

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY (RGS) CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT (CRD)

This article describes how Regional Growth Strategies came about, their development in B.C. and how the CRD has recently changed the focus from growth to sustainability. The CRD's Regional Sustainability Strategy is **binding** on the JDFEA and must be adhered to in the upcoming Otter Point and Shirley OCP Reviews.

Background

Back in the 1970s, growth strategies focused on economic development and social equity: essentially, how to maximize the use of resources, generate efficiencies and produce a more fair or just distribution or access to services and economic opportunity. By the early 1990s, regional growth strategies were in place or being drawn up in Japan, Europe, Australia and of course British Columbia. By this time, there had been a shift in focus and there was a profound questioning of the basic assumption that continuous growth was desirable and attainable. Upon examination it was found that:

- ◆ Many wild life species and natural habitats were threatened.
- ◆ Green house gas emissions were triggering climate change, particularly global warming.
- ◆ There was unplanned development with little attention to the future costs and planning for basic services like water, transport and sewage treatment.

For economic as well as environmental reasons, the planning frameworks for growth and development began to incorporate **ecological variables** as well as predictive analysis of **sustainability** in 20 to 25 year time cycles.

The Development of Regional Growth Strategies in British Columbia

In 1995, British Columbia passed the *Growth Strategies Act* which **encouraged** B.C.'s regional governments—which include both municipalities and electoral areas—to develop regional growth plans. The Act further stipulated the processes and frameworks to be used: economic development, social equity, ecology and sustainability. This legislation is now **Part 25** of the *BC Local Government Act*. By 1996, in compliance with the *Growth Strategies Act*, the Capital Regional District (CRD) was laying the ground-work for a Regional Growth Strategy. The background document, *Analysis of Policies and Priorities*, published in March 1997, identified an “implied regional vision”. It suggested that growth in Colwood, Langford and View Royal and the desire to preserve the amenities and ambience of established neighbourhoods were existing, suitable trends. However, other parts of the vision expressed by residents, such as shifting from cars to public transit and directing growth in ways that protected the environment, differed significantly from existing trends and practice and would present a challenge to implement.

There were also profound differences in the *futures* envisioned by most Official Community Plans for CRD member municipalities and the *futures* envisioned by both the provincial *Growth Strategies Act* and the emergent CRD "implied regional vision". However, by 2003 there was CRD Board consensus and agreement to adopt our **Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)**. The RGS has a mandatory five year review which is now in progress. In many ways, the *differing future* envisioned for each municipality and for the region district, as conceived in the provincial legislation, is still a challenge for the Capital Regional District and throughout the province.

Regional Sustainability Strategy

The RGS has now changed its name to the **Regional Sustainability Strategy (RSS)**. This is in response to federal and provincial legislation and policy moving further from the idea that growth is good for the economy to the idea that growth must be sustainable.

The CRD's RSS applies to the 13 municipalities and the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area. The two electoral areas under the Island Trust are not within the planning area for the RSS. Part 25 of the *Local Government Act* sets the minimum content for a RGS: 20 year minimum time frame

- ◆ Comprehensive regional context statement
- ◆ Population and employment projection
- ◆ List of actions proposed to meet the needs of the projected population.

The RSS provides a means of ensuring compatibility and linkage between the various Official Community Plans (OCP) within a region. A RSS is not an OCP done at a larger scale: instead it provides a framework for the individual OCPs in a region. Municipalities contribute to the development and implementation of the RSS. The Act (Section 866) stipulates that all community plans must include a regional context statement. The RSS applies to, and is **binding** on, the CRD. Only the regional context statement is binding on a municipality. The regional context statement sets out the relationship between the RSS and the OCP and how they will be made compatible over time. The Juan de Fuca Electoral Area (JDFEA) is not a municipality so the CRD RSS is **binding** on the JDFEA. By extension, the current RSS must be adhered to in the upcoming Otter Point and Shirley OCP Reviews.

The current CRD RGS is binding on the JDFEA and has 8 Strategic Initiatives:

1. Keep urban settlement compact
2. Protect the integrity of rural communities
3. Protect regional green and blue space
4. Manage natural resources and the environment sustainably
5. Build complete communities
6. Improve housing affordability
7. Increase transportation choice
8. Strengthen the regional economy

Conclusion

The RGS has been in place for over five years and the CRD has initiated a process to update and rewrite the document. The revised document will be the Regional Sustainability Strategy and the Otter Point and Shirley OCPs will adhere to it. The Strategy will be broadened to address social, economic and environmental sustainability. Updates will also include:

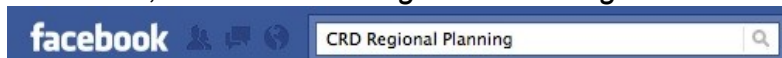
- ◆ Revised population and growth projections
- ◆ A new amendment process
- ◆ Inclusion of climate change and land use strategies
- ◆ Response to provincial targets for greenhouse gas reduction
- ◆ Revised targets and indicators.

The CRD has generated a range of comprehensive written materials to inform the public and encourage participation in the review process.

Find out more about the RGS-RSS:

www.crd.bc.ca/rgs

in Facebook, search: *CRD Regional Planning*.



Or, click on the image just above to go to the CRD's Facebook page.

It is also possible to participate in ~~the review process~~ online and provide your feedback and priorities by visiting crd.metroquest.com.