

Report to Council



Date: April 19, 2021
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Regional Growth Strategy – RDCO Consultation
Department: Policy & Planning

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the report from the Policy & Planning Department, dated April 19, 2021 regarding Regional Growth Strategy consultation;

AND THAT Council recommends the Regional District of Central Okanagan not undertake a 5-year review of the Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 1336.

Purpose:

To consider whether to review the RDCO Regional Growth Strategy.

Background:

On June 23, 2014 the Regional District of Central Okanagan (RDCO) adopted the region's Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The RGS is a strategic long-range policy document that provides direction as to the growth of the region, including its member municipalities. Regional districts, with acceptance by member municipalities, may adopt Regional Growth Strategies in accordance with the Local Government Act (LGA). Moreover, the LGA requires that at least once every five years, regional districts must consider if the Regional Growth Strategy should be reviewed for possible amendments. Further, this legislation also requires that the public as well as key organizations and authorities be provided an opportunity to provide feedback when the need for a review is considered. For this reason, the RDCO is currently considering whether there is the need for a review of the RGS and has requested comments from the City of Kelowna as part of the consultation process.

Discussion:

The RGS continues to be advanced by the RDCO, member municipalities and local First Nation communities through various collaborative projects. In 2017, the RDCO endorsed the RGS Priority Projects Plan to advance the implementation of the key Issue Areas identified in the RGS. This five-year action plan, which identified gaps in the RGS implementation, was developed collaboratively with the member municipalities, Westbank First Nation, and RGS Steering Committee. Subsequently, several

collaborative projects were completed which advanced the goals of the RGS in a cooperative manner; these include the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, Regional Flood Management Plan, Regional Planning Labs, and Regional Growth Strategy Monitoring Program. More recently, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) was developed collaboratively with all member municipalities participating. The endorsement of the RTP in late 2020 ensures that regionally significant transportation planning processes and infrastructure projects will be coordinated at a regional level. These collective efforts demonstrate the strong regional partnerships that exist and the on-going efforts to advance the RGS Issue Areas and Vision.

In recent discussions with RDCO staff, there were concerns around the staff resourcing that would be needed to undertake a review of the RGS at this time. Moreover, the staff resources and consulting budgets that would be needed to complete a fulsome review of the RGS would come at the expense of other important planning efforts such as the Regional Flood Management Plan work, the Regional Housing Strategy and other collaborative planning projects that are identified in the RGS Priority Projects Plan.

Other regional jurisdictions that have taken on review and updates of their regional growth strategies have identified issues with the RGS legislation in the LGA that has led to significant costs and resource intensive processes. More specifically, the Capital Regional District (CRD) adopted a new RGS bylaw after an 8-year process of negotiations and disputes between the various member municipalities. The CRD indicated at a recent Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) convention that without legislation changes future RGS updates will likely face similar challenges. The recent RGS 5-year review undertaken by the Regional District of North Okanagan also demonstrated the process and content challenges associated with the RGS legislation in the LGA. RDCO staff is monitoring discussions at UBCM around the RGS legislation further to the call for updates to the legislation at a recent convention.

Conclusion:

As five years have passed since the RGS was adopted, the RDCO Board will need to consider if a review is necessary. To inform this decision, the RDCO is undertaking consultation to gather input from member municipalities and the broader community. City of Kelowna staff recognizes that there are benefits and challenges associated with undertaking a RGS review right now.

City of Kelowna staff is recommending that a memo summarizing the discussion and feedback of Council be prepared after the report today. This memo would then be used by RDCO staff to develop a recommendation to the RDCO Board regarding the need for a 5-year review of the RGS.

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Local Government Act, Section 452(2), (3)

Existing Policy:

Kelowna Official Community Plan, Objective 2.1 Deliver sustainable services.

Inter-municipal Co-operation: Investigate opportunities and implement actions to efficiently plan and deliver programs and services with the Regional District of Central Okanagan and other neighbouring municipalities.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority

External Agency/Public Comments

Communications Comments

Submitted by:

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Approved for inclusion:



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cc:

Divisional Director, Planning & Development Services

Development Planning