



**REGIONAL DISTRICT
of
NORTH OKANAGAN**

REPORT

File No.: 3045.06

TO: Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee
FROM: Anthony Kittel, Regional Growth Strategy Coordinator
DATE: March 11, 2010
**SUBJECT: Regional Growth Strategy Goals, Strategies and Actions
Recommendations: Water Stewardship, Agriculture and Food
Systems and Economic Development**

RECOMMENDATION:

That it be recommended to the Board of Directors that the Regional Growth Strategy Goals, Strategies and Actions recommended by the Water Stewardship, Agriculture and Food Systems and Economic Development Growth Issues Working Groups and contained in the report dated March 11, 2010 from the Regional Growth Strategy Coordinator, be included within the draft Regional Growth Strategy;

And further, that the Regional Growth Strategy Goals, Strategies and Actions recommendations be referred to member municipalities, First Nations and adjacent Regional Districts to provide comment prior to May 30, 2010.

PURPOSE:

This report includes the Regional Growth Strategy policy recommendations that have been developed by the Water Stewardship, Agriculture and Food Systems, and Economic Development Growth Issues Working Groups and refined by the Community Advisory Committee and Regional Growth Strategy Support Team. It outlines the policy options, arrived at by consensus that may be included within the North Okanagan Regional Growth Strategy. Additional Working Group recommendations will be presented in a separate report further in the process.

DISCUSSION:

The selection of growth issues goals, strategies and actions will provide the framework upon which the Regional Growth Strategy will be constructed. The Working Groups, Community Advisory Committee and Regional Growth Strategy Support Team have endeavored to develop policy recommendations that take into consideration public input and respond to the direction of the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee and Board of Directors, as provided within the Regional Growth Strategy Terms of Reference, Vision Statement, Guiding Principles, and Elected Officials Forum and meeting minutes. The goals, strategies and actions that are presented within this report have been developed by, and agreed to through consensus, the Working Groups. The contribution of the membership's technical knowledge, dedication, passion and time to this process has resulted in productive discussion that resulted in a comprehensive series of recommendations.

The recommendations that are contained within this report are intended for consideration by the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee for inclusion within the Regional Growth Strategy. All recommendations that have been endorsed by the Board of Directors should be forwarded to member municipalities, First Nations and adjacent regional districts for comment and/or endorsement. As well, the recommendations should be referred to the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee for technical review and Provincial comment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

WATER STEWARDSHIP

Water is one of the most precious and important natural assets in the North Okanagan Basin. Even though the North Okanagan is endowed with several large lakes, community watersheds and groundwater resources, the supply of clean, reliable water is inherently limited by the semi-arid climate. Water shortages have already occurred in some areas of the North Okanagan, and are expected to occur more widely and frequently in the future. Balancing the often competing water requirements of the environment, basic human needs, irrigation, tourism, recreation and industry has become increasingly difficult as more people live, work, and play in the North Okanagan.

GOAL WS-1: Groundwater Protection

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy WS-1.1: Require a more extensive duration for groundwater testing that captures seasonal variability of water flow to ensure that new residential developments do not compromise the ability of an aquifer to supply water to existing residents.

Strategy WS-1.2: Recommend to the provincial government and OBWB develop a regional groundwater quality and quantity monitoring program and undertake enhanced aquifer and groundwater limited areas mapping to be used in planning and approval decisions.

Strategy WS-1.3: Consider the Groundwater Bylaw Toolkit Guidelines suggestions, as they apply to local governments, during the review of Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaws.

Strategy WS-1.4: Develop minimum lot size policies that are contingent upon local conditions, reflecting the precautionary principle, so that land use decisions, in the face of incomplete information or uncertainty, must ensure that the cumulative effects of development do not compromise the sustainability of the community.

GOAL WS-2: Water Quality and Quantity: Protection and Conservation

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy WS-2.1: Encourage the provincial government and Interior Health Authority to review water quality standards, guidelines and reporting mechanisms to ensure the protection of water quality throughout the North Okanagan.

Strategy WS-2.2: Develop North Okanagan Water Management Plans and Drought Management Plans with a consideration of the variability of surface and ground water supplies. The harmonization of local Drought Management Plans should be considered.

Strategy WS-2.3: Enact water conservation measures for new developments, including bylaws that limit environmental impact, reduce water use per occupant and promote integrated storm/water management to manage surface water, drainage and groundwater to protect the supply and quality of water resources.

Strategy WS-2.4: Develop a Regional Water Conservation Strategy that focuses on water conservation initiatives, public education and demand management.

Strategy WS-2.5: Encourage the provincial government and OBWB to develop a consistent North Okanagan Supply and Demand Water Model/Strategy for the Shuswap and Okanagan watersheds.

Strategy WS-2.6: Encourage the provincial and federal government to conduct an issues assessment on the impacts of motorized watercraft on North Okanagan waterways on water quality, with a focus on the identification of solutions, options and opportunities at the local, regional, provincial and federal levels.

Strategy WS-2.7: Encourage the provincial government to develop a stream flow gauge network to produce and collect data for use in tracking instream flows and identifying baseline flow data for all watersheds within the North Okanagan, with the recognition that stream flow monitoring is critically important to support water monitoring programs for people, fish, and farms.

Strategy WS-2.8: Encourage the provincial government to reconsider the regulations governing reclaimed water use in residential developments, with guidance from other jurisdictions that have legislated grey, reclaimed and/or reused water.

GOAL WS-3: The True Cost of Water

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy WS-3.1: Develop a regionally consistent, transparent, equitable and understandable full-cost accounting policy for water and infrastructure for new developments.

Strategy WS-3.2: The regional standardization of approaches when determining cost of development, replacement and maintenance of water and sewer infrastructure when considering the feasibility of development proposals, with an emphasis on full cost accounting and a developer-pays principals.

Strategy WS-3.3: Discourage private water and wastewater utilities within the North Okanagan, with the acknowledgement that while a private solution may appear to be a convenient and expedient means of providing water distribution and wastewater treatment for development outside of utility service areas, these solutions should be seen only as temporary. The ultimate cost of providing public service should be considered as a part of the decision for allowing such systems.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Agricultural land preservation and the development of a robust, diverse, profitable and resilient agricultural sector was identified by the Board of Directors and municipal councils as a key growth issue early in the process. The commitment to the North Okanagan agricultural heritage is reflected in the adopted Vision, which states that “Agricultural lands are protected and a sustainable regional food system is supported and encouraged.” The following goals, strategies and actions reflect the direction given through the Regional Growth Strategy vision statement, guiding principles, elected officials’ forum outcomes and public input that has been received to date.

GOAL AG-1: Water is managed sustainably so that the all reasonable needs, including agricultural water users, are met in a balanced manner

Ensuring a sustainable and safe water supply for residential, agricultural and ecological purposes is one of the most critical issues currently facing the North Okanagan. Projections for growth will place a greater demand on the existing water supply. Meeting that demand should not be achieved by relying on increasing the amount of water that is taken from surface and groundwater supplies. There should also be concerted efforts at conservation and re-use. Water availability is essential to agricultural production within the North Okanagan, although water resources are limited throughout the region.

The Regional District and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy AG-1.1: Through collaboration with the provincial government and OBWB, explore the establishment of an Agricultural Water Reserve as a component of a North Okanagan Water Supply and Demand Strategy, that provides the appropriate amount of water to agricultural lands in drought years without compromising stream health or ecological function.

Strategy AG-1.2: Develop a tiered water metering system to ensure the efficient use of agricultural water allocations.

Strategy AG-1.3: Collaborate and cooperate with the provincial government, and OBWB in the development of policies and methods for efficient water use, including best management practices, responsive local bylaws and agricultural water conservation initiatives.

Strategy AG-1.4: Collaborate with the relevant parties on the feasibility of maintaining the Agricultural Water Reserve (AWR) allotment, with any efficiencies in agricultural water conservation reallocated to the AWR.

Strategy AG-1.5: Explore opportunities to optimize the use of reclaimed water for agricultural use as a component of drought management.

Strategy AG-1.6: Collaborate with relevant parties, where agricultural water is supplied by a utility, to ensure that agricultural operations that make efficient use of water resources are maintained through the provision of an assured, adequate and affordable water supply, in so far as not to compromise other agricultural and water stewardship goals, strategies and actions.

Strategy AG-1.7: Ensure that new residential developments will not compromise the water requirements of agricultural operations.

Strategy AG-1.8: Based upon **Goal WS-3**, explore opportunities for expanding reclaimed agriculture water infrastructure outside of existing serviced areas.

GOAL AG-2: Maintain, expand and diversify the North Okanagan agricultural land base to encourage a variety of agricultural opportunities

Agriculture is significant feature of the North Okanagan economy, landscape and identity. Agriculture and the North Okanagan food system are susceptible to pressure from growth and urban development. Competition for land and water creates a significant impact on farmers. Outside the ALR there is significant pressure to convert remaining farmland to residential areas. Within the ALR, issues of lot size, access to water and incompatible uses at the edges need to be addressed.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy AG-2.1: Through Official Community Plans, restrict the removal or subdivision of ALR lands.

Strategy AG-2.2: Working with the relevant agencies, remove barriers and create incentives that facilitate the inclusion of current agricultural lands into the Agricultural Land Reserve.

Strategy AG-2.3: Encourage new developments and non-agricultural uses to minimize the loss of productive agricultural lands on ALR lands.

GOAL AG-3: Increase agricultural economic activity in the North Okanagan.

Agriculture is an important economic activity within the North Okanagan, although the challenges to the agricultural sector over the last few decades have impacted the vitality of many agricultural producers. Greater international competition, the increased value of agricultural land, the loss of local processing capacity and barriers to younger farmers entering the sector has impacted the sustainability of agricultural economic viability.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy AG-3.1: Create an inventory of existing and potential agri-industrial operations, infrastructure and lands.

Strategy AG-3.2: Collaborate with the Agricultural Land Commission and key stakeholders to explore the options available to support the recruitment of seasonal farm labour, including a uniform standard for on-site farm labour supportive housing on (ALC) and off of (local government) ALR lands.

Strategy AG-3.3: Encourage an ongoing dialogue with the provincial government, farming interests and other stakeholders to assist in the identification and creation of new agricultural economic opportunities, including local added-value production, processing, distribution and marketing.

Strategy AG-3.4: Support initiatives that will provide opportunities for new, young and/or experienced farmers within the North Okanagan, as was encourage the development of agricultural skills.

Strategy AG-3.5: Develop an Agricultural Economic Development Plan that builds on the strengths or the Region, including agri-tourism opportunities, shop local programs and initiatives that raise the profile of agriculture throughout the Region and the Province.

ACTION AG-3.5.1: Establish a Regional Agricultural Support Officer to assist in the implementation of the North Okanagan Food System Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy.

GOAL AG-4: Encourage the development of a healthy, accessible and resilient regional food system.

Developing a sustainable regional food system requires a comprehensive (whole community) approach to meeting the needs of people living in the North Okanagan. A sustainable North Okanagan food system is envisioned as integrating economic, social and environmental needs, while being resilient in the face of change.

The food system is a complex, interconnected assembly of activities which are influenced by the individual and collective actions of our citizens, by government policy and planning initiatives, economic forces and our natural environment. Given the complexities of our regional food system, the significant number of issues to be addressed, and the numerous possibilities for next steps, it must be emphasized that the Regional Growth Strategy is meant to represent a strategic framework from which citizens, community groups, local government, the business community and the agricultural sector can work toward strengthening our regional food system and increasing its resiliency and viability.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy AG-4.1: Through ongoing dialogue, collaborate and cooperate with the provincial government, encourage the development of supportive policies that will enhance local, sustainable agriculture within the North Okanagan.

ACTION AG-4.1.1: Cooperate with the provincial government, the local agricultural sector and other stakeholders, to enhance public awareness of agricultural activities, the role of agriculture within the community and the North Okanagan local food system.

ACTION AG-4.1.2: Develop supportive policies that recognize the benefits of urban agriculture as a component of the local food system and complimentary to the agricultural industry in local food security.

ACTION AG-4.1.3: Consider acquiring and allocating public lands for community gardens and food production in urban areas.

ACTION AG-4.1.4: Encourage collaboration and cooperation with First Nation communities on food systems and agricultural issues.

ACTION AG-4.1.5: Endorse and adopt the North Okanagan Food Charter.

Strategy AG-4.2: Support and, within the authority of local government, promote environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.

ACTION AG-4.2.1: Continue to support the Sterile Insect Release Program.

ACTION AG-4.2.2: Work with the provincial government and industry stakeholders to address the need for local appropriate, affordable, safe and adequate agricultural animal carcass and (slaughter) by-products disposal options.

ACTION AG-4.2.3: Through the use of partnerships, education and support, encourage the creation of Environmental Farm Plans.

ACTION AG-4.2.4: Provide or facilitate household, institutional and farm/food waste composting facilities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Working together to create a strong economic environment that both attracts new businesses and retains existing ones is of critical importance. Internal competition between local governments or business associations will only weaken the region's collective attractiveness and economic

performance. The Regional Growth Strategy should provide a framework for regional economic development stakeholders to collaborate and cooperate on local and regional economic development, research and planning.

The recommendations focus on the development of a strategy that will provide for adequate employment opportunities and economic development activities which support the unique character of our communities. A strong economy is essential to maintaining the high quality of life enjoyed in the North Okanagan. Through improved policy and project coordination between levels of government and the private sector, it is expected that the Region will attract new business, maintain and improve its competitive advantages, and enhance its fiscal stability through economic diversification.

GOAL ED-1: Develop a REGIONAL economic development strategic plan that is:

Strategy ED-1.1: Supported by financial resources from all municipalities and adopted by municipal councils and the Regional District.

Strategy ED-1.2: Collaborative, cooperative, complimentary and coordinated while reflecting the values and strengths of each jurisdiction.

Strategy ED-1.3: Supports continued diversification of industry sectors in the North Okanagan.

Strategy ED-1.4: Provides positive incentives to attract investment and business development in the region.

Strategy ED-1.5: Supports the attraction of skilled labour/entrepreneurs and the attraction of younger people/families (i.e. age 25-45).

Strategy ED-1.6: Coordinate tourism initiatives, identify and address gaps and develop a collaborative and complimentary regional approach to marketing tourism.

Strategy ED-1.7: An integrated, regional approach to economic development.

Strategy ED-1.8: Economic development initiatives must promote North Okanagan lifestyle to attract businesses, entrepreneurs and labour.

Strategy ED-1.9: Raise the profile of small businesses throughout the Region.

GOAL ED-2: Establish cooperative regional servicing agreements between all communities that provide policies and resources for the development and expansion of commercial and industrial lands.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy ED-2.1: Develop a Regional Industrial Lands Strategy that identifies existing and potential industrial lands, as a component of a comprehensive Regional Economic Development Strategy.

Strategy ED-2.2: Establish supportive regional servicing arrangements and policies for the expansion of attractive industrial lands throughout the North Okanagan.

Strategy ED-2.3: Identify new significant industrial and commercial lands and opportunities that are serviced by transit and respect the Agricultural Land Reserve and environmentally sensitive lands.

GOAL ED-3: Develop economic development “nodes” so that businesses/work are located together and connected by regional transportation.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy ED-3.1: Collaborate and cooperate with all levels of government on the development and implement of supportive policies that encourage economic development hubs and nodes that respond to the needs of communities and reflect ‘Smart Growth’ principles.

Strategy ED-3.2: Through growth management policies, preserve the beauty of the North Okanagan by reducing sprawling development and adhering to ‘Smart Growth’ principles.

GOAL ED-4: Develop, expand and resource the transportation systems between communities/employment nodes.

The Regional District of North Okanagan and member municipalities agree to:

Strategy ED-4.1: Establish effective, efficient and appropriate public transit service and other transportation options to the major North Okanagan tourism, service, industrial and commercial nodes.

GOAL ED-5: Develop policies that support the creation of affordable/attainable housing in all communities in order to retain and attract a labour force that meets and expands economic opportunities.

PROPOSED TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR COMPLETION OF THE RGS:

Completion of the draft Regional Growth Strategy is a top priority for the Board, and staff has been directed, through the adopted Regional Growth Strategy Terms of Reference and the Work Plan to provide the Board of Directors a completed first draft of the Regional Growth Strategy by September 2010.

The *Local Government Act* sets out the requirements for adoption of a Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw. The process for the Board to do so entails first and second reading of the bylaw followed by a Public Hearing. After the Public Hearing, the Board must refer the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw to all “affected local governments”, a term defined in the *Local Government Act* which includes all member municipalities, First Nations and adjacent Regional Districts. The Regional Growth Strategy must also be referred to the provincial Minister of Community and Rural Development. Affected local governments have 120 days to consider acceptance of the bylaw. After the 120 day acceptance period has concluded, the Board may consider third reading and adoption of the bylaw.

This statutory process will require a minimum of six months to complete, translating into the initiation of the Bylaw process no later than January, 2011. Given the request for final Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw adoption in August 2011, the Draft Regional Growth Strategy should be presented to the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee in September 2010 and referred to member municipalities, First Nations and adjacent Regional Districts for comment.

To enable staff to make any final revisions and prepare the draft Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw, the member municipality, First Nations and adjacent Regional Districts’ comment period and public consultation activities must be concluded by December 15, 2010.

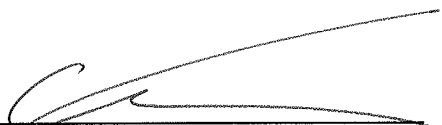
Feedback would be received by a number of means: formal Council submissions, feedback forms for the public, submissions from businesses and community groups, and other governments and First Nations. This process, which would usually take about six months, will have to be adapted to fit the time available.

SUMMARY:

The Regional Growth Strategy Goals, Strategies and Actions Recommendations: Agriculture and Food System, Water Stewardship and Economic Development are the product of many discussions within the Growth Issues Working Groups, Community Advisory Committee and Regional Growth Strategy Support Team. In addition, discussion and input at open houses, public forums such as the meetings held throughout the process, the Elected Officials Forum, held on April 16, 2009, municipal council presentations and survey responses have provided public and municipal feedback on the growth issues and policy options.

The completion of the Regional Growth Strategy is a top Board of Directors priority. It is recommended that the Regional Growth Management Advisory Committee consider the policy recommendations included within this report for inclusion within this report and recommend to the Board of Directors the inclusion of identified goals, strategies and actions within the draft Regional Growth Strategy and refer those policy options to member municipalities, First Nations, adjacent Regional Districts and the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee for general comment. Due to the accelerated timeline established by the Board of Directors on January 9, 2009, it is recommended that the closing date for comment be May 30, 2010.

Submitted by:



Anthony Kittel, Regional Growth Strategy Coordinator

Approved For Inclusion:



Greg Betts, Administrator

Endorsed by:



Rob Smalles, MCIP
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