



Regional Planning

2024 Winter Bulletin

Regional Planning Labs

Regional Planning Labs are a forum for stakeholders located around the region to work together on common land use planning issues. Planning Labs support implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The Regional Board's Strategic Priorities 2023-2026 specifically identified the need to continue to leverage Planning Labs to inform land use policies that enhance quality of life in the region.

Since 2018, the RDCO has hosted eight Regional Planning Labs. Participant feedback continues to demonstrate that there is great interest and value in working together to tackle regional or complex issues.

Development Planning for Environmental Protection Planning Lab

In November 2023, RDCO hosted a Planning Lab that gathered planners, land-use managers, environmental specialists, and technical professionals to share knowledge, discuss challenges, and improve planning and implementation for environmental protection during development. Attendees included local, provincial and federal government staff, as well as topical experts and specialists from across the Okanagan.

Environmental protection directly links to RGS issue areas including Our Land, Our Water Resources and Our Ecosystems. Collaborating for environmental protection is crucial within the context of the RGS as it fosters a unified and sustainable approach to managing the region's development. Collaboration on issue areas ensures the preservation of the region's natural resources, biodiversity, and rich cultural tapestry, while contributing

to the overall resilience of our region in the face of challenges including climate change, affordability, and housing.

The Lab included panel presentations from RDCO member municipalities with an overview of current policies as well as discussions on potential solutions and tools to improve environmental protection in the Central Okanagan. Project updates on the Central Okanagan Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory (SEI) and several workshops explored and prioritized administrative, technical and policy solutions.

While recognizing the value of all of the solutions discussed, participants collectively prioritized those that would be most beneficial to approach from a regional perspective. Key solutions that resulted from the Planning Lab will be considered by our partners through the upcoming RGS Priority Projects Plan (for more details see Priority Projects Plan section in this bulletin).

Results from the SEI Update and recommendations for Terms of References for Environmental Assessments is anticipated in 2024 and will be shared with partners and member municipalities.



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Upcoming Regional Projects

There are several projects planned to begin in 2024.

Regional Employment Lands Inventory

The RDCO received funding through the 2023 Complete Communities grant for a Regional Employment Lands Inventory to assess current and future use of employment lands in the Central Okanagan. The project will include a market assessment and inventory of all commercial, industrial, office and institutional land within the RDCO.

The inventory will provide the basis for projected demand, future supply, and impending shortages by sector. This information can then be used to direct future commercial and industrial land use development in the region. It will also provide a resource to inform more efficient development of infrastructure and transportation to promote growth and encourage the development of integrated communities.

Priority Projects Plan

The Priority Projects Plan is a five-year action plan that outlines priority initiatives for RDCO implementation based on commitments defined in the Regional Growth Strategy. It will be developed in collaboration with our partners and identify a number of priority projects that will be selected and scoped to support regional coordination and collaboration in support of regionally shared needs.

Beyond the RGS, a coordinated regional response continues to be the most sensible, economic, and effective approach to collective challenges.

Initiatives identified in the existing Priority Projects Plan developed in 2017 are wrapping up and it is now time to consider how momentum can be maintained through the years ahead.

Examples of projects completed under the existing action plan include:

- Regional Flood Management Plan Phases 2 and 3
- Regional Growth Strategy Monitoring Program
- Regional Housing Needs Assessment
- Regional Housing Strategy

Regional Agricultural Strategy

In 2022, a process to develop a regional agricultural strategy was launched. The first phase resulted in the completion of the Central Okanagan Agricultural Background Report which serves as a foundation to support knowledge sharing, data collection, and joint investments. It contains an agricultural profile for the region, findings of a policy review and information gathered from engagement activities with the agricultural community, partners and stakeholders.

The next phase of the project will get underway in 2024 and will see development of regionally consistent policies to help the larger agricultural food system through a regional agricultural strategy developed in the final phase of the process.

