



Regional Board Report

Information

To: Regional Board
From: Director of Development and Engineering Services
Date: April 3, 2025
Subject: Regional Employment Lands Inventory - Final Report

Voting Entitlement: *All Directors - Unweighted Corporate Vote - Simple Majority (LGA s.208)*

Purpose: To receive the final report for the Regional Employment Lands Inventory for information.

Executive Summary:

Ensuring an adequate supply of available, serviced employment lands is vital for supporting economic development in the rapidly growing Central Okanagan region. However, there is a lack of information on whether the current supply of employment lands will be sufficient to meet future demand. The Regional Employment Lands Inventory (RELI) is designed to fill this gap. The study used employment projections to estimate future deficits/surplus in employment lands across the region. It also created an interactive mapping tool to help the business community, real estate professionals, and public more easily locate employment lands that meet their requirements. By understanding projected future employment land shortages, all governments in the region can work together to ensure the Central Okanagan has the employment lands necessary to attract business and support a thriving regional economy now and into the future.

The RELI study indicates there are several employment land categories where the demand will be greater than the supply over the next 20 years. These include both commercial and institutional employment lands which are projected to experience shortages by 2046. Additionally, vacant industrial land that is serviced and unconstrained is also in short supply across the region. Most of the projected shortages are located within the City of Kelowna but population growth across all parts of the region will drive the demand for local services and businesses.

Moving forward, the Central Okanagan government partners will need to work together to ensure needed employment lands are in adequate supply, appropriately serviced, and protected from competing development pressures. The second phase of this work, the Regional Employment Lands Strategy, will build on the findings and momentum of this first phase by identifying key actions to address projected employment land shortages across the region. As per the recently endorsed 2024 Regional Growth Strategy Priority Projects Plan, the Phase 2: Regional Employment Lands Strategy is scheduled to launch in 2026, pending future Board support during the annual budget cycle.

Recommendation(s):

THAT the Regional Board receives the final Regional Employment Lands Inventory report as attached to the Report from the Director of Development and Engineering Services, dated April 3, 2025, for information.

Respectfully Submitted by: Mariah VanZerr, Regional Planning Manager

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

Approved for Agenda: Sally Ginter, Chief Administrative Officer

Strategic Plan Alignment:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency preparedness | <input type="checkbox"/> Truth and reconciliation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health and wellness | <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and climate – Regional priority only |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regional transportation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Growth and development – Electoral Area priority only |
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Background:

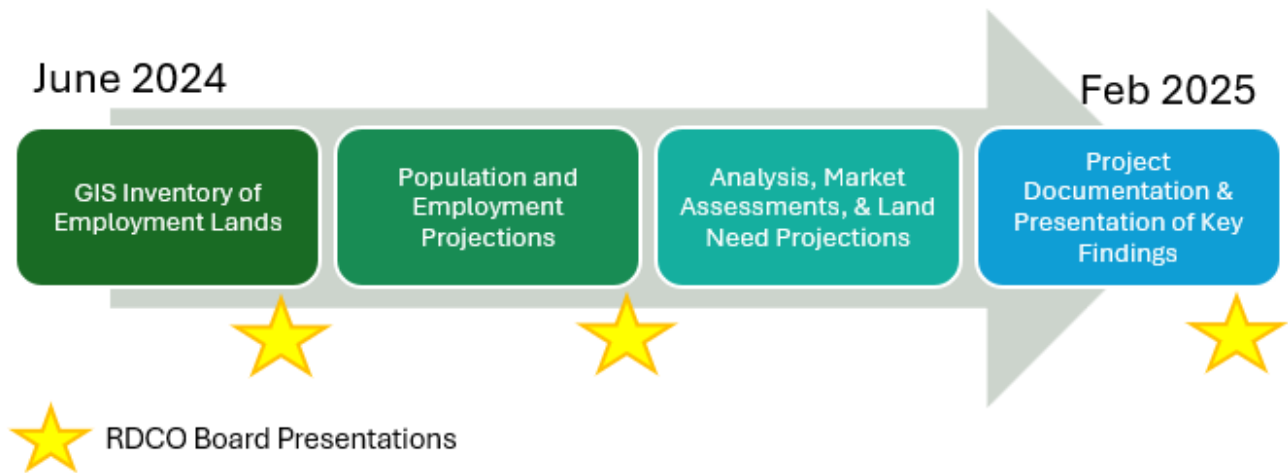
The Central Okanagan is one of Canada's fastest growing regions with unique development and planning needs. Over the next several years, the RDCO is advancing key regional planning initiatives to address topics that pose challenges across jurisdictional boundaries, such as regional housing, economic development, and transportation. Each regional government partner is impacted by challenges in these areas. As part of implementing the Regional Growth Strategy, the RDCO is advancing regional planning initiatives, such as the Regional Employment Lands Inventory (RELI), to help partner jurisdictions plan for their own communities' growth and development. Since economic activity crosses jurisdictional boundaries, a regional approach allows for better coordination between member governments and a more holistic look at employment land trends across the entire Central Okanagan.

Regional Employment Lands Inventory

Ensuring an adequate supply of available, serviced employment lands is vital for supporting economic development in the rapidly growing Central Okanagan region. However, there is a lack of information on whether the current supply of employment lands will be sufficient to meet future demand. The Regional Employment Lands Inventory (RELI) is designed to fill this gap. The study used employment projections to estimate future deficits/surplus in employment lands across the region. It also created an interactive mapping tool to help the business community, real estate professionals, and public more easily locate employment lands that meet their requirements. By understanding projected future employment land shortages, all governments in the region can proactively work together to ensure the Central Okanagan has the employment lands necessary to attract business and support a thriving regional economy now and into the future.

The Regional Employment Lands Inventory was included in the 2017 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) Priority Projects Plan. It was developed in collaboration with the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission and a Technical Committee comprised of subject matter experts from all the partner governments in the region. The project was funded by provincial grants from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and the Local Government Housing Initiatives Funding Program.

The project began in June 2024 and is now complete. It was developed in four phases and included three presentations to the RDCO Board at key project milestones.



The Regional Employment Lands Inventory is an assessment of the supply of employment-supporting lands in the Central Okanagan at a regional scale. The project methodology was developed to create an understanding of the following three elements:

- Employment Projections: How much employment growth, in terms of jobs by sector, is reasonable to expect across the region by 2046?
- Land Use Demand: How do those jobs relate to different types of employment lands?
- Potential Supply: How much employment land is available to accommodate future job growth? Where are there shortfalls or constraints?

Key Findings

Coupled with a review of employment land utilization and market trends, the RELI incorporates regional projections of population and employment growth to develop detailed outlooks for employment land need. Projections for three employment growth scenarios were prepared to enable the region and its partners to plan for a range of potential viable outcomes. Detailed findings are included in the Regional Employment Lands Inventory & Gap Analysis Final Report (Attachment 1). A summary of key findings and highlights is provided below:

- By 2046 the region is projected to grow by 50,000 to 126,000 new residents¹.
- Accounting for new residents and residents aging into the workforce, employment is projected to grow by between 44,000 - 67,000 new jobs. Factoring for where people work and changing trends in remote work, it is expected that between 38,000 - 58,000 of these jobs are linked to employment lands in the region.
- Accounting for historic and emerging land use trends, the projected job growth translates to a need for approximately 3,478 to 3,848 hectares of employment land.

¹ Net population change has been adjusted from reporting in the Rennie report, which summarizes change between 2024 and 2046, to reflect the 2023 base utilized by the employment projections.

- The projections of future employment land demand compared to supply indicate that several employment land categories will likely experience shortages. These include commercial and institutional employment lands, which are projected to experience shortages by 2046. Additionally, vacant industrial land that is serviced and unconstrained is also in short supply across the region.
- Most of the projected shortages are located within the City of Kelowna, but population growth across all parts of the region will drive the demand for local services and businesses.

While it can be challenging to make room for employment growth, the benefits to the region of a strong, robust regional economy mean the Central Okanagan must be proactive to ensure the additional jobs and businesses that will want to locate here are supported both now and in the future. These businesses, across all sectors, represent an integral component for the continued development of resilient communities, providing jobs and creating numerous other economic benefits for residents and the entire Central Okanagan region.

RELI Interactive Mapping Tool

The Regional Employment Lands Inventory includes an interactive mapping tool that allows the business community, real estate professionals, and public to quickly search for employment lands across the Central Okanagan. The tool is designed to optimize land use efficiencies, facilitate key property acquisitions, and aid in more informed real estate transactions. The tool enables users to quickly search for commercial, industrial, institutional, agricultural, tourist/commercial, or other rural employment lands by jurisdiction. The tool also allows users to filter for employment lands by features such as vacancy, access to existing servicing (water, sewer and transportation), environmental constraints and slope, among others. Parcel data includes information related to future land use designation and zoning. The tool will be updated regularly and is available on the RDCO website at the following link: [RELI Interactive Mapping Tool](#).

Next Steps:

The findings of the Regional Employment Lands Inventory provide information that each partner jurisdiction can utilize as they update their various land use and infrastructure master plans. Moving forward, the Central Okanagan government partners will need to work together to ensure employment lands are in adequate supply across the region, appropriately serviced, and protected from competing development pressures.

The second phase of this work, the Regional Employment Lands Strategy, will build on the findings and momentum of this first phase by identifying key actions to address projected employment land shortages across the region. As per the recently endorsed 2024 Regional Growth Strategy Priority Projects Plan, the Phase 2: Regional Employment Lands Strategy is scheduled to launch in 2026, pending future Board support during the annual budget cycle.

Considerations:

Organizational/External:

The project was led by the Development and Engineering Services Department, with collaboration and support from Information Services, Communications, and the Central Okanagan Economic Development Commission.

Financial:

The RDCO received funding for this project through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) 2023 Complete Communities grant in the amount of \$150,000. An additional \$30,000 in grant funding was received from the British Columbia Local Government Housing Initiatives Program.

Considerations not applicable:

- Legal/Statutory Authority:
- Alternate Recommendation:

Attachment(s): 1. Regional Employment Lands Inventory-Final Report
 2. Regional Employment Lands Inventory - Presentation
