



Compact, Complete Communities

"My small community be beautiful and in 10 years I can see miles onto lovely forests, farms and fields"
(Age 11, from the Youth Survey)

Why is this important

Higher density or mixed use development are needed to support regional sustainability goals. Increased density in our communities is necessary to support public transit, reduce the costs of utilities, infrastructure and roads, provide a diversity of housing, options and allows for travel by foot and bicycle. Focusing development within our communities also reduces development pressure on our rural areas, allowing us to preserve agricultural, resource and low density rural residential lands. By concentrating growth in areas that are already serviced by water and sewer services, municipalities can reduce costs while diversifying and growing their economy.



Some of the issues

- Compact development in existing developed areas protect important values located outside of our communities, including ecologically sensitive areas, drinking water sources, and farm and forest lands.
- The costs of sprawl include higher costs for public infrastructure, more vehicle miles traveled, less cost-efficient transit, and a variety of negative quality of life impacts.
- Sprawling development consumes agricultural lands, our hillsides, as well as environmentally sensitive areas.
- Sprawl forces an almost total reliance on the automobile when getting around our communities, increasing levels of obesity and associated health issues, as well as increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

% of Agricultural
Land Reserve
lost since 1974

6.3

How can the Regional Growth Strategy help protect our rural lands?

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) could include policy that protects our rural lands through the establishment of a Rural Protection Boundary. The RGS could recognize that municipalities will receive the majority of this growth within Growth Areas. Some of the areas that have been identified in Official Community Plans for future growth and may be included within the RGS.

The RGS may focus on the protection of our rural and agricultural lands from low, density, sprawling development by:

- directing development to existing communities and protecting rural lands by avoiding sprawl,
- promoting higher density infill and mixed use development,
- encouraging development to take place where adequate services and infrastructure exist,
- protecting agricultural lands and the regional food system;
- offering multi-modal transportation choices (walking, cycling, transit), and;
- coordinates planning between jurisdictions.





Agriculture and Food Systems

"More community gardens, less lawn and more food being grown, stores buying fresh produce from local farmers instead of importing them"
(Age 15, from the Youth Survey)

Why is this important

If you look at British Columbia, the North Okanagan has an abundance of agricultural lands. Only 5% of the province can be used for agriculture and the North Okanagan contains 39% of all ALR lands in the Okanagan. Although 9% of the Regional District is within the Agricultural Land Reserve, most of those lands are located in the valley bottoms where urban development pressure is greatest. Since 1974, we have lost over 6.3% of our ALR lands. The protection of our agricultural land base, our agricultural heritage and support for our farmers will be critical to the sustainability of the North Okanagan.



Some of the issues

- Agriculture provides economic benefits – in 2006, farm receipts were estimated to be worth over 100 million dollars and farms provided jobs for 4.6% of the labour force in the North Okanagan.
- Attracting young farmers has continued to be a challenge, with many of our producers preparing for retirement.
- Water is critical to food production in the North Okanagan — with population growth, climate change and the potential for drought, sustainable irrigation supplies and practices have become a pressing issue.
- The non-local food at your table is estimated to travel about 2,400 km, which raises a food sustainability issue. Since B.C. only produces 48% of the food we eat, we must rely on the rest of the world to feed us.

Average Age of
North Okanagan
Farmer

54.6

How can the Regional Growth Strategy help protect our local food sources?

Food security is important to the region's sustainability. Locally grown or raised agricultural products support our local food system, helps our farmers financially and reduce reliance on imported foods.

Securing access to local food sources requires the preservation of existing agricultural lands for farm use and supports the local farming community. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) could include strategies that assist in remove barriers to farming and promote local food.. The RGS could also support the use of lands outside of the Agricultural Land Reserve suitable for related uses such as food processing.

The RGS could assist in achieving a number of social, economic and environmental goals by providing more direction on how to protect farmland, remove obstacles to urban agriculture and support local food production. The RGS could give direction for the implementation of these strategies through official community plans and other appropriate tools



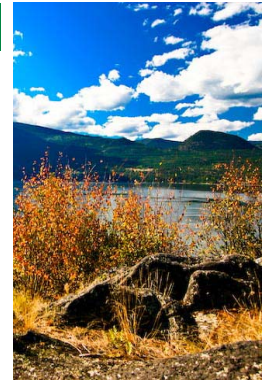


Environment and Natural Lands

"My favorite part of living here is that there is still a great amount of ecological diversity nearby and among us, though it is under threat" "
(Age 16, from the Youth Survey)

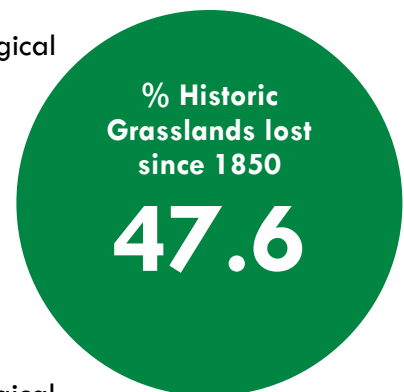
Why is this important

The North Okanagan is home to many diverse ecosystems, including wetlands, forests, lakes, rivers and grasslands. These ecosystems and the features they contain are valuable in their own right. They also provide important benefits. In addition to filtering pollutants, preventing erosion, and controlling crop pests and diseases, many natural areas provide habitat for diverse plant and animal species. The urban and rural environment makes possible our recreational activities, our tourism industry and our quality of life. Growth over the last 20 years has impacted some of our most vulnerable ecosystems, our hillsides and our views.



Some of the issues

- The Thompson-Okanagan supports 300 species of birds, 74 species of mammals, 11 reptiles and 9 amphibians species, 10-20,000 invertebrate species and numerous plants.
- The Okanagan is considered one of the most endangered ecological regions in Canada.
- Natural land impacts from development increase the risk of watershed, grassland and natural area loss.
- Wetland and riparian areas cover only 4% of the region - any loss of even small areas may dramatically affect our water supply and wildlife populations.
- Open space has a multitude of roles, including recreation, ecological integrity, ecosystem services, providing wildlife habitat and improving quality of life.



How can the Regional Growth Strategy help protect the environment?

The natural environment is one of the reasons that the North Okanagan is such a popular residential and recreational destination. Local and regional governments have tremendous opportunities for environmental stewardship. However, with multiple jurisdictions and strong growth, capitalizing on these opportunities can be challenging.

Although governments can protect the natural environment, there are many opportunities for residents to take part, including stewardship agreements, covenants, donation of land to conservation agencies and minimizing your personal impact on the land.

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) will explore opportunities and policies that would protect our environmental lands and sensitive areas. The establishment of Rural Protection Areas, that include agricultural and environmental lands, is one way of achieving RGS goals. There are many opportunities for local governments to protect the natural values that attract people here. The RGS will look at ways of collaborating on the best approaches.





Water Stewardship

"I would like more protection of our waters (lakes, streams and rivers)"
(Age 14, from the Youth Survey)

Why is this important

Water is one of the most precious and important natural assets in the North Okanagan. Even though we are endowed with several large lakes, community watersheds and groundwater resources, the supply of clean, reliable water is inherently limited. 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.



Some of the issues

- 86% of water used in the Okanagan is for outdoor purposes – 55% for agriculture, 24% for domestic outdoor, 5% for golf courses and 2% for parks and open spaces. 14% is used indoors – 7% in homes and 7% for commercial and institutional.
- The need to protect of our watersheds in the face of increasing population and development pressures.
- Our limited water supply is under pressure to meet community and environmental needs as we face uncertainty and climate change. Water movement doesn't respect jurisdictional boundaries.
- Most of our rural areas rely on groundwater, a resource we don't know much about.
- Water availability is the cornerstone of our economy—tourism, agriculture, industry rely on it.

% water used in
the Okanagan is
for outdoor use

86

How can the Regional Growth Strategy help protect our water resources?

Local residents, elected officials and Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) working groups expressed that their greatest concern about regional growth is the availability and quality of water. People have stated different reasons for their concerns about water -, some are concerned about drought and water shortages, others included climate change, agricultural viability, economics and increasing residential use.

The RGS is exploring a balance approach to water to achieve social, economic and environmental sustainability over the long term. The challenge is to balance the health and well being of people who benefit from the use of water for basic life needs, agriculture and economic activity with the needs of the environment.

The RGS will identify water management policies and actions. The discussions will provide the context for water management strategic direction and specific actions that need to be taken for effective implementation of sustainable regional water policy.





Housing

"Making things more affordable so in the future, we actually have a chance for a good life"

(Age 16, From the Youth Survey)

Why is this important

Housing is a critical community asset and an important local economic driver. Well-balanced communities provide housing opportunities for people in all stages of life, different family types, a range of financial situations, and those with special needs. A diversity of safe and secure housing opportunities can help a community retain working families and attract new businesses. The economic, social, and environmental impacts of housing development should enhance and complete the community.

Ultimately, the provision of varied housing choice creates and fosters communities that are vibrant, diverse, and sustainable.



Some of the issues

- In 2006, according to the last Census, 26% of North Okanagan households were spending over 30% of their income on housing.
- Although approximately 30% of North Okanagan residents are renters, the rental vacancy rate is less than 1%.
- It is important to the economic and social well being of our communities that a range of housing options are available.
- The more a family needs to spend on housing, the less there is available for food, education, recreation and transportation. .
- The lack of housing options can be a roadblock to business investment and growth, as well as attracting employees.
- Affordable, accessible and appropriate housing for the North Okanagan's growing population of seniors is a major issue for the region.

Housing demand
by 2031
(thousands)

11

How can the Regional Growth Strategy help with diversifying housing options?

North Okanagan communities are attempting to address the issues surrounding affordable housing. The challenge is to develop an Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) that provides direction on a coordinated approach to address the demand for affordable housing in the future.

The RGS recognizes the need to provide a range of housing options for different incomes, ages and family needs. Local and regional governments can play a role in setting the community planning and regulatory context for the development of diverse housing options and opportunities. The strategic actions of the RGS on housing are intended to work with other RGS policies to promote compact and sustainable communities. In addition to the cost of housing, developments should support the concept of "affordable living" and consider access to services, shops and workplaces, as well as features such as energy-efficiency and sustainability.





Economic Development

*"There are not many job options or post-secondary options."
 (Age 15, from the Youth Survey)*

Why is this important

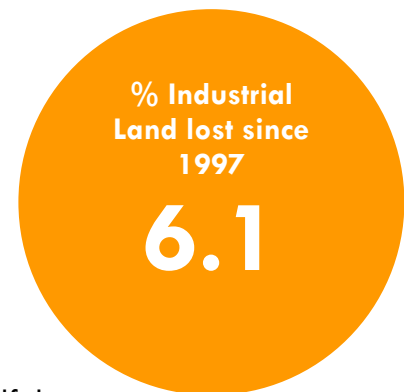
Sustainable economic development focuses commercial and industrial developments within existing communities' and existing economic lands to create more local services and employment possibilities for residents.

Where lands for commercial and industrial uses are maintained within central locations (nodes), businesses may collaborate with each other and minimize the need for additional costly infrastructure. Commercial growth within community centres also supports employment opportunities that are within walking distance or easily accessed by transit. A strong, vibrant and diverse economy will attract young families and add to community financial sustainability.



Some of the issues

- Economic development throughout the Okanagan is increasingly influenced by environmental conditions, particularly the availability of land, water, and energy.
- As the population grows, industrial and commercial land use will compete with residential land use.
- Each community has unique competitive strengths that can be built-upon.
- The lack of serviced industrial lands, due to a number of constraints, can be a barrier to attracting new industries to our communities.
- The North Okanagan labour force is expected to increase at half the rate of population growth due to an aging population.



How can the Regional Growth Strategy help support economic development?

In support of economic and social sustainability, a region should have employment opportunities close to where people live, not only to reduce commuting times for workers, but also to support economic development in our communities. At the same time, there should be a sufficient supply of land for industry and commerce with good regional transportation connections for workers, customers and businesses.

The Regional Growth Strategy will be emphasizing working together to create a strong economic environment that both attracts new businesses and retains existing ones. 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 collaboration and cooperation on local and regional economic development, research and planning. A strong economy is essential to maintaining the high quality of life we enjoy in the North Okanagan.





Transportation/Infrastructure

*"More bike lanes! Bike Racks! Make it easier to get around on foot or bike instead of driving. Also better transit."
(Age 22, from the Youth Survey)*

Why is this important

Transportation, sewer and water infrastructure involve costly investments. To make the most of them, our communities are encouraged to continue working to more effectively integrate transportation and infrastructure planning within our communities. This approach will advance sustainability and livability goals in a fiscally responsible way. Transportation infrastructure also has a strong physical impact on the overall structure and fabric of a community. Care must be taken to ensure that transportation infrastructure — including roads, rail, transit, and trails — enhance our communities. .



Some of the issues

- Our transportation options link our homes, our neighbours, our employment, our recreation, and our commercial activity.
- It is more expensive to lay sewer and water, and build roads over longer distances than shorter ones.
- Other forms of municipal infrastructure recover some of their costs, but roads are entirely paid through taxes.
- The majority of trips within the Region are by automobile (91.9%), while the number of trips by transit is 1.2%, walking is 5.2% and cycling is 1.7%.
- In the North Okanagan, transportation is the largest contributor to our greenhouse gas emissions.

Cost per km of a
new community
road (in millions)

1.3

How can the Regional Growth Strategy create sustainable transportation options?

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is looking at focusing development within our existing communities, reducing the cost of transportation, water and sewer infrastructure. As well, 'nodal' or compact development increased mobility for those who cannot drive or prefer not to drive. It is also important for the RGS to minimizing traffic congestion, by making other transportation choices other than the use of a car more viable. Higher average densities within our communities support more frequent transit service and better active transportation options. Residents who live near where they work, shop, or take part in other activities often can choose to use active transportation, transit and carpooling.

Land use patterns affect the costs of providing public infrastructure such as roads, water and sewer. Various studies show that these costs tend to increase with sprawl, and can be reduced with compact developments within existing communities. More accurate pricing that recovers the cost of infrastructure can result in significantly more efficient land use, providing overall benefits to residents.



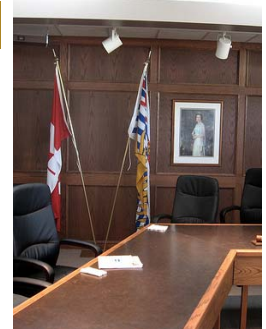


Governance and Service Delivery

"Getting a sports complex with indoor soccer, rinks and a wave pool like H2O"
"More money going toward important things like planting trees and clean water"
(Age 11, From the Youth Survey)

Why is this important

The Regional District was incorporated in 1965, when the total population was 27,500. As the Region has grown, now with over 78,000 residents, governance and service needs of municipalities and electoral areas has changed. Regional service strategies, developed by all jurisdictions working together through regional service partnerships, are becoming ever more necessary in these fiscally challenging times. The number and range of service issues that cross local boundaries has been growing. Regional cooperation and effective communication are essential for effective governance and delivery of services.



Some of the issues

- Regional District establishes and provides local, sub-regional and regional services in response to the expressed needs, desires and instructions of the municipalities and electoral areas.
- The cost of providing services increases with distance and decreases with density.
- The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for all of the Regional District's activities, including the provision of regional and sub-regional services.
- The Regional District is a federation between the six municipalities and five electoral areas; as a result they are voluntary and cooperative relationships.
- A regional district is a regional government which represents regional residents and communities and is the vehicle for advancing interests of a region as a whole.

of services the
Regional District
provides

72

How can the Regional Growth Strategy improve regional services?

The planning of regional district services is directly linked to land use planning. The more dispersed our settlement patterns, the more our services must be extended, the more expensive it is, and the greater impact it will have. Due to their potential impact and cost, extensions of these services must be carefully considered. Good land use planning must, therefore, be one of the drivers of service delivery. The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) provides a key opportunity to come together as a region and discuss our priorities and objectives for land use patterns, services and infrastructure.

The Regional Growth Strategy is looking at our governance and service delivery options, focusing on creative solutions and a culture of collaboration and cooperation. Improved communication between elected officials, staff and the public is vitally important in reducing misunderstanding and creating efficiencies. The Regional District is a partnership and effective service delivery requires policy guidance at the regional level. The RGS will provide strategic guidance on how we think about governance and service delivery over the next 20 years.





Energy and Emissions

"Stop global warming"
(Age 11, From the Youth Survey)

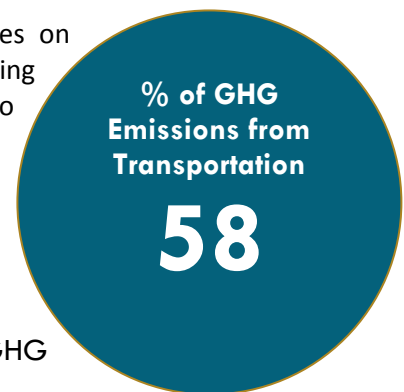
Why is this important

Our economy is dependent upon nonrenewable fossil fuels. This reliance poses serious challenges to our long term sustainability. Fossil fuels are becoming more limited in supply and their prices are becoming more volatile, leaving the economy vulnerable to price shocks. Burning of fossil fuels releases air pollutants which can have adverse health impacts. One aspect of building healthy communities is efficiently managing community energy use and carbon emissions. The Regional Growth Strategy will provide broad, strategic policies for reducing energy consumption and regional greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions.



Some of the issues

- The total estimated GHG emissions in the Regional District of North Okanagan in 2007 are estimated at 615,149 tonnes of CO₂. For a population of 78,877 residents, this is about 7.7 tonnes per person.
- In 2007, over \$224 million was spent by residents and businesses on energy in the North Okanagan. This is equivalent to spending approximately \$2,800 for every man, woman and child annually to pay for our energy.
- The North Okanagan relies on hydroelectric electric power and natural gas for electricity and heat. This lowers our GHG emissions but does not protect us from price shocks.
- Green building and energy efficient home renovations lower GHG emissions but also reduce our yearly energy bills.
- Walking and cycling only need human power, do not produce any GHGs and are free.



How can the Regional Growth Strategy reduce our energy use?

A driving factor behind the Regional Growth Strategy's inclusion of energy use and GHG emissions policies is recent provincial legislation requirements. Beginning in 2007, the Province of British Columbia has moved forward with a number of actions designed to encourage energy efficiency and reduce emissions of GHGs. The *Local Government (Green Communities) Statutes Amendment Act (Bill 27, 2008)* requires that the Regional Growth Strategy includes GHG targets and actions.

The Regional District hired Stantec Consulting to assist in developing GHG reduction policies and targets for inclusion in the RGS. The process was designed to bring key staff together from each member municipality and the Regional District to define regional policies and GHG reduction targets for each municipality and the region as a whole. Together, senior staff agreed on a set of GHG policies built on Regional Growth Strategy policy recommendations as well as Official Community Plans and GHG reduction targets for the Region.

