



## COUNCIL REPORT

To: Paul Gipps, CAO

Date: March 9, 2021

From: Chris Oliver, Senior Planner

File No: P 21-04

Subject: **P 21-04, Regional Growth Strategy Review, RDCO Referral**

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### RECOMMENDATION

**THAT** Council recommend the Regional District of the Central Okanagan not undertake a 5-year review of the Regional Growth Strategy.

### STRATEGIC AREA(S) OF FOCUS

**Strengthen Our Community** – to provide opportunities for the residents of West Kelowna to build connections, celebrate successes, embrace the community's strengths and diversity, address shared needs, and contribute to shaping the community's future.

### BACKGROUND

The RDCO has a statutory obligation under Section 452(2) and (3) of the *Local Government Act* (LGA) to consider, at least once every five years, whether the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) should be reviewed for possible amendment and to provide an opportunity for input into the need for review. This requirement provides an opportunity for the Regional District to periodically assess the RGS and gather feedback from stakeholders to determine if a review of the RGS is warranted.

Following RDCO's consultation plan, the City is expected to provide comments and express an opinion regarding a need for a review of the RGS. Input received through the consultation process will be provided to the Regional Board prior to deciding whether to undertake a 5-Year Review.

### DISCUSSION

#### RDCO Regional Growth Strategy

The RDCO initiated a review of the Growth Management Strategy (old bylaw) in 2010 and adopted RGS Bylaw No. 1336 on June 23, 2014. A RGS is a long-range planning tool governed by Part 13 of the LGA that assists local governments to plan a coordinated future for their communities while dealing with regional issues and decisions that cross local political boundaries. The RGS is also a collective vision from the regional partners

to create a region that promotes economic, environmentally and socially healthy growth over a 20-year time horizon.

### Implementation

Being accountable for progress towards achieving the goals of the RGS requires a commitment to implementation. Since the adoption of the RGS, the RDCO and regional partners have been striving to fulfil this commitment in several ways and have a history of successful coordination of regional services and action supporting RGS priorities in environmental, transportation, water stewardship, economic and other areas.

The RGS Priority Projects Plan, endorsed by the Regional Board on July 24, 2017, was developed as an action plan to outline priority initiatives intended to implement the RGS over five years between 2017 to 2021 (Attachment 1). The Plan contains projects regional in nature that propose to fulfil policies that remain outstanding or have the opportunity to be strengthened. As new opportunities or unexpected demands arise, the current priority project plan projects can be revised, resequenced, or replaced as needed. Each year, the Regional Board considers the recommended projects and approves resources on a case-by-case basis. The Regional Housing Needs Assessment and Regional Growth Strategy Monitoring Program completed in 2019 are examples of projects which resulted from the action plan.

### RGS Review and Update

Based on comments received, should the Regional Board decide to proceed with a 5-Year Review, the Priority Projects Plan identified that this would be completed at a high-level with input from affected agencies, member municipalities, First Nations, the public, and other stakeholders as listed in the LGA. The review process would include assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the growth strategy, performance, and re-evaluating solutions to persistent region-wide issues and responses undertaken (e.g. containment boundaries to address growth management).

### RGS Legislation / Lessons Learned from other Regional Districts

Some regional districts throughout the Province that have taken on review and updates of their growth strategies have highlighted issues with the existing RGS legislation, which has led to costly and time-consuming processes (legislation has not been reviewed in 20 years). One example is the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board who took eight years to review and adopt a new RGS bylaw. Through that process, it was noted that the legislative requirements for preparing, adopting and implementing an RGS presented both process and content challenges to preparing the 2018 RGS document (Attachment 2). The CRD indicated that “without legislation changes, future RGS updates will likely face similar challenges.”

At this time, considering the above-noted challenges in regards to existing RGS legislation, the remaining horizon identified in the existing RGS (7 years in to the 20 year plan), as well as the ongoing and identified projects, a review and update of the RGS may prove to be onerous.

## **CONCLUSION**

Council may choose to consider the following as part of their decision:

- A number of successful initiatives related to the implementation of the RGS have been completed (e.g., Flood Management, Planning Lab, Housing Needs Assessment, etc.) and others are in process (e.g., Poverty and Wellness Strategy, Climate Action Plan, Housing Strategy, etc.);
- There are several projects identified in the Priority Project Plan that have not been completed and may be considered by the Regional Board through a future budget deliberation process;
- There is an opportunity going forward to assess priorities within the existing RGS framework to identify other projects to support the ongoing implementation of the current RGS; and
- A review and update of the RGS could become a multi-year initiative requiring designated resources and may delay some of the priority projects identified in the existing Plan.

## **ALTERNATE MOTION**

**THAT** Council recommend the Regional District of the Central Okanagan undertake a 5-year review of the Regional Growth Strategy.

## **REVIEWED BY**

Brent Magnan, Planning Manager

Mark Koch, Director of Development Services

Shelley Schnitzler, Legislative Services Manager/Corporate Officer

## **APPROVED FOR THE AGENDA BY**

Paul Gipps, CAO

Powerpoint: Yes ☒ No ☐

Attachments:

1. RGS Priority Project Plan
2. CRD UBCM Letter