prior to the first meetings of the growth issues working groups. The first was held on June 22, 2009 in Vernon at the Recreation Complex, the second was held on June 23, 2009 in Enderby at the Drill Hall and the third was held on June 25, 2009 in Lumby at the White Valley Community Centre. A total of 106 participants attended these sessions, with 36 in Vernon, 66 in Enderby and 4 in Lumby.

There were a total of 106 attendees that participated in the three Regional Growth Strategy open houses. Although the 'twitter-lite' post-it note comment exercise was anonymous, casual observation by Regional District staff indicates that this method of comment was popular with attendees. Over the course of the three open houses, there were 129 growth issues comments posted on the display boards. **Table 1** provides a summary of the number of comments received per growth issue at each open house..

Table 1: Growth Issues Display Board Comments Comparison

	Total	Vernon	Enderby	Lumby
Total Attendees	129	36	66	4
Economic Development	14	10	3	1
Environment	22	11	11	0
Water Stewardship	27	7	19	1
Urban Containment	10	6	4	0
Agriculture and Food Systems	19	7	12	0
Governance and Service Delivery	6	5	1	0
Transportation and Infrastructure	18	10	8	0
Affordable Housing	13	10	2	1
Total Comments	129	66	60	3

Governance and service delivery received the fewest comments at each event, with environment and natural areas, agriculture and food systems and water stewardship received the most comments overall, although the Enderby open house influenced the final percentages due to the focus on issues surrounding a single proposed local development and not broad regional growth issues

5.4 Growth Issues Comment Form

Growth issue comments forms were available at the three open houses for participants to provide a comprehensive set of comments about the eight growth issues. The comment forms were also available to the residents of the North Okanagan from June 26th to August 1st, 2009 on the Regional Growth Strategy website, the Regional District Aberdeen Office, at displays at the Lumby, Armstrong, Enderby and Vernon public libraries and each North Okanagan municipal hall. To create awareness for the open houses and to advertise the availability of the growth issues comment forms, a press release was issued on May 25th, 2009 and several articles about the event were in local papers and on radio media. Black and white advertisements were placed in the Friday, June 12th, Sunday, June 14th and Wednesday, June 17th, 2009 editions of the Vernon Morning Star, the Friday, June 19th, 2009 edition of the Lumby Valley Times and the Tuesday, June 16th edition of the North Valley Echo. As a pilot project, 4,200 open house advertisements were mailed to residences in Electoral Areas 'B', 'C' and 'F', with instruction on how to use and access the comment form after the open houses.

Twenty-two (22) Growth Issues Comment Forms were filled out by open house attendees and, to date, zero (0) Growth Issues Comment Forms were received from citizens that did not attend the open house sessions. A total of 257 comments were summarized in growth issues categories: Economic Development (25), Environment and Natural Lands (34), Water Stewardship (38), Agriculture and Food Systems (43), Transportation and Infrastructure (43), Governance and Service Delivery (21), Urban Containment (28), Affordable Housing (20) and Additional Comments (5). Comments that were inappropriate have been omitted from this report to ensure that the input presented addresses the Regional Growth Strategy process and the growth issues under examination.

5.5 Working Groups Orientation Session

The Growth Issues Working Groups' Orientation Session was held between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. on July 20, 2009 at the Vernon Recreation Complex Auditorium. Thirty-five Working Group members attended the event and were tasked with developing, through discussion and consensus, a preliminary policy recommendation for each working group. The policy recommendations provided within this report should not be considered within the Regional Growth Strategy but are the result of a facilitated exercise designed to begin working group discussion and cooperation.

The Working Groups' Orientation Session provided an initial opportunity for the members of each group to become acquainted and to begin the discussion regarding the development of goals, objectives, strategies and policies recommendations to the RGS Support Team, Community Advisory Committee, Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee and Regional Board. Low attendance was attributed to the fire situation throughout the Okanagan and working group participant prior commitments.

The attendees were provided with an overview of the Regional Growth Strategy process, how and where the working groups are within the process and the roles and responsibilities of the working group participants. A working group schedule and pre-meeting workbook were provided to each participant and a facilitated 'pre-meeting', executed with the assistance of facilitator Rod Drennan. Each working group was tasked with developing a preliminary recommendation through consensus. The following recommendations were reported to the plenary.

The Water Stewardship Working Group focused on water management and watershed protection. The Agriculture and Food Systems Working Group determined that public involvement in the North Okanagan food system was essential to success. The Affordable Housing Working Group looked at regional cooperation to create diverse housing needs. Transportation and Infrastructure Working Group examined transportation benchmarks. The Economic Development Working Group suggested the needs of the region should be evaluated using the projected population, housing and employment forecasts. The Environment and Natural Lands requested more information before proceeding with the discussion.

The Growth Issues Working Groups' Orientation Session was a 'pre-meeting' and the facilitated exercise was designed to provide an opportunity for the participants to begin to discuss the growth issues. The above recommendations should not be considered for inclusion in the Regional Growth Strategy but as the result of the initial working group discussion, but could be refined, agreed to and included as it progresses.

6.0 The Growth Issues

The information in this document was primarily derived from the results of the public participation activities that were undertaken during Phase I of the Regional Growth Strategy process. The results from the Elected Officials' Forum, held on April 16th 2009, the three Open Houses, held on June 22nd, 23rd and 25th, 2009 and the Growth Issues Comment Forms, which concluded on August 1st, 2009 were analyzed according to the eight growth issues, which are:

1. Economic Development
2. Environment and Natural Lands
3. Urban Containment
4. Governance and Service Delivery
5. Agriculture and Food Systems
6. Transportation and Infrastructure
7. Urban Containment
8. Affordable Housing

The Regional Growth Strategy will focus on creating a "made in the North Okanagan" plan for sustainable growth management that recognizes our unique nature, citizens and resources.

6.1 Limitations

As with any research effort, certain limitations are inherent with the methodology of investigation and assumptions made. Some of these limitations do not preclude the veracity or value of the observations made, nor the conclusions drawn. Others are more serious. To the degree that the

more serious limitations can be controlled they have been. For others, it is important that the reader be made aware of them and subsequently be afforded the opportunity to draw his or her own conclusions as to their relative importance. Some of the more significant limitations incurred in the preparation of this document include the following:

1. The public analysis and strategy recommendations are premised on circumstances as they existed when the meetings were conducted and the information was collected. There is an inherent assumption that certain matters or issues will remain relatively unchanged and any strategy is premised on this assumption.
2. It was not within the mandate of this effort to deal with specific items at this time as only the broad aspects have been addressed. Despite being presented in a distinct manner, however, recommendations with respect to developing the Regional Growth Strategy should not be viewed separately from other efforts. In fact, they should be premised on established goals and objectives and serve to build on and complement existing efforts.
3. While public consultation is an excellent means to gather information, there is an a priori assumption that the public has full information and fully understands the subject being discussed.

6.2 Economic Development

Major Issue: Regional coordination and cooperation on economic development.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The economic development discussions focused on two primary topics, the need to cooperate on identifying and serving industrial lands and establishing a regional perspective on economic development initiatives. There was support for economic diversity across the Region based upon recognizing both regional opportunities and economic strengths of the communities.

Open House Display Board Comment

The three Open Houses provided insight into jurisdictional difference. The comments from the Vernon Open House focused upon regional cooperation on economic development, support for (2) and against (2) increasing industrial land supply and diversifying the economy of the region – including green industry, local business support and mixed use zoning. The Enderby Open House comments focused on local business development and economic self-sufficiency. The Lumby Open House had a poor turnout, with a single recommendation that focused on tourism development.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

Economic development recommendations focus on regional cooperation on economic development initiatives, diversification of businesses and industries and increasing industrial lands/industries within the North Okanagan.

Summary

Recommendations from the public and elected officials have focused on very similar issues:

1. The need for regional cooperation on economic development;
2. The need (or lack of) for an increased industrial land base; and
3. Local and regional economic diversity, with a jurisdiction-specific focus.

6.3 Environment and Natural Lands

Issue: Protection and preservation of natural lands, green space and watersheds.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The break-out group discussed polluting land uses and watershed protection. The preservation of rural and urban open spaces through smart growth principles and urban containment policies was arrived at through group consensus, with an emphasis on looking after the needs of future generations. The support of establishing and maintaining 'complete communities' that integrated green space and park lands into neighbourhood design was debated. The consensus was that open spaces are as important as schools, public facilities and events in recognizing and supporting neighbourhood identity and diversity.

The breakout group decided, as one of the outcomes of the Regional Growth Strategy process, that the possibility of a Regional Parks Plan that built upon the values of, and complimentary to, the LRMP should be explored. As well, the breakout group discussed and agreed that the North Okanagan should strive to be carbon neutral at the regional, community and corporate levels.

Open House Display Board Comment

At the Vernon Open House, the preservation of natural lands, wetlands, environmentally sensitive ecosystems and urban greenspace was considered the highest priority. Greening the urban areas and increasing the number of trails were also considered important. At the Enderby Open House, polluting land uses, Shuswap riparian area erosion and natural lands preservation were the greatest concerns.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The policy recommendations that were received focused on preservation of natural lands, environmentally sensitive lands and wildlife corridors. As well, many comments recommended the expansion and connection of the green space network and trail system.

Summary

Elected officials and the commenting public have identified a series of common recommendations:

1. The preservation of urban and rural natural lands using a series of techniques and tools;
2. The increase in urban green space and the trail network; and

3. Polluting land uses and watershed protection will need to be addressed.

6.4 Urban Containment

Issue: Residential sprawl into rural areas, inefficient land use, and urban boundary management.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The breakout group unanimously supported the establishment of urban containment boundaries and green buffers around urban growth areas, although the group did not know which tools to use to accomplish this. Regionally appropriate policies and strategies that could be used to achieve urban containment will need to be explored further by the working groups. Some suggestions for additional urban containment strategies were increase densities in established urban areas, confining development to designated areas and developing financial tools to support (re)development in identified key areas. The protection of rural lifestyle opportunities through urban containment policies was stressed during this discussion.

Open House Display Board Comment

At the Vernon Open House, most of the comments could be grouped into three themes, reduce urban sprawl, consider urban containment measures, including boundary management and concentrate on higher density, mixed use nodal development. Comments from the Enderby Open House also concentrated on reducing sprawling development, including tourism development, urban containment measures, including eliminating annexations and having a single regional governing body that would make sustainable land use decisions. No comments were received from the Lumby Open House.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The recommendations received are based upon urban, nodal, mixed-use development that focuses on complete communities and smart growth principles. Several recommendations mentioned that development should be restricted to existing urban communities through urban boundary management.

Summary

Elected officials and the commenting public agreed on several urban containment directions:

1. Urban containment boundary management was necessary, using a variety of tools;
2. Development should be focused on existing communities; and
3. Smart Growth principles should be considered when making land use decisions.

6.5 Water Stewardship

Issue: Protection of water resources in a semi-arid environment.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The group discussions focused on the need for collaboration between all levels of government on water stewardship issues, with an emphasis on source protection and establishing public confidence in our water supplies. The basis of these discussions was the acknowledgement of the numerous challenges when planning for sustainable water management across both the Okanagan and Shuswap Basins, especially with the number of government agencies that have responsibilities with regard to water issues. The common themes that resulted from these discussions were the need for uniformity, both within water quality management and the method of determining allocation (i.e. supply and demand across both basins) of water resources between different users. The constraints of water availability within a semi-arid environment and the lack of knowledge about water resources were concerns that were raised, discussed and identified as gaps that must be addressed in any growth management plan.

Open House Display Board Comment

The comments received at the Vernon Open House can be expressed as three main themes: watershed and groundwater protection, regional water service delivery coordination and water conservation and availability. The Enderby Open House comments focused on several other issues, including too many overlapping jurisdictions (and the need for provincial, regional and local cooperation) regarding water stewardship and management, watershed and river bank protection the need for transparent water supply monitoring and the elimination of polluting land uses. The Lumby Open House had a single suggestion: Lakefronts should not be developed so public access is maintained and water pollution is lessened.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The recommendations received from the commenting public could be expressed as three themes: low water landscaping and technologies should be mandatory in all new developments, water pricing and metering should be used to ensure water supply is maintained and watershed protection is a priority.

Summary

Elected officials and the commenting public agreed on several water stewardship policy directions:

1. Coordination and collaboration of various levels of government on water stewardship issues, including addressing data gaps;
2. Watershed and water resource protection initiatives;
3. Developing policy and implementing techniques that will increase water conservation within a semi-arid environment; and
4. The need for a uniform and transparent regional water quality management and reporting system.

6.6 Transportation and Infrastructure

Issue: Regional transportation network requires alternatives, infrastructure investment and cooperative relationships.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

Two broad trends were discussed in the breakout session. The group stressed the need for an integrated and collaborative approach to inter- and intra- regional transportation planning and coordination of infrastructure planning at all levels of government. The suggested broad regional approach to transportation and infrastructure was based upon maximizing efficiency and supporting economic development.

The second theme that the group explored was integrating transportation decision-making into land use planning, with an emphasis on development that encourages alternative modes of transportation (cycling, walking and transit).

Open House Display Board Comment

Vernon Open House comments focused on increasing transit viability, convenience and accessibility and rail infrastructure investment. The Enderby Open House comments were along three main themes: reduction of car traffic along highway corridors, improved regional transportation network based upon rail, transit and alternative transportation options and the development of appropriate transportation infrastructure before development occurs.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The recommendations received from the commenting public exhibited several key themes, including the need for greater incentives, investment and infrastructure to expand alternative transportation options (cycling, transit, car-pooling, walking, etc.), invest in rail and highway infrastructure, and increase urban densities to facilitate the viability of alternative transportation options.

Summary

Elected officials and the commenting public have generally agreed on several policy directions:

1. The regional transportation network requires appropriate investment, inclusion of various modes of transportation and cooperative relationships with various levels of government;
2. Land use planning and transportation decision-making should be integrated; and
3. Appropriate infrastructure should be in place prior to development.

6.7 Governance and Service Delivery

Issue: Delivering efficient, effective and necessary regional services.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The breakout group decided that service delivery would be the focus of the discussion. Group consensus was there was no point in addressing governance models until core services had been identified at the regional level. There was also consensus that jurisdictions must work collaboratively and cooperatively on basic service delivery needs, such as water provision, liquid and solid waste, transportation, energy, air quality, and agriculture and food security. The group acknowledged that there has been insufficient effort and commitment in the past on this subject.

The breakout group also discussed the reality that different jurisdictions have different core service needs, such as transportation. The diversity of needs across jurisdictions needs to be considered in any decision about basic/core servicing.

Open House Display Board Comment

Few comments were received regarding governance and service delivery. The Vernon Open House input focused upon appropriate, effective, efficient and cooperative service delivery. The only comment received at the Enderby Open House involved efficient service delivery while reducing the local and regional tax burden. Comments were not received at the Lumby Open House.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The growth issues comment form recommendations can be summarized as three primary themes: regional and municipal coordination and collaboration, develop and maintain an efficient and appropriate local and regional governance system and efficient, appropriate and effective services should be the focus of regional governance.

Summary

Elected Officials and the commenting public agreed on several policy directions, including:

1. Focus on regional service provision and delivery – appropriate, efficient, effective and cooperative; and
2. Regional and municipal coordination and cooperation will be necessary when developing regional/sub-regional services.

6.8 Agriculture and Food Systems

Issue: Developing a sustainable, profitable and resilient agricultural sector.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The breakout group, throughout their discussions, focused on three main themes. The protection of agricultural lands from development, urban encroachment or non-farm uses was unanimously supported. The promotion, support and enhancement of the growth of the North Okanagan's agricultural sector were discussed at length, with group agreement on diversifying agricultural production while encouraging value-added agricultural industries. The group brainstormed barriers to realizing a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector. The primary concerns were infrastructure challenges, such as closure of transportation linkages such as CP railways, and senior government regulatory barriers. To resolve these identified challenges, an agriculture goal was agreed upon that stressed collaboration will all levels of government on agricultural and infrastructure policies and projects that supported the North Okanagan agricultural sector.

Open House Display Board Comment

The comments received at the Vernon Open House fell into three main themes, including Agricultural Land Reserve preservation, development of a viable and profitable local agricultural sector that included production, processing, distribution and local consumption and provincial support and cooperation on developing policies and incentives that are supportive of local agriculture. The main themes that arose from the Enderby Open House were greater citizen involvement in agricultural lands decision-making, greater protection of the Agricultural Land Reserve and the development of a viable local food system. Comments were not received at the Lumby Open House.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The recommendations received from the commenting public can be portrayed as three primary themes: encourage and support local food production, processing and consumption (agricultural, urban garden, farmer's markets, etc.), coordinate and collaborate with various levels of government to develop favorable agricultural policy and local production incentives and protect the Agricultural Land Reserve from non-agricultural development.

Summary

Elected Officials' Forum outcomes and input received from the commenting public highlight several agricultural policy directions:

1. Preservation of the Agricultural Land Reserve will be key to maintain the agricultural sector;
2. Collaboration and coordination by various levels of government on developing supportive local agricultural policies, incentives and infrastructure funding opportunities;
3. The development of a viable, sustainable and profitable agricultural sector will require diversification, value added production and local distribution; and

4. Greater involvement by citizens in the regional food system.

6.9 Affordable Housing

Issue: Low diversity of housing options that respond to various needs and income levels.

Elected Officials' Forum Comments

The need to address affordable housing through the Regional Growth Strategy was emphasized during the breakout group discussions. The focus of the brainstorming session was on policies and strategies that could be used to achieve affordable housing goals. Some of the suggestions that the group endorsed through consensus were: changing the DCCs per unit to per sq. ft., rezoning potential infill sites to smaller property sizes, provide tax incentives to revitalize downtown neighbourhoods, support the establishment of secondary suites and coach houses, and explore ways that local government could develop lands to improve affordable housing options for the community. The idea of government ownership of affordable housing developments, such as practiced in Germany and England, or through land trusts was discussed.

The other focus of the discussion was acknowledging that affordable housing options were intertwined with transportation, land use planning and economic development. Goals, objectives and strategies that provide diverse employment opportunities, transit options, safe neighbourhoods, green space and neighbourhood amenities that establish 'complete communities' were considered vital to the success of affordable housing policies.

Open House Display Board Comment

The comments received at the Vernon Open House were based upon various methods of increasing housing diversity, including mixed use developments, rent-to-own programs, municipally-managed developments, mobile home development, subsidized housing, co-operative housing, special needs housing, rental suites and reducing DCCs on affordable housing development. The two Enderby Open House comments reflected the need for affordable housing policy and the effect incompatible land uses can have on property values. The single comment received at the Lumby Open House was the acknowledgement that affordable housing options were needed for people moving into a community.

Growth Issues Comment Form Comments

The recommendations that were suggested were based upon a variety of methods of increasing the diversity of housing choices (regional planning, zoning, non-government organization partnerships, rental suite legalization, developer enticements, etc.)

Summary

Elected officials and the commenting public focused on numerous methods to achieve a diverse housing mix within the region.

1. The challenge moving forward will be determining the appropriate tools and policies that reflect the needs and realities of the North Okanagan.

7.0 Summary

The objective of the Phase I Summary Report is to provide a brief overview of the key milestones and provide a general summation of growth issues input received to date and outline some suggestions about growth issues broad strategic direction based upon elected official and public input agreement. The document reflects a summary of information and feedback from the public and elected officials on the eight growth issues that are most important for the entire region when considering growth management in the North Okanagan. The development of a general strategic direction that can guide the Growth Issues Working Groups when developing recommendations is an integral component of a large and complex process, with numerous relationships between each. A crucial step during the next phase of the Regional Growth Strategy will be how to address the growth issues and a focused political direction will be essential for success.

8.0 Next Steps

During Phase II of the Regional Growth Strategy, Working Groups will develop recommendations for objectives, goals, strategies, policies and indicators that may be used in the development of the Regional Growth Strategy. The results of Phase I will assist the Working Groups, the Regional Board and the various committees devoted to the project.

The Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Inter-governmental Advisory Committee, Regional Growth Strategy Support Team and Working Groups, will be extensively reviewing the broad direction outlined in the this document. The outcomes of Phase I will assist decision-makers by providing advice on policy options, identifying common strategy direction, and evaluating Working Group recommendations. The overall Regional Growth Strategy process has been designed to adapt to feedback with input from the public, elected officials, First Nations and the numerous advisory committees.

The next step will be to use the compiled participation input and information to guide the development of clear goals and policy recommendations. Developing clear goals and objectives should support the vision statement as an overarching policy directive. The process of designing performance indicators and measurements for monitoring how well the RGS is implemented and the objectives are met will also begin during the next phase.

The next phase of the RGS will also work towards examining alternate growth scenarios and strategy options for the North Okanagan. The process will use the growth issues public input derived during the first phase, while following the spirit of the overall vision statement in addressing the development of policy recommendations.

The ultimate goal of the Regional Growth Strategy will be to plan for sustainable growth management and provide policies and agreements that aim to protect, preserve and enhance the region's unique character, communities, environment and resources.