



# Standing Committee Report Electoral Area Services Committee

**To:** Electoral Area Services Committee  
**From:** Director of Development and Engineering Services  
**Date:** October 21, 2024

**Subject:** Electoral Area Official Community Plan Updates

**Objective:** To provide an update on the recommended approach for updating the Electoral Area Official Community Plans (OCPs).

## **Discussion:**

### Summary

The RDCO's four Official Community Plans (OCPs) and Joe Rich Rural Land Use Bylaw (RLUB) are primary policy documents that guide planning and land use management in the Electoral Areas. They are critical for informing decisions on the amount, location, and type of development allowed to ensure growth occurs in a fashion that is aligned with the community's vision and supportive of the economy, environment, and quality of life. While an OCP is typically updated every five to ten years, all four of the Electoral Area's OCPs and the Joe Rich RLUB were adopted between 12 and 18 years ago. In response, the Regional Board's Strategic Priorities for 2023-2026 identified pursuing funding opportunities to update OCPs as an action under the Electoral Area priority for Growth and Development.

Given the comprehensive nature of an OCP and that all four Electoral Area OCPs and the Joe Rich RLUB require review and update, a considerable amount of time and budget would be needed to complete each update individually. On June 13, 2024, staff provided an overview of five options for updating the RDCO's four Electoral Area OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB to the Electoral Areas Services Committee (Attachment 2). Staff have reviewed and considered the feedback from the Electoral Area Services Committee (EASC) and recommend proceeding with one OCP for the West Electoral Area and one OCP for the East Electoral Area and repealing the Joe Rich RLUB. This option delivered the highest value during staff's evaluation process and is recommended because it is cost-effective, respects community uniqueness, and will facilitate more efficient development application review in the Electoral Areas. Electoral area residents will also benefit from a more streamlined approach that provides enhanced consistency and the opportunity to incorporate current community values into a more modern OCP framework.

## **Background:**

### Electoral Area OCPs are Directional Growth Policy Documents

The RDCO's four Electoral Area OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB are primary policy documents that guide planning and land use management in the Electoral Areas. They are critical for informing decisions on the amount, location, and type of development allowed to ensure growth occurs in a fashion that is aligned with the community's vision and supportive of the economy, environment, and quality of life. An OCP uses information such as demographic projections, housing needs, community values,

environmental considerations, and infrastructure capacity to establish future land use designations, development permit areas, and a broad growth management policy framework.

#### Updates to the Electoral Area OCPs are a Board Strategic Priority

While an OCP is typically updated every five to ten years, all four of the Electoral Area's OCPs and the Joe Rich RLUB were adopted between 12 and 18 years ago. Since then, the Central Okanagan has experienced rapid population growth and an increase in the frequency of wildfires, extreme heat, and floods. Additionally, recent provincial housing legislation (Bill 44 – the Housing Statutes Amendment Act) required secondary suites to be allowed in all single-family residential zones within the Electoral Areas. The amount of time that has passed since the Electoral Area OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB were adopted, combined with the scale and impact of recent events, mean updates to these foundational policy documents are necessary. In response, the Regional Board's Strategic Priorities for 2023-2026 identified pursuing funding opportunities to update OCPs as an action under the Electoral Area priority for Growth and Development.

#### Individual OCP Updates would Require Considerable Time and Resources

A comprehensive OCP update can take a considerable amount of time and resources from initiation to final adoption. For example, an OCP must include policies and map designations for residential, commercial, institutional, and agricultural land uses, along with restrictions on the use of land that is subject to hazardous conditions or that is environmentally sensitive. An OCP update must also be completed with a corresponding public engagement plan, as there are mandated external agencies that must be consulted as part of OCP preparation. These requirements are stipulated in Part 14 of the *Local Government Act (LGA)*. Given the comprehensive nature of an OCP and that all four Electoral Area OCPs and the Joe Rich RLUB require review and update, a considerable amount of time and budget would be needed to complete each update individually.

#### OCP Update Options and EASC Direction

To address this challenge, staff identified a range of possible options, from maintaining the current approach, to harmonizing all OCPs into a single plan. Specifically, five options were evaluated across six criteria that included staff and budgetary resources, timeframe considerations, administrative complexity, value for the community, regional cohesion, and ease of document understanding. On June 13, 2024, staff provided an overview of the option development and evaluation process to the Electoral Areas Services Committee (Attachment 2). The recommended option that performed the best was to proceed with one OCP for the West Electoral Area and one OCP for the East Electoral Area, with the repeal of the Joe Rich RLUB. However, the Electoral Area Services Committee was not ready to move forward with this option on June 13<sup>th</sup> due to questions about whether consolidating the four OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB into two OCPs would result in a loss of community uniqueness within the documents.

Since then, staff have been considering the Committee's comments and reviewing the unique content and character of the four Electoral Area OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB. Staff are confident that the rich historical context and unique community character of each OCP area can be maintained, while still realizing the efficiency gains of the recommended approach. This is because, despite the geographically distinct and unique context of each area, there are many similarities that unite the East Electoral Area and West Electoral Area. For example, while the Rural Westside and Brent Road / Trepanier areas are each unique with special considerations and challenges (e.g. in relation to Westside Road), they also share values related to preserving environmentally sensitive features and enhancing recreational features. The same is true in the East Electoral Area. While Ellison, the South Slopes, and Joe Rich are each unique with their own contexts (e.g. Ellison's integration with nearby communities, the South Slope's 2003 fire impact recovery, and Joe Rich's RLUB) they also share values related to preserving their rural character.

### The Recommended Option Provides Multiple Benefits

In addition to being able to respect community uniqueness, the recommended option of one OCP for the West Electoral Area and one OCP for the East Electoral Area (with the repeal of the Joe Rich RLUB) will bring additional benefits to Electoral Area residents.



More efficient development review



Current residents have voices heard



Cost-effective



Respects distinct geographies and community uniqueness



Modernizes and harmonizes OCPs, aligned with best practice

For example, more efficient development review will be enabled by streamlining development permit area definitions and exemptions. Electoral Area residents will also benefit by having a fresh opportunity to have their voices heard during public engagement. Finally, the recommended option will help reduce the cost of updating the Electoral Area OCPs, as the associated administrative processes would be reduced by half.

Staff have also scanned practices at other regional districts throughout BC and have found that the approach of consolidating OCPs is also being used elsewhere to modernize and bring efficiency to planning and land use management in electoral areas.

Landing the preferred approach will provide staff with the direction they need to inform multi-year work planning, OCP scoping (including identifying efficiencies with the co-development of the Regional Growth Strategy) and costing for the purposes of preparing grant applications.

### Conclusion

Staff have reviewed and considered the feedback from the Electoral Area Services Committee from the June 13, 2024 discussion and recommend proceeding with one OCP for the West Electoral Area and one OCP for the East Electoral Area, including the repeal of the Joe Rich RLUB. This option delivered the highest value during staff's evaluation process and is recommended because it is cost-effective, respects community uniqueness, and will facilitate more efficient development review in the Electoral Areas. Electoral area residents will also benefit from a more streamlined approach that provides enhanced consistency and the opportunity to incorporate current community values into a more modern OCP framework.

**Next Steps:**

Once the Electoral Area Service Committee identifies a preferred option for updating the Electoral Area OCPs and Joe Rich RLUB, it will be forwarded to the Regional Board for consideration. Once approved, staff will have the needed information to move forward with advancing the Board's Strategic Priority of pursuing funding opportunities to update the Electoral Area's OCPs.

**Recommendation(s):**

**THAT** the Electoral Area Services Committee advances the recommended option of one (1) Official Community Plan per Electoral Area, as outlined in the report on Electoral Area Official Community Plan Updates, dated October 21, 2024, to the Regional Board for consideration.

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Respectfully submitted by: Mariah VanZerr, Regional Planning Manager and Danika LeBlanc, Senior Planner

Report Approved by: Danielle Noble-Brandt, Director of Development and Engineering Services

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

- Attachment(s):
1. Official Community Plan Updates staff report dated June 13, 2024
  2. PowerPoint Presentation